

OPINION 6

WHY IS THE BJP AVOIDING CHINA IN CAMPAIGNING?

WORLD 8

NETANYAHU VOWS TO INVADE RAFAH WITH OR WITHOUT DEAL

MONEY 10

MARKETS WIPE OUT EARLY GAINS ON FAG END SELL OFF

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY MAY 1, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

Established 1864

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

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

Late City Vol. 34 Issue 120
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

CSK EYE STABILITY AGAINST PBKS 12 SPORTS



Covishield cure comes with serious side effects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Sparking criticism and raising concerns, British-Swedish multinational pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca has for the first time acknowledged in court documents in the UK that its Covid-19 vaccine, which is known as Covishield in India, has the potential to cause Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS), a rare side effect associated with blood clotting.

clotting. As per media reports in the UK, the pharma giant is facing up to 51 litigations, being sued in class action over claims its vaccine caused death and serious injury in dozens of cases. In India, it was one of the widely administered Covid vaccines to reduce severe Covid-19 complications. Developed in collaboration with University of Oxford, AstraZeneca's vaccine was manufactured in India by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII). As many as 1,749,417,978 doses of Covishield vaccine have been administered in India, in what was the world's largest vaccination programme from January 2021, according to the vaccine dashboard of the

government's web portal CoWIN as on April 29, 2024. Taking cognizance of the development, Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said the Indian Government should work to urgently address the alleged side-effects of the Covishield vaccine as millions of people in India were administered the shot during the Covid pandemic. Bharadwaj expressed concern over the alleged link between the vaccine's side-effects and a series of sudden deaths in India, claiming that Covishield was banned in several European countries, including Germany, France, Spain, Finland, Norway and Denmark, at the beginning of



2021 due to apprehensions about its safety. Speaking about complications related to the Covishield vaccine, Bharadwaj told a news agency,

"We have seen numerous videos on social media recently showing people collapsing and dying immediately after performing activities, which was not observed before the pandemic. Many people speculate a connection to the coronavirus vaccine and such reports are a matter of concern as they escalate tension." However, in India, the doctors said there was no need to worry. They said that if a person has received the AstraZeneca vaccine, known as Covishield in India, two years ago, the likelihood of experiencing any adverse effects now is extremely low. "Adverse effects, if they occur, typically manifest within a few weeks of vaccination," said Dr Sudhir

Kumar, Neurologist, Apollo Hospital, Hyderabad. Dr Rajeev Jayadevan, Co-Chairman of the National Indian Medical Association, added that this particular outcome is reported only in the first month following the first dose, not afterwards. In India, Dr Kumar added that the incidence of TTS after the vaccine is not known. "Only isolated case reports have been reported. So, TTP is extremely rare after Covid vaccination, considering millions of vaccine doses have been administered," the expert said. "TTS is thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome, which is basically clot in blood vessels of the brain or elsewhere,

along with a low platelet count. It is known to occur in very rare instances following certain types of vaccines and also from other causes. According to the WHO, adenovirus vector vaccines in particular have been rarely associated with this condition," Dr Jayadevan asserted. Dr MV Padma Srivastava, Chairperson - Neurology, Paras Hospitals, Gurugram, however, told a news agency, "I have read the recent report which states that TTS (Thrombosis Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS) is happening. In rare events, I can say that the vaccine has caused certain consequences and TTS."

Continued on Page 2

Amit Shah deepfake video sings the Congress Sex scandal plot thickens

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AHMEDABAD/NEW DELHI

The Gujarat police on Tuesday said they have arrested a Congress leader and an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) functionary for allegedly sharing Union Home Minister Amit Shah's deep fake video, in which he is purportedly seen announcing the curtailment of reservation rights of the SCs, STs and OBCs. The arrest comes a day after Delhi Police initiated a probe and summoned several persons including Telangana chief minister Revanth Reddy for questioning in the case. A few arrests have already been made in this case as Mumbai police too registered FIRs against the Maharashtra Youth Congress social media platform and 16 others. Police in other BJP-ruled States also swung into action making the first arrest in Assam in connection with the case on Sunday. In his first reactions pertaining to the matter, Home Minister Amit Shah said the Congress' frustration and disappointment have reached such a level that it made and circulated it on social media and even chief ministers and state unit chiefs also forwarded



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses a Press conference at Vajpayee Bhawan, in Guwahati, on Tuesday. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and State BJP president Bhabesh Kalita are also seen

it. Shah alleged that since leader Rahul Gandhi assumed leadership of the Congress, its level of politics is sinking and the attempt to create confusion and mislead people is condemnable. "They should contest elections on the basis of their principles, programmes and manifesto and not by circulating a fake video," he said at a Press conference in

Guwahati when asked on the arrest of a Congress functionary of Assam for allegedly circulating a fake video of the BJP leader. The Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Cell arrested the two persons, including one who was working as a Personal Assistant (PA) of Congress MLA Jignesh Mevani since the last six years. Another has been serving as the AAP's

Dahod district president since the last four years and third belongs to the Dalit community, also serves as the general secretary of Banaskantha district Congress. The duo was booked under section 153A (promoting enmity between different groups) and 505(2) (statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The police release said the duo had uploaded the

edited video of Amit Shah's speech with an intention to create enmity between reserved castes and unreserved castes in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. "Both of them had shared this edited video of Amit Shah on their Facebook pages. They received this video on their WhatsApp and investigations are still on to nab the person who had edited this video," said a Gujarat police official. BJP on Monday lodged a complaint with the Election Commission against the Congress, alleging that it circulated a "deep fake and morphed" video of Amit Shah to derail the poll process, and demanded strict action against the party. The Special Cell of the Delhi Police had on Sunday registered an FIR after the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), which is under the Ministry of Home Affairs, filed a complaint about the doctored video of Shah where his statements indicating a commitment to abolish quota for Muslims on religious ground in Telangana were changed to make it seem that he was advocating scrapping of all reservations.

Continued on Page 2

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

JD(S) on Tuesday suspended its Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna from the party with immediate effect over an alleged sex scandal involving him. Prajwal is the BJP-JD(S) alliance's candidate from Hassan, which went to the polls in the second phase on Friday. While Home Minister Amit Shah sought to know why the Congress Government in the State did not take any action against Prajwal for alleged sexual abuse of women, the National Commission for Women sought a report within three days from the Karnataka police over allegations of sexual abuse involving Prajwal. The 33-year-old is the son of HD Deve Gowda's elder son HD Revanna, who is an MLA and a former Minister. Prajwal's uncle H D Kumaraswamy is State president of JD(S). The suspension came minutes after the party core committee that met in Hubballi recommended his suspension to its national president and former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, who is also Prajwal's grandfather. "Videos of Hassan MP Prajwal



NSUI members hold a poster of JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna during a protest against his involvement in the alleged sexual abuse case in Bengaluru on Tuesday

Revanna allegedly harassing women are widely in circulation on social media and this has caused huge embarrassment to the party and its leadership," the suspension order said. Stating that the Congress government in Karnataka has constituted a Special Investigation Team to investigate this, it said, "In this backdrop, as per JD(S)' party constitution and rules regarding breach of discipline and punishment, Prajwal Revanna has been suspended with immediate effect." Some explicit video clips allegedly involving Prajwal

Revanna were circulated in Hassan over the last few days. Police on Sunday booked Prajwal Revanna and his father H D Revanna on charges of sexual harassment and criminal intimidation based on a complaint from a woman, who worked in their household. BJP welcomed the JD(S) decision to suspend MP Prajwal Revanna over allegations of sexual abuse, asserting that it will push for the full might of law against him, and launched a fierce counter-attack on Congress for "delayed"action by the Karnataka Government.

Continued on Page 2

MEA debunks WaPo report claiming RAW hand in murder plan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day after The Washington Post named an Indian official for allegedly plotting to eliminate Sikh extremist Gurbat Singh Pannun, India on Tuesday said the report made "unwarranted and unsubstantiated" imputations on a serious matter. The newspaper, citing unnamed sources, named a Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) officer in connection with the alleged plot to assassinate Pannun. "The report in question makes unwarranted and unsubstantiated imputations on a serious matter," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "There is an ongoing investigation of the high level committee set up by the Government of India to look into the security concerns shared by the US government on networks of organised criminals, terrorists and others," he said. Jaiswal was responding to media queries on the report. "Speculative and irresponsible comments on it are not helpful," Jaiswal said. The report in The Washington Post claimed that a man referred to as 'CC-1' in the indictment filed on the alleged murder plot to kill Khalistani terrorist Gurbat Singh Pannun was a RAW officer, Vikram Yadav. Yadav forwarded details about Pannun to the hired hit team, the report said. Vikram Yadav, an officer who allegedly worked with the Research and Analysis Wing, had hired a hit team and plotted an attack on Pannun on American soil, the report said. According to the report, Vikram Yadav, who is allegedly working with a different government organisation now, forwarded details about Pannun, including his New York address, to the hit team. The Washington Post claimed that the Ministry of External Affairs declined to respond to its article. In November last year, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta with working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Pannun. He is wanted in India on terror charges.

Continued on Page 2

EC confirms voter fatigue in first two rounds

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Days after suspense over the low voter turnout, the Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday came out with official data showing low voting percentage in the first two phases that concluded recently. A voter turnout of 66.14 per cent was recorded in the first phase and 66.71 per cent was recorded in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections. In 2019, the voter turnout was recorded at 69.43 per cent and 69.17 per cent in the first and second phases, respectively. The voter turnout in the two phases of the recent Lok Sabha elections experienced a decline compared to the 2019 polls. The first phase of polling was held on April 19 across 102 constituencies and the second phase was held on April 26

for 88 constituencies. "In the ongoing general elections, voter turnout of 66.14 per cent has been recorded in phase 1 for 102 PCs (Parliamentary Constituencies) and 66.71 per cent in phase 2 for 88 PCs that went for polls in the two phases," the EC said in a statement. Generally, a higher voter turnout is considered an indication of change, while a low turnout suggests continuity. However, there is no clear correlation or trend evident in the data. Analysts say the lower turnout marked a clear lack of enthusiasm among people. Officially sharing the turnout figure, the EC said in phase one of the elections, 66.22 per cent of male and 66.07 female electors turned up to vote. The turnout for registered third-gender voters stood at 31.32 per cent. In the



2019 polls, the turnout in the first phase stood at 69.43 per cent. In the second phase of elections held on April 26, the male voter turnout was recorded at 66.99 per cent, while the female turnout stood at 66.42 per cent. As many as 23.86 per cent of the

registered third-gender voters came out to vote. The data showed that Bihar recorded 49.26 per cent voter turnout, less than 50 per cent while Meghalaya and Uttar Pradesh recorded 56.87 per cent and 57.22 per cent respectively. Three parliamentary constituencies recorded less than 50 per cent voting percentage, which include Nawada in Bihar 43.17 per cent; Karauli-Dholpur in Rajasthan 49.59 per cent, a decline from 55.18 per cent in 2019 and Almora in Uttarakhand 48.74 per cent, a decline from 52.31 per cent in 2019. In the first phase of polling, Lakshadweep (84.1 per cent) recorded the highest voter percentage while Bihar (49.26 per cent) recorded the lowest voter turnout of the twenty-21 States and Union Territories that voted on April 19.

Continued on Page 2

India squad for T20 World Cup

RISHABH MALIK ■ NEW DELHI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the Indian squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup which will be hosted in the West Indies and the USA from June 2. The Senior Selection Committee chairman Ajit Agarkar and Captain Rohit Sharma picked India's 15-member squad on Tuesday. However there are many surprising inclusions in the team and shocking omissions which created buzz among the cricket fans. In a 15-member squad opener Yashasvi Jaiswal found a place with opening partner Rohit (captain) followed by Hardik Pandya who is newly appointed vice captain for the upcoming World Cup which raises eyebrows about his poor

form. In the much awaited race of wicketkeepers who are named in the squad are Rishabh Pant and Sanju Samson. KL Rahul was ignored in the selection with many questions arising despite his seniority and experience in the game and Ishan Kishan due to his form and inconsistency. Virat Kohli and Suryakumar Yadav will be seen batting at number three and four positions. The new all-rounder Shivam Dube, who is getting praises for his swashbuckling batting in the IPL for the CSK, will further strengthen India's bowling attack with Ravindra Jadeja. Yuzvendra Chahal is making a comeback in this year's World Cup. The four spinners in the team are Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ravindra



Jadeja and Axar Patel. Right-arm leg break spinner Ravi Bishnoi has been axed in this year's World Cup. The pace attack will be headed by Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, and Mohammed Siraj. India will begin their World Cup campaign against Ireland in Group A on June 5 in New York. SQUAD: Rohit Sharma (Captain), Hardik Pandya (Vice Captain), Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant (WK), Sanju Samson (WK), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Suryakumar Yadav, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Mohd Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah, Yuzvendra Chahal. Reserves: Shubman Gill, Khaleel Ahmed, Avesh Khan and Rinku Singh.

Kolkata experiences 43°C burns for first time ever

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Even as parts of south-western Bengal simmered in the vicinity of 45-46 degrees centigrade, Kolkata on Tuesday recorded its all-time highest temperature at 43 degrees which is six degrees above normal, said the weather office, adding the temperature is to go up in the coming 3-4 days. Kolkata had recorded highest temperature of 41.7 degrees 44 years ago in 1980, said sources at Alipore weather office, adding Orange alert had been issued for the City of Joy which had presently turned into a 'city on the boil'. Red alert has been sounded in the Gangetic West Bengal including the areas adjacent to Chotanagpur plateau like Purulia, Bankura, West Midnapore and Birbhum, sources said advising caution for the election campaigners and asking them to abstain from campaigning between 12 and 3 pm. "While heat wave like conditions will prevail in Kolkata, severe heat wave like conditions will prevail in western districts of the Gangetic Bengal," weather office sources said predicting heat-wave like condition in districts of North Bengal too save Darjeeling. The Bengal Government had preponed the summer vacations in Government and Government aided schools from April considering rising heat. "Considering the prevailing heat wave situation, the competent authority has decided to prepone the summer vacation in the schools under your administrative jurisdiction with effect from April 22 except for schools in hill areas of Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts, wherein the existing academic schedule may continue until further order," the notice issued by School Education earlier said.



Mamata, Shah trade barbs over CAA, Sandeshkhali

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Even as the election temperatures soared keeping pace with record-breaking heat, war of words intensified between Amit Shah and Mamata Banerjee with the Union Home Minister on Tuesday holding the Bengal Chief Minister guilty of facilitating the infiltrators that comprise her vote banks by default and allowing the Central funds meant for the poor people to be siphoned away to private coffers.

The Bengal Chief Minister promptly hit back asking Shah to prove his charges or do a public penance for spreading disinformation.

"The Home Minister has said that we have not sent utilization certificate for the money sent by the Centre... which is why they have stopped our funds... I challenged Amit Shah to prove his point or do a public penance," Banerjee said quoting a Comptroller and Auditor General which has said that 32 departments of the Centre too had not sent their utilization certificates.

"You are accusing us despite we have sent our reports but what about 32 departments of the



central Government which according to the CAG has not sent utilization certificates worth Rs 72,000 crore," Banerjee said.

Referring to Shah's allegation that Banerjee was peddling lies against the Citizenship Amendment Act because she wanted to promote her vote bank politics the Chief Minister said,

"giving vote to the BJP means inviting CAA, NRC and Uniform Civil Code which will finish the identity of the dalits, OBCs, minorities and many sub sects of the Hindu religion... but I will not allow this to happen."

Earlier Shah said that "Mamata



didi is opposing the CAA which is for giving citizenship to the Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Jains etc who have come from the neighbouring countries... where is the harm if these people get citizenship... she is doing so to because she does not want to offend her vote bank of infiltrators... but I am saying it loud and clear that CAA will be implemented whatever she does."

While Shah was addressing a rally at East Burdwan, Banerjee was speaking at a meeting at Harihchandrapur in North Malda. While the Burdwan seat is held by the TMC, the BJP won North Malda seat in 2019.

Raising the Sandeshkhali issue once again Shah said Banerjee being the Chief Minister was trying to shield the perpetrators of crime against women. "Whatever happened at Sandeshkhali is world's worst ever crime against women and we are determined to punish the guilty... But Mamata didi is trying to shield these criminals which she won't be able to do," he said.

On the rampant corruption in Bengal Shah said if BJP would come to power in Bengal it would end corruption in the State. "The TMC Government has perpetrated a rule of the corrupt and a Parivartan (political change) is needed to bring this to an end... if the BJP comes to power we will hand these corrupt upside down and realize all the money they have cheated."

Asking for 30 seats Shah said "if Bengal gives 30 seats to Modi ji then we promise to start a health scheme of a maximum Rs 5 lakh for free."

The BJP won 18 seats from Bengal in 2019 emerging as the principal opposition party in the State. The TMC won 22 seats while the Congress got 2 seats.

India, Bangladesh ties could boost regional connectivity, claims envoy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The destinies of India and Bangladesh are intertwined and the relationship between the two countries could be a valuable contributor to regional connectivity, Bangladeshi envoy Mustafizur Rahman said here on Tuesday.

In an interactive session at a think-tank, Rahman also said South Asia is one of the least integrated regions in the world and a "synergistic approach" could ensure regional integration.

"The destinies of our two countries and people are intertwined, not only due to our geographical proximity, shared history, culture, heritage and value system, but also because of the indelible bond that was forged when we stood together, shedding blood together in 1971 for the independence of Bangladesh," he said.

The Bangladesh high commissioner also referred to the common vision of India and Bangladesh to build a stronger South Asia.

"In recent years, the leaders of Bangladesh and India have emphasised the significance of building a stronger South Asia," he said at the Ananta Centre.

"The government of



Bangladesh is currently focusing on economic diplomacy with the ambitious goal of establishing Dhaka as the centre of transit and trade in Asia," he said. "Bangladesh aims to serve as the gateway to landlocked Nepal, Bhutan and Northeast India," he added.

Rahman said efforts are underway to establish Bangladesh as a hub of connectivity encompassing roads, railways, waterways, air linkages and power transmission.

"South Asia is one of the least integrated regions in the world. A synergistic approach to fostering regional integration is possible," he said.

The envoy said connectivity stands out as a vital element for regional cooperation. "I believe,

EC defers polling in Anantnag due to bad weather, to be held on May 25



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

The Election Commission of India Tuesday revised the date of polling in the Anantnag-Rajouri Parliamentary Constituency from May 7 to May 25 in the wake of inclement weather conditions in the region.

According to a press statement issued by the office of the Election Commission of India, "the commission, after considering a report from the UT administration as well as analyzing the ground situation prevailing in the said constituency, has decided under section 56 of Representation of People Act, 1951, to revise the date of the poll in the said Parliamentary constituency in respect of ongoing General Election to Lok Sabha, 2024 from May 7 (third phase) to May 25 (sixth phase)".

ICG, AIIMS hold medical camp at Lakshadweep islands



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) in collaboration with AIIMS New Delhi and support of the Union Territory (UT) administration conducted a two-day medical camp ending Tuesday in the remote islands Kavaratti and Androth of UT Lakshadweep. The camp engaged approximately 1,500 citizens at each island and provided free of cost medicines along with expert consultation, officials said here.

Dr M Srinivas, Director, AIIMS, Delhi headed the medical team which comprised of 15 specialist doctors from fields of Gynecology, Pediatrics, Neurology,

Dermatology, Orthopedic and more.

The medical camp focused on providing super-specialist medical coverage through consultation with domain experts. They also delivered basic life support (BLS) lectures to local medical professionals to enhance the standards of available medical infrastructure.

The camp was inaugurated by Dr M Srinivas in the presence of Inspector General Bhisham Sharma, Commander Coast Guard Region (West), Surgeon Commodore Diviya Gautam, VSM, Principal Director (Medical Services), CGHQ and Avanish Kumar, IAS, Health Secretary, UT administration.

NEET aspirant hangs himself in Kota days before third attempt

PNS ■ KOTA (RAJASTHAN)

A 20-year-old NEET aspirant allegedly hanged himself here days before appearing for his third attempt at cracking the exam. "Sorry papa, I couldn't do it this year as well," a note found in the room said. This is the ninth case of suspected suicide by a coaching student in Kota since January. The number of student suicides in the coaching hub stood at 26 in 2023. Rajasthan native Bharat Kumar Rajput was found hanging from the ceiling fan on Tuesday morning, police said.

They said a one-line suicide note was recovered from the room saying 'Sorry papa, me is saal bhi nahi kar paya' (Sorry papa, I couldn't do it this year as well). Rajput had taken the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) twice before and was scheduled to appear for his third attempt on May 5, Jawahar Nagar Sub Inspector Gopal Singh said.

The student lived in a paying guest (PG) room in Rajiv Gandhi Nagar and was preparing for the medical entrance exam for the past

one year. His nephew Rohit stayed with him and was also studying for the same exam, SI Singh said.

The medical aspirant allegedly committed suicide around 10.30 am on Tuesday when his nephew went outside. At around 11.15 am, when Rohit returned, he found the room was closed from inside so he peeped through a window and saw Bharat hanging from the ceiling fan with a bedsheet, the officer said.

Prima facie, it seems that the student took the extreme step as he was under stress of not performing well in his third attempt, however, the actual reason of death would be clear only after investigation, Singh said.

The body has been placed in the mortuary of MBS hospital for post-mortem, which will be conducted after arrival of his family members from their native Dholpur district, he added.

On Sunday, a NEET aspirant and Haryana native Sumit Panchal (20) also allegedly committed suicide by hanging from the ceiling fan in his hostel room. No note was recovered from the spot.

Minister orders probe into attempt to tamper with coal samples

PNS ■ PATIALA

The Minister for Power and PWD Harbhajan Singh ETO, ordered a departmental inquiry to investigate the role of PSPCL employees including private companies or persons regarding the attempt of tampering with coal samples at Guru Gobind Singh Super Thermal Plant Roop Nagar. The Minister said that anyone irrespective of position and post found involved in such activities will face a stern action and the government will not tolerate such activities.

The Minister informed that and FIR was lodged against six persons on 22.03.2024 under section 457, 380 of IPC at Roop Nagar. So far four individuals have been apprehended by the police in connection with the crime namely Piyush Kumar R/o Jhunia, Arvind Kumar R/o Jhunia, Varun Kumar R/o Phagwara & Pushpinder R/o Nuhan Colony.

The remaining two persons i.e. Kailash Kumar R/o Jhunia & Nakul Gupta R/o Delhi are yet to be apprehended

Modi attacks Congress over fake video

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Intensifying his attack against the Opposition INDIA bloc, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday ridiculed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for "selling fake videos" through his "mohabbat ki dukaan" and exhorted the voters to punish NCP chief Sharad Pawar for his "failure" to keep his 2009 poll promise of bringing water to Solapur district which continues water shortages.

On the second day of his election tour of Maharashtra where he addressed rallies at Madha in western Maharashtra, Dharashiv (Osmanabad) and Latur in Marathwada, Modi took a nasty dig at Rahul Gandhi said that "fake videos are

being sold in "mohabbat ki dukaan" and the people would shut these shops after the elections.

Alluding to catch phrase "nafrat ke bazaar me mohabbat ki dukan" used often by Rahul during his "Bharat Jodo Yatra" and "Bharat Jodi Nay Yatra", Modi said: "Modi is tirelessly working day and night to change your lives, while the opposition, the INDIA bloc, is using all their strength to change Modi instead. Those whose scams I've halted, will they not be furious with Modi? Will they not hurl abuses at him?"

"They (the Opposition leaders) are busy scaring you, sometimes in the name of democracy, sometimes in the name of the Constitution, sometimes in the name of reservation," Modi said

addressing rallies in Maharashtra," he said.

"Now they've even opened a shop for fake videos. Serious allegations have been made against the Congress party and its members for creating fake videos. I ask you, should the shops of those selling such lies be closed or not?" he asked, while addressing an election rally at Dharashiv which was previously known as Osmanabad.

Singling out Pawar for a vicious attack at Madha in western Maharashtra from where he had been elected to Lok Sabha in 2009, Modi claimed that the NCP chief had not done anything for drought-prone areas like Solapur - prone for farmers across the country when he was the Union Agriculture Minister.

Congress announces Raj Babbar from Gurugram, Anand Sharma from Kangra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

While the suspense over the Amethi and Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha seats mounted on Tuesday, Congress announced the candidature of actor turned politician and three time MP Raj Babbar as Lok Sabha candidate from Gurugram and former Union Minister Anand Sharma from Kangra in Himachal Pradesh.

The party also declared Mumbai north contestant Bhusan Patil as INDIA bloc member while Satpal

Raizada as Hamirpur candidate who will take on Union Minister Anurag Thakur.

Amid speculation that Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra would be fielded from the two constituencies, the Congress workers in Amethi on Tuesday held a sit-in, demanding that the party names a member of the Gandhi family as its candidate from the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency. Sources said Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is keen to contest from the Rae Bareilly seat and her candidature is likely to be announced soon.

Covishield cure comes with serious side...

From Page 1

More than 17 million people have received the vaccine in the United Kingdom and the European Union to date, with fewer than 40 cases of blood clots reported as of last week. In a statement AstraZeneca said, "Our sympathy goes out to anyone who has lost loved ones or reported health problems. Patient safety is our highest priority, and regulatory authorities have clear and stringent standards to ensure the safe use of all medicines,

including vaccines." TTS typically manifests with symptoms such as severe headaches, abdominal pain, leg swelling, shortness of breath, and neurological deficits. Diagnosis involves blood tests to assess platelet levels and imaging studies to detect blood clots.

Last year, a WHO report had said TTS emerged as a new adverse event following immunisation in individuals vaccinated with COVID-19 non-replicative adenovirus vector-based vaccines.

Amit Shah deepfake...

From Page 1

Congress claimed that the Delhi Police's summons to Revanth Reddy is yet another "nail in the coffin of free and fair elections", and asked whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi is afraid that the CM will "torpedo" his party's prospects.

Ahead of the prime minister's rallies in Telangana, Ramesh said why does the PM fear Chief Minister Revanth Reddy? "Where are the Central funds that had been promised to Telangana? Will the BJP ever establish the National Turmeric Board in Nizamabad?" Ramesh sought to know.

MEA...

From Page 1

Gupta, aged 52, found himself apprehended in the Czech Republic on June 30, 2023, following charges from the US Justice Department. The indictment detailed Gupta's agreement to pay \$100,000 for Pannun's assassination, with an initial payment of \$15,000 made on June 9, 2023.

India had staunchly denied the US allegations, stating that the so-called conspiracy to murder Pannun was "contrary to government policy". The government also constituted a high-level inquiry committee on November 18, 2023, to probe Pannun murder plot allegations.

He holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada. He has been designated as a terrorist by the Union home ministry under the anti-terror law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

On December 7, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in Parliament that India instituted an inquiry committee to look into the inputs received from the US in the case as the matter has a bearing on national security.

The allegations about the failed plot to kill Pannun came to fore weeks after the Canadian Prime Minister claimed in September of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on June 18 in British Columbia. India had strongly rejected the charges.

EC confirms voter...

From Page 1

Some other key States including Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu witnessed 61.11 per cent, 63.71 per cent, 67.75 per cent, 57.65 and 69.72 per cent polling respectively in the first phase.

In the second phase of polling, Manipur recorded the highest voter turnout at 84.85 per cent, while Uttar Pradesh recorded the lowest at 55.19 per cent. Some other key states including Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Kerala witnessed 62.71 per cent, 58.59 per cent, 65.03 per cent, 69.56 and 71.27 per cent polling respectively in the second phase.

Earlier in the day, the Congress, CPI(M) and the TMC questioned the Election Commission over delays in announcing the final voter turnout figures for the first two phases of the Lok Sabha polls, 11 days after the first round of polling on April 19.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said it is essential for the Election Commission of India (ECI) to be timely and transparent about all election-related data, and it should come out with the figures and make them public. "For the first time, even 11 days after the first phase of the polls and

four days after the second phase, the final voter turnout has not been published by the ECI. In the past, ECI used to publish the final voter turnout immediately after voting or within 24 hours. Only approximate polling figures are available on ECI's website. What accounts for this delay," he asked in a post on X. Ramesh said that additionally, the number of registered voters in each Lok Sabha constituency and the assembly constituencies included in that Lok Sabha constituency is also not available on the commission's website.

The website only shows the total number of voters in a state and the number of voters in each booth, he said. "It is essential for the Election Commission of India to be as timely and transparent about all election-related data," the Congress general secretary said. Echoing similar sentiments, Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Derek O'Brien in a post on X wrote, "Modi got the law changed in Parliament to get his own empire and destroy the Election Commission. Now, after two phases, the EC yet to disclose final polling data. Why the delay? The first two phases didn't go well, did they! And EC, why no press conference after every phase?"

Devender Yadav appointed interim chief of Delhi Congress

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Two days after Delhi Congress president Arvinder Singh Lovely resigned from the post citing internal conflicts, issues with the Aam Aadmi Party-Congress alliance and the fielding of 'outsider' candidates from Lok Sabha constituencies in the national capital, the Congress on Tuesday appointed Devender Yadav as the interim chief of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC). Currently serving as the Congress's Punjab in-charge, Yadav previously held the position of MLA, representing the Badli assembly constituency. Yadav's appointment comes as part of a leadership transition within the Delhi unit of the Congress party.

"Congress president (Mallikarjun Kharge) has appointed Devender Yadav as the interim president of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee with immediate effect," read a communiqué issued by Congress general secretary in-charge of the organisation KC Venugopal on Tuesday. Yadav will continue in his role as AICC in-charge for Punjab, the statement added.

Ten Naxalites killed in encounter in Chhattisgarh

PTI ■ NARAYANPUR/ RAIPUR,

Ten Naxalites including three women were killed in an encounter with security forces on the border of Narayanpur and Kanker districts of Chhattisgarh on Tuesday morning, state police said. This was a second major blow to the Naxalites within 15 days.

The site of Tuesday's encounter was 30 km south of Kalper village in Kanker where 29 Naxalites were killed in a gunfight with security forces on April 16, a senior police official said.

Two of the killed cadres were prima facie identified as Joganna and Vinay alias Ashok, both "divisional committee members" of Maoists, he said. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said his government was fighting strongly against Naxalism, while deputy CM and home minister Vijay Sharma termed the operation as a major success and also appealed to the Naxalites to come forward for talks and give up the path of violence.

The encounter took place around 6 am in the forest between Tekmeta and Kakur villages in Abhujmad area, a Naxalite stronghold, when a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxal operation.

Sex scandal plot...

From Page 1

Home Minister Amit Shah and other top BJP leaders questioned the Congress government in Karnataka as to why it did not take action against Prajwal when law and order is a state subject.

Shah asserted that the BJP will not tolerate any insult to women and said Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi is "questioning us (BJP) but I want to tell her that instead of asking Prime Minister Narendra Modi or me, she should ask her party's chief minister". "What is the Karnataka government

doing? Why is there no inquiry? We are in favour of a probe, and the JD(S) has also announced that action will be taken against Revanna," Shah said at a Press conference in Guwahati.

Shah said the issue regarding Revanna reported in the media "is very hurtful and cannot be tolerated in any way". "The BJP's stand is very clear; we will not tolerate any insult to 'matri aur nari shakti'," he asserted.

In a letter to Karnataka DGP, the NCW drew attention to the matter following the circulation of several explicit

video clips on social media platforms depicting Revanna allegedly engaged in acts of sexual abuse against multiple women.

The commission urged prompt and decisive action to apprehend the accused, who is reported to have fled the country. "Such events not only endanger women's safety but also foster a culture of disrespect and violence against them. We urge prompt and decisive action from the concerned Police Authority to swiftly apprehend the accused, who has fled the country," it said.

SC questions ED on timing of Kejriwal arrest

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Terming life and liberty as "exceedingly important", the Supreme Court on Tuesday questioned the Enforcement Directorate on the timing of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest ahead of the general elections in the excise policy-linked money laundering case.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta, which continued hearing on the Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest for the consecutive day, posed several queries to Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, appearing for the ED, and sought his reply on Friday.

"Life and liberty are exceedingly important. You can't deny that," the bench told Raju and sought his reply, saying, "the last question is with regard to the timing of the arrest, which they have pointed out, the timing of the arrest, soon before the general elections."

The bench also flagged the long time gap between initiation of adjudication proceedings in the case and the action of arrest, saying the section 8 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) provides a maximum limit of 365 days.

The apex court is likely to continue hearing on Kejriwal's plea on Friday as the two judges will be sitting in differ-

ent combinations from Wednesday.

It said, "Mr. Raju, we have some questions, which we would like you to answer, when you make your submissions. First is without there being any adjudicatory proceedings, can the ED initiate a criminal proceedings in view of several judgements of this court on PMLA." The bench said in this case there are no proceedings of attachments so far and if there are any such proceedings, then the ED will have to show how petitioner (Kejriwal) is connected to it.

Justice Khanna said the verdict on the bail plea of former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who is in custody in



the excise policy scam case, was divided into two parts – the first part was in favour of Sisodia and the second part was against him. "You (Raju) have to tell us which part of Sisodia verdict does the petitioner (Kejriwal) case lie," the bench said.

important question relates to ED's power of arrest as it is the reason why Kejriwal has repeatedly approached the court.

"Look, they have not openly stated but it is quite apparent why they are repeatedly coming up against the remand because what they believe is that the threshold of section 19 of PMLA casts an onus on the prosecution and not on the accused," he told Raju. Elaborating his question, Justice Khanna said that under section 19 of the PMLA, the threshold is fairly high whereas the onus shifts on the accused when he seeks bail under section 45 of the Act. The bench told Raju, "So, how

do we interpret it? Do we make the threshold much higher and ensure that the standard is the same as to find the person who is guilty but then we have to deal with benefit of doubt and other things?" It added that what is bothering the court is the time gap between the initiation of proceedings and the repeated complaints being filed because all this have consequences as PMLA provides for a maximum of 365 days.

At the outset, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Kejriwal, took the court through the statements of witnesses, approvers and accused in the case and said that only five statements had named the

Aam Aadmi Party chief. He pointed out that the ED was initially opposing the bail plea of accused arrested in the case but after they had named the Delhi chief minister, the probe agency chose to not oppose their bail plea.

On Monday, the top court questioned the non-appearance of Kejriwal before the ED despite repeated summonses for recording of statements, and asked if he can challenge the arrest in a money laundering case related to the excise policy scam on the ground of non-recording of his version. Kejriwal is currently lodged in the Tihar jail here under judicial custody after his arrest on March 21 in the case.

Court dismisses Sisodia bail plea

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi court on Tuesday dismissed the bail pleas of former Deputy Chief Minister and AAP leader Manish Sisodia in the corruption and money laundering cases lodged by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in relation to the alleged excise policy scam case. Special judge for CBI and ED, Kaveri Baweja, denied the relief, saying the stage was not right to grant the bail.

Now, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said Sisodia will approach the high court against a Rouse Avenue court's Tuesday order, refusing bail to him in the alleged excise policy scam case.

The court had reserved the order after hearing arguments from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) as well as the counsel appear-



ing for Sisodia. The CBI as well as the ED had alleged that irregularities were committed while modifying the Delhi Excise Policy, undue favours were extended to the licence holders, licence fee was waived or reduced and licences were extended without the competent authority's approval. The beneficiaries allegedly diverted "illegal" gains to the accused officials and made false entries in their books of account to evade detection, the probe agencies have alleged. Sisodia was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on February 26, 2023 for his alleged role in the "scam".

Bansuri files nomination for New Delhi LS seat

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

BJP candidate Bansuri Swaraj filed her nomination on Tuesday for the New Delhi seat ahead of the polls for Lok Sabha 2024 elections draped in her mother former Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj's saree in the presence of Union Minister Sardar Hardeep Puri and her father former Governor of Mizoram Swaraj Kaushal. She also offered prayers to Lord Ram and performed a puja before heading to file nominations.

One witnessed a large crowd of women supporters in her roadshow ahead of the general election polls slated to be held in the national capital on May 25. Party workers carrying flags bearing images of Lord Ram and Prime Minister Narendra Modi celebrated the occasion by dancing to the beat of dhols and raising victory slogans. Three factors work in Bansuri's favour-Modi, Swaraj and nari shakti (women power).

Swaraj held a grand roadshow from Tuglaq road to the Jamnagar House where she filed her nomination. In her roadshow, one could see supporters and party workers raise slogans including 'Kyo pade ho chakar ne, koi nahi hai takkar me' and 'abki bar 400 par'.

Talking to *The Pioneer*, supporters, especially women, attributed the reason behind their support and vote to the saffron party's candidate as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's face and work.

An 80 year old woman voter said that Bansuri represents 'nari shakti', which is her reason to vote for her and walk in the roadshow in the scorching sun. Additionally, supporters also see her mother Former Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj's reflection in her personality, making her more trustworthy to be elected given her mother's legacy.

After filing her nomination at the office of the district magistrate-cum-returning officer, Bansuri asserted that BJP will



sweep all seven states in the national capital and said, "This is a national election and BJP is loaded with self-confidence. PM Modi has done a lot of work; we are going among people with our performance report card."

Outside the office, one could witness an atmosphere of festivity with party workers and supporters enthusiastically raising slogans. Few also danced on the tunes of a band

being played outside while Bansuri was filing her nomination for the general elections.

The INDIA alliance candidate from the Aam Aadmi Party Somnath Bharti is contesting against Swaraj on the seat. Attacking the jailed Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, she said, "However, if we speak about Delhi, CM Arvind Kejriwal does politics of hatred and because of that he

has not let PM Modi's people welfare scheme be implemented in the National Capital like Ayushman Bharat. If people make me win then I am going to ensure that the people welfare scheme of PM Modi 'Ayushman Bharat' will be implemented in Delhi as well."

Party workers and supporters wore saffron clothes and waved flags bearing images of Lord Ram and Modi as Bansuri Swaraj made her way to file her nomination papers. The streets reverberated with slogans of "Phir ek bar Modi sarkar" and "Hamara neta kaise ho, Bansuri jaisa ho" as her roadshow passed, with both men and women participating in equal numbers.

Puri, while speaking to the media following the process, attacked the Congress on the issue of reservation and inheritance tax.

He said, "No one among us has said that we want to change the Constitution. As far as changing the Constitution is concerned, a false scenario is

being spread in this regard. They have tried to spread a false narrative. They have to pay the price. We are just at two-phase, polling at five phases is still to be conducted, and we will get '400 paar'. One of their professors Sam Pitroda said that they will bring an inheritance tax, but when he himself had to pay inheritance tax, they covered it up. Bansuri ji will have a great performance and victory."

Placards featuring images of Modi and Bansuri Swaraj were prominently displayed while some attendees wore t-shirts emblazoned with "Team Bansuri".

The roadshow, which started from Tughlak Lane, drew a large number of party workers, leading to traffic disruptions. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, who was also present for Bansuri's nomination filing, said, "The way workers are enthusiastic here, this shows that we are going to win all the seven seats in Delhi. Bansuri Swaraj will win the New Delhi Lok Sabha seat."

Kejriwal enjoying Tihar stay with luxury: Sukesh

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Alleged conman Sukesh Chandrasekhar, who is currently lodged in Mandoli jail, on Tuesday claimed that the jailed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is "enjoying his stay in Tihar jail with all luxury" and is crying foul to gain sympathy from people.

In his letter dated on Tuesday, Sukesh called Kejriwal and AAP's claims of alleged ill treatment in jail "an Oscar winning performance". He alleged, "From last few days looking at your Drama and Oscar winning performances of acting by your Corrupt associates, Jail officials and also Bhabhi ji, I remembered the Rhymes I learnt when I was in Play School. But with a twist now, 'Kejriwal, Kejriwal', Yes papa...Eating 'Sugar', No papa... Telling lies, No papa... Fooling people, No papa... Diet chart



exposed, Ha, Ha, Ha..."

Further Sukesh, who is accused in a Rs 200 crore cheating case involving the wife of a former Fortis Healthcare promoter, refuted the claims by Kejriwal and AAP leaders and said, "You are absolutely enjoying your stay in tihar club, with all 'luxury', it is just that you and

but, how vome, when Sanjay was enjoying his stay in Tihar Club never Raised any such complaint. Hence that proves, he was well taken care of."

He said that the same goes for the Former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Former Delhi Minister Satyender Jain who according to him "continue with all luxury and strong control of the Tihar Club."

"Its very evident that Kejriwal, you and your puppet jail administration, is creating this perception drama, of you suffering, to garner sympathy votes from people and to fool the law of the land, to get medical bail," he alleged.

Stating that the public won't be fooled by the drama, he said, "Kejriwal, no sympathy will work, everyone knows your fooling, mark my words, you will get your Answer on June 4th, you will see how people will reject you and your Khattar Corrupt party AAP." Referring to Kejriwal's

wife as 'Bhabhi', he advised "to not make a fool out of her, by saying he is innocent, and he along with his associates will be convicted soon"

He stated that he will provide more evidences to the investigative agencies and will turn an approved in the case against him.

"Lastly Kejriwal ji, it's not just this one 'excise Case'. Many more of your corruption will be exposed, And I assure I won't disappoint you, I will give all the evidence to the agencies as provided and further also turn approver against you and your associates," he said, adding that despite AAP chief's pressure he will expose Kejriwal.

"How can I forget to thank you and Satyender Jain, for constantly threatening and pressurising me, through your jail administration harder and harder everyday. So "Thank you" but no matter what I will expose all of you, AAP Syndicate," he said.

Raghav Chadha in UK for eye treatment, says Bharadwaj

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) grapples with its worst political crisis since its inception, one of its popular leaders and Rajya Sabha member, Raghav Chadha, is nowhere to be seen. The question many within and outside AAP are asking now is — where is Raghav Chadha? Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Tuesday attributed his absence during the crucial election period to a critical eye complication.

Bharadwaj said Chadha might have lost his eyesight and is in the UK for treatment. He is in the UK; there was a complication in his eyes and I was told that it was quite critical that he might have lost his eyesight as well. He has gone there to get treatment. I have my best wishes with him. He will be back soon in good health and will join the campaign," the minis-



ter said.

Chadha has been conspicuous by his absence at a time when AAP talking heads are battling a political storm triggered by party supremo and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the liquor policy case on March 21.

Chadha, seen as close to Kejriwal, was last seen in India on March 2 when he visited the residence of AAP legislator Sahiram Pehalwan to congratulate him after his name was announced as a Lok Sabha candidate from South Delhi — the same seat from which Chadha

had unsuccessfully contested against the BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri in 2019.

Chadha was on a trip to the UK with his wife Parineeti Chopra, a Bollywood actor, on the day of Kejriwal's arrest. He released a video clip on his social media account in which he expressed support for Kejriwal, hours after his arrest, and attacked the ruling BJP at the Centre.

While Chopra has returned to India and was spotted in promotion events of one of her recently released movies earlier this month, Chadha's whereabouts seem to be a mystery even for many of his party colleagues. The delay in his return has fuelled speculation about his political future. According to his social media posts, Chadha reached London on March 8, primarily for a vitrectomy — an eye surgery that's supposed to treat problems related to retina and the vitreous.

NDMC deploys anti smog guns to fight air pollution

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To mitigate air pollution in the New Delhi area, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has deployed a fleet of 08 anti smog gun on all its avenue roads on hiring basis. The move will help to strengthen anti-pollution efforts and make the environment more livable in the NDMC area. These Smog Guns are GPS enabled and will be operating on main roads of the New Delhi area from 0800 hrs to 1600 hrs. These smog guns covered 360 km roads, lanes on a per day basis.

The hiring cost of these guns amounts to 2.87 crore for a two-year period. Each gun is operated by a team comprising one HMV driver, one operator, and one helper.

The guns are mounted on CNG-operated trucks with a water tank capacity of 7000 liters, they have horizontal water throwing distance of 30 meters, 330-degree rotation in the horizontal plane, and 60-degree tilting in the vertical plane, they are also capable of atomizing water droplets rang-



ing from 10 to 30 microns through 24 stainless steel nozzles.

Despite their performance, these Smog Guns maintain an eco-friendly approach with a water consumption of 1500 liters per hour each. Additionally, they serve as a platform for displaying environmental awareness messages. Earlier NDMC has already deployed Anti-Smog Gun mounted on 28 Ton CNG truck chassis of Tata make with the largest water tank capacity of 17000 liter for mitigating air pollution. Due to large water tank capacity, this anti-smog gun has a continuous runtime

of three hours non-stop water supplying for spray reducing dead mileage.

Furthermore, a mist spray machine has been procured and deployed at Pt. Pant Marg in the NDMC area. Additionally, four Mechanical Road Sweepers (MRS) work in two shifts to deep clean road channels covering approximately 350 kilometers of roads daily.

18 water tankers/trolleys ranging from 5000 to 10000 liters have been deployed for spraying STP-treated water on trees and shrubs along main roads to ensure the maintenance of greenery.

Provide protection to transgenders filing LS nominations: Court to cops

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that it is the duty of the State to safeguard and enforce rights guaranteed to transgenders under the Constitution, the Delhi High Court has directed the Delhi police to provide necessary security to a person from the transgender community intending to file nomination for the Lok Sabha elections.

The court order came after the petitioner Rajan Singh, who intended to file his nomination from South Delhi Parliamentary Constituency with the support of Rashtriya Bahujan Congress Party, had alleged there was a "life threatening attack" earlier this month at his office in Badarpur. He had sought directions for appropriate security and protection of his fundamental rights.

After the order, Rajan Singh expressed his gratitude at the Court's dedication to upholding constitutional principles and safeguarding the rights of all citizens, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. He said, this ruling not



only ensures his safety but also reinforces the importance of equality and inclusivity in the electoral process.

Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta had observed that Article 14 of the Constitution ensures equality even for participation in the election process and any discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity impairs this provision.

"Article 14 of the Constitution of India ensures equal protection of laws in all spheres of State activity, including participation in the election process. Any discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity impairs the equality before law and violates the Article 14 of the Constitution of India. The duty lies on the State for the purpose

of safeguarding and enforcing the rights of the transgenders guaranteed under the Constitution," the court said in its order on April 29.

"Petition is disposed of with directions to DCP (South) to provide necessary security to the petitioner for filling up the nomination form from South Delhi Parliamentary Constituency. SHO concerned shall also share his mobile number with the petitioner for aforesaid purpose," the court ordered.

Rajan Singh is poised to file his nomination soon in a constituency where established political figures like Ramvir Singh Bidhuri of the BJP and Sahiram Pehalwan of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) are also contenders. Despite the competitive electoral landscape, Singh's primary motivation for entering the race is to amplify the voices of the transgender community. Regardless of the election's outcome, the 25-year-old is committed to advocating for greater visibility and representation for transgender individuals in the political sphere, he said.

AUD launches new MA course



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Dr B R Ambedkar University (AUD) has launched a new MA programme in public policy and governance with 60 seats in the current academic session, according to its Vice Chancellor Professor Anu Singh Lather here on Tuesday. The admission brochure of the University for undergraduate and postgraduate admissions for the academic year 2024-25 was also launched and the Vice Chancellor said Ambedkar University organises admissions on the basis of NTA CUET.

This time around 200 universities are on the CUET portal, yet despite being a state uni-

versity, AUD has been ranked 7th among the top ten universities across the country in NTA CUET. The Vice Chancellor further shared that about 4 lakh students have chosen to apply for AUD in PG and UG on the CUET portal. She also informed that in the present session, 18 undergraduate and 27 postgraduate programs are available for admission in AUD.

In the ongoing academic session, admissions will be made on a total of 2,595 seats in all these programs, out of which 1,141 are UG and 1454 will be seats available for PG. Admissions for PhD (23 programmes) will also be done in June which will be done on the basis of CUET only.

BJP claims its performance in South India will be historic

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday claimed that its performance in South India, a region where it has traditionally struggled outside Karnataka, will be historic and accused the Congress of running a campaign full of blatant lies and misinformation.

BJP leader and Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar, who contested against incumbent MP and Congress candidate Shashi Tharoor from Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala, said history will be made on June 4 when votes for the Lok Sabha polls are counted. The BJP has performed extremely strongly in Kerala and Tamil Nadu and its overall tally from south India will be closer to 60 this time, he claimed.

The region has a total of 131 Lok Sabha seats. The BJP had won 29, including 25 in Karnataka, of those in 2019, drawing a blank in Andhra



Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Polling in Kerala and Tamil Nadu are over.

The BJP is in a tight fight in nine seats in Kerala and people will witness a dramatic change in the political landscape in Tamil Nadu as it will emerge as a principal second pole there, he said.

He also accused the Congress of running a campaign full of blatant lies, misinformation, deepfake videos and bizarre economic proposals. It has become so desperate that it is misleading voters that the BJP will change the Constitution, he said. Such a claim has come from a party that has

amended the Constitution the maximum number of times, he added.

Amid police action by several BJP-ruled states besides the Delhi Police, which reports to the Centre, in the case of morphed videos of Home Minister Amit Shah to give the impression he promised to end the reservation for disadvantaged Hindu communities, the Union minister blamed the Congress for it and said the party is doing what Prime Minister Narendra Modi had warned about deepfakes long ago. Law has stringent provisions against promoting deepfakes, he said.

Admiral Dinesh Tripathi takes charge as new Navy chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy should remain operationally ready at all times to deter potential adversaries at sea, Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi said on Tuesday shortly after taking charge as the 26th chief of the Naval Staff.

Tripathi, who is a communication and electronic warfare specialist, assumed charge of the force following the retirement of incumbent R Hari Kumar. The new chief took charge of the Navy at a time various strategic waterways, including the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, are witnessing security challenges, especially in view of Houthi militants targeting various merchant ships in the region.

“Over the years, our Navy has evolved into a combat-ready, cohesive, credible and future-proof force,” he told reporters. “The existing and emerging challenges in the maritime domain mandate that the Indian Navy should remain operationally ready at all times to deter potential adversaries at sea in peace and to win war at and from the sea when asked



to do so,” he said. “This will remain my singular focus and endeavour,” Tripathi added.

The new Navy chief also said boosting the Navy’s ongoing efforts to enhance self-reliance will be one of his priorities. “I will also strengthen the ongoing efforts of the Indian Navy towards ‘Aatamnirbharta’, towards introducing new technologies and becoming an important pillar of national

development towards our collective quest for a ‘Viksit Bharat’ (developed India),” he said.

Before taking charge, Admiral Tripathi paid tributes to the fallen heroes at the National War Memorial. He was also accorded a ceremonial guard of honour at the lawns of the South Block at the Raisina Hills here. He took blessings from his mother Rajni Tripathi

before taking charge as the chief of the Indian Navy.

An alumnus of the Sainik School Rewa, Admiral Tripathi was serving as the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff before taking the reins of the force. Born on May 15, 1964, Admiral Tripathi was commissioned into the executive branch of the Indian Navy on July 1, 1985. A communication and elec-

tronic warfare specialist, he has had a long and distinguished service spanning nearly 39 years.

Prior to taking over as Vice Chief of Navy, he had served as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command.

Admiral Tripathi has commanded Indian Naval Ships Vinash, Kirch and Trishul. He has also held various important operational and staff appointments which include fleet operations officer of the Western Fleet, director of naval operations, principal director, network centric operations and principal director, naval plans. As Rear Admiral, he served as flag officer commanding of the eastern fleet. He also served as Commandant of the prestigious Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala.

An alumnus of National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, Admiral Tripathi has undergone courses at the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Naval Higher Command Course, Karanja and Naval Command College in the United States.

Admiral Hari Kumar retired following superannuation after a career spanning four decades.

Congress slams Modi for ignoring farmers plight in Marathwada

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of ignoring the plight of farmers in Marathwada, and also asked about his vision to address water scarcity in that region.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh posed questions to the prime minister ahead of his rallies in Marathwada region of Maharashtra.

“Why has the PM ignored the plight of Marathwada’s farmers? What is the PM’s vision to address water scarcity in Marathwada? Why has the

export ban only been lifted on Gujarat’s white onions?” Ramesh said in a post on X.

Elaborating on what he said were “jumla” details, Ramesh said that in the first half of 2023, the Marathwada region accounted for the highest number of farmer suicides in Maharashtra.

“As many as 685 farmers took their own lives in Marathwada and the State Agriculture Minister’s home district, Beed, reported the highest number of deaths at 186. Now, after suffering from drought conditions for the last four months, the Marathwada region has been hit by unseasonal rains and hailstorms, causing severe

crop losses. The ruling BJP government has not declared this event a national disaster or announced any relief measures,” Ramesh said.

This is no surprise from a government that has also “failed” to care for the Godavari river, which is considered the lifeline of Marathwada, he said. “Although 88 crores were allocated for the cleaning of the river in 2022, there has been no tangible improvement in water quality. Similarly, Manjira river that passes through Latur has also been neglected,” he claimed.

“What are PM Modi and the BJP doing to protect Marathwada’s farmers from



drought and natural disasters? What is their vision to prevent farmer suicides?” he said.

Ramesh further said that more than 600 villages and 178 hamlets in Marathwada have

worst affected with drinking water reservoirs only at 19 per cent capacity, compared to 40 per cent last year,” he said. In Latur, water availability has come down to once in 15 days, he noted.

“Instead of trying to address this catastrophe, BJP leaders have shirked responsibility, played the blame game, and failed to address allegations of widespread corruption in the implementation of relief and support schemes,” Ramesh alleged. What is the PM’s vision to tackle water scarcity in Marathwada, he asked.

He also raised the issue that since December 2023, onion farmers in Maharashtra have

been reeling from the Modi government’s ban on onion exports.

“During the cultivation season, the state was hit with unsatisfactory rainfall and water crises, and most farmers were only able to produce 50 per cent of their usual crop. When onions were finally harvested, farmers were faced with an arbitrary export ban which led to devastatingly low sale prices,” Ramesh said. As a result, farmers have racked up significant losses in the last five months, he said.

“To add insult to injury, yesterday, the Modi Sarkar allowed the export of white onions which are primarily grown in

Gujarat. Maharashtra farmers, who primarily grow red onions, have been left out.

Can PM Modi explain why his government is playing favourites? Why have they so callously neglected Maharashtra’s onion farmers?” Ramesh said. The Congress Nyay Patra promises a stable, predictable import-export policy to prevent such catastrophic last-minute policies being imposed on farmers, he said.

“What is the Modi Sarkar’s vision to assure farmers of policy stability?” Ramesh said and asked the prime minister to break his “silence” on these issues.

Army Chief underlines importance of technology infusion in Armed forces

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Army chief General Manoj Pande said here on Tuesday the Indian Army is alive to the imperative of transformation, and it is with a progressive outlook, that it intends, to not only change, but to change at a good pace too.

The Army chief especially underlined the importance of “technology infusion” and “self-reliance” in the armed forces, saying both are distinct yet interconnected. Making this point while paying tributes to former Army Chief General K Sundarji, he also said the holistic transformation of the Indian Army “we put into effect two years ago, is part of our efforts to give shape to a modern, agile, adaptive, technology enabled and self-reliant future ready force.”

The 4th General Sundarji Memorial Lecture was organised by the Indian Army in



Manekshaw Centre to commemorate the legacy of one of India’s foremost military thinkers General K Sundarji. The lecture was conducted under the aegis of Mechanised Infantry Centre and School (MIC&S) and Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS). The event was attended by serving and retired officers of the three Services as well as literati and various think tanks. The lecture remembered the dynamic and visionary General K Sundarji, the 13th Chief of

the Army Staff, who is also fondly called as the ‘Father of the Mechanised Infantry Regiment’. General Manoj Pande delivered the keynote address and underscored the foresight of General Sundarji. He highlighted Sundarji’s vision in the fields of digitisation of the battlefield, Information Warfare, technology infusion, conventional strategies and force structure, reflected in his work ‘Vision 2100’.

The eminent speakers NN Vohra, former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, shared his experiences with General Sundarji and also expressed his thoughts on ‘Need for National Security Policy’ while Lieutenant General Subrata Saha (Retired), former Deputy Chief of Army Staff and Member National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) delivered a talk on, “Modernising India’s Armed Forces: Lessons from Gen K Sundarji”.

Manipur cops drove two Kuki Zomi women to mob: CBI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Manipur Police personnel allegedly drove the two women from the Kuki-Zomi community, who had sought refuge in their official gypsy, to a mob of around 1,000 Meiti rioters in Kangpokpi district, the CBI charge sheet has said.

The two women were subsequently stripped naked and paraded before being sexually assaulted during the ethnic violence in the state, the charge sheet added.

The women, one of whom was the wife of a Kargil war veteran, desperately asked the police personnel to drive them to a safe location but were allegedly told by them that “there was no key” (of the vehicle) and did not provide any help, the officials giving details of the charge sheet said. A video showing two women being paraded naked surrounded by a mob of men went viral last year in July, nearly two months after the



ethnic violence broke on May 4.

The CBI filed its charge sheet against six accused and a report against one Child in Conflict with the Law (CCL) before the Special Judge, CBI Court at Guwahati on October 16 last year.

It has alleged that the two women were running away

from a mob of around 900-1,000 persons carrying sophisticated weapons like AK rifles, SLR, INSAS and .303 rifles. The mob had forcefully entered their village in Kangpokpi district, about 68 km south of Saikul police station, it said.

The women, along with other victims, ran into the forest to

escape from the mob but were spotted by the rioters who had separated the victims. Some members of the mob told the women to reach the police vehicle parked on the roadside to seek help, officials in the know of the development said.

The two women managed to get inside the vehicle, in which two police personnel and the driver were sitting. Three to four personnel were outside the vehicle.

One of the male victims, who also managed to make his way inside the vehicle, kept pleading with the driver to drive them to a safe place but was told “there was no key”. The husband of one of the victims had served the Indian Army as a subedar of the Assam Regiment. The police also did not help the father of the man sitting in the vehicle from being assaulted by the mob, the CBI alleged.

Later, the driver of the police gypsy drove the vehicle towards a mob of around 1,000 people and stopped it in front of them. The victims

desperately asked the police personnel to drive them to safety, but no help was provided to them.

The mob had already killed the father of one of the male victims who was sitting in the gypsy along with the two women, the agency has said.

The violent mob came towards the gypsy when the police personnel fled from the scene, leaving the victims at the mercy of the crowd.

The rioters dragged the women out, stripped them of their clothes and paraded them naked before sexually assaulting them, the charge sheet has said.

The CBI has charge sheeted Hureim Herodas Meitei, who was nabbed by Manipur police in July, and five others, and a report has been filed against a juvenile.

The accused have been charged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including those pertaining to gang rape, murder, outraging the modesty of a woman and criminal conspiracy, the CBI has said.

Above normal rain predicted over South Asia in 2024

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Above-normal rainfall is expected during the 2024 southwest monsoon season over most parts of south Asia, the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum said on Tuesday.

The forecast follows the prediction of above-normal rain in the monsoon season in India on the back of favourable La Nina conditions, expected to set in by August-September.

“Above normal rainfall is most likely during the 2024 southwest monsoon season (June-September) over most parts of south Asia, except some areas over northern, eastern, and northeastern parts of the region, where below-normal rainfall is most likely,” the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF) said.

Above-normal maximum and minimum temperatures are predicted over most parts of south Asia during the season,



except a few areas over the southeastern part of the region where normal temperatures are most likely. This regional climate outlook for the 2024 southwest monsoon season has been developed by all nine National Meteorological and

Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of south Asia with support from international experts at the 28th session of SASCOF-28, conducted online.

The SASCOF said moderate El Nino conditions are prevailing at present. ENSO (El

Nino-Southern Oscillation) neutral conditions are expected in the first half of the monsoon season. Thereafter, La Nina conditions may set in by the second half.

El Nino conditions — periodic warming of surface waters in the central Pacific

Ocean — are associated with weaker monsoon winds and drier conditions in India.

La Nina conditions — the antithesis of El Nino — are the dominant factor in the likelihood of “above-normal” rainfall during the monsoon season, DS Pai, a senior scientist at the India Meteorological Department (IMD), told PTI. Positive Indian Ocean Dipole conditions, favourable for the Indian monsoon, are predicted in the later part of the season. Additionally, the snow cover in the northern hemisphere is low.

The northern hemisphere winter and spring snow cover extent generally have an inverse relationship with the subsequent southwest monsoon rainfall over south Asia. Earlier this month, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) said the seasonal rainfall in India will be on the higher side of ‘above-normal’ and pegged it at 106 per cent of the long-period average (87 cm).

Rahul urges party candidates to carry Constitution copy during nominations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday urged all party candidates to carry a copy of the Constitution with them during nominations, public meetings and outreach programmes, and tell the people that as long as the Congress is there, let alone the BJP, no power in the world can snatch away the Constitution.

The former Congress chief has been carrying a copy of the Constitution in his public meetings. He did so in Gujarat’s Patan and Chhattisgarh’s Bilaspur on Monday and in Madhya Pradesh’s Bhind on Tuesday. “A boon for the poor, respect for the deprived and pride of every citizen — our Constitution! I request all Congress candidates and leaders to keep the sacred



Constitution with them during nominations, meetings, speeches and public outreach,” Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X. “Announce it in every village and every street that as long as the Congress is there, let alone BJP, no power in the world can snatch away the Constitution of India,” the former Congress chief said.

In a post in Hindi on X, Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said, “Even today, Rahul Gandhi reached

the public meeting in Madhya Pradesh with Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar’s Constitution. This election is between those who save the Constitution and those who destroy it.”

“This is the most important election of our lifetime,” Ramesh added. The Congress has been alleging that the BJP wants “more than 400 seats” so that it can amend the Constitution and fulfil the “conspiracy” of the RSS to abolish reservation.



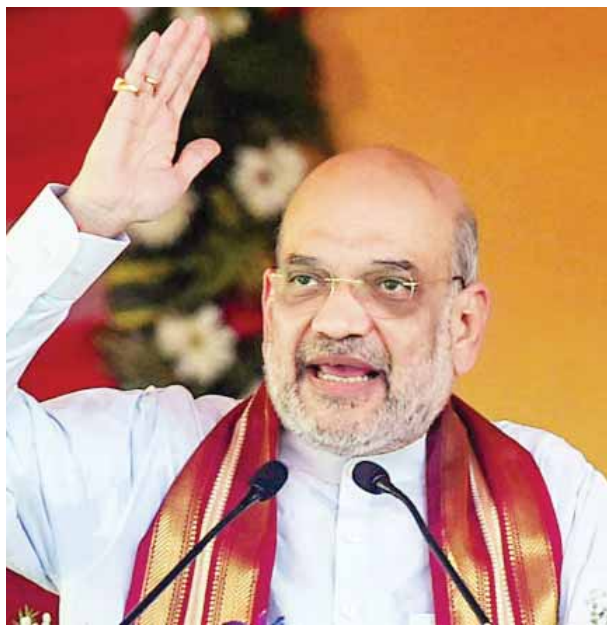
Congress spreading lies about BJP changing Constitution: Shah

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday alleged the Congress was spreading lies that the BJP intends to change the constitution and end reservations if it returns to power for a third term. Shah also said the BJP is heading towards its goal of 400-plus Lok Sabha seats with the blessings and support of people.

"The Congress is spreading lies about the saffron party changing the constitution and ending reservations... We do not see voters as minority or majority; the BJP will win 12 of the 14 Lok Sabha seats in Assam," he told a press conference here.

The senior BJP leader slammed the Congress for practising the "politics of appeasement since the very beginning", and said it wants to save "the little of what is remaining of their support base".



"The BJP does not believe in reservations on the basis of religion... We are also in favour of implementing the Uniform Civil Code across the

country and ensure that there is one law for people of all religions," the home minister said. In a secular country, it is not

right to have laws based on religion, and this is against the spirit of the constitution, Shah said.

The BJP condemns the Congress' promise to bring back the Muslim Personal Law as mentioned in its manifesto, he said.

Commenting on the "fake video" of Shah on reservations that was circulated on social media platforms, he said all kinds of methods were being employed by the opposition to misguide people.

A Congress functionary of Assam was arrested on Monday for allegedly circulating the video, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said.

To a question, the home minister asserted that the BJP was getting a "very good response" from voters in the southern states.

Shah had arrived here on Monday evening and held a roadshow for the party's Guwahati candidate Bijuli Kalita Medhi.

Haryana to rope in musical bands to encourage young voters

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana will rope in musical bands to play election-theme songs for encouraging young voters to exercise their franchise, Chief Electoral Officer Anurag Agarwal said.

These bands will encourage people to cast their vote on the day of polling and also promote awareness and education regarding the election, Agarwal told PTI. "Soon we will be doing the first band play, hopefully in Panchkula. The band will perform and election-theme music will be played," he said.

Later, these bands will be engaged districts having a higher percentage of young voters, he said.

Notably, 1,99,81,982 voters across the state are eligible to cast their votes when polling will be held on May 25 in 10 Lok Sabha constituencies of the state in the sixth phase of general elections.

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath declared on Tuesday that people would not accept the agenda of "INDI alliance" to grant reservation to a specific religious group, thereby jeopardising the constitutional framework and encroaching upon the reservation meant for the backward and scheduled caste.

Interacting with the media at the Goraknath temple complex, the chief minister underscored, "The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) staunchly opposes any form of reservation based on religion because the common people have borne the brunt of partition of the country on the basis of religion. The BJP firmly supports reservation benefits for SC/ST and OBC communities."

"The history of the Congress, Samajwadi Party, and their associates within the INDI

People will not accept those giving quota to specific religious group: Yogi

alliance is well-known to all. The Congress has a track record of undermining Baba Saheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar's Constitution. Since its adoption in 1950, the Congress persistently attempted to manipulate the Constitution for its own ends, often disregarding fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression. Governance is meant for the people, and public sentiments ought to be honoured, a principle the Congress failed to grasp," he added.

Yogi highlighted that the people have not forgotten the Emergency period. He likened the incident to strangulating the Constitution of the country. "Along with this, the people

of the country also remember the sins that the Congress committed during the UPA government. The SP and BSP were allies of the Congress at that time," he added.

Yogi alleged that the Congress had tried to deprive the SC/ST and OBCs of their rights through initiatives like the Justice Ranganath Mishra and Sachar committees, engaging in actions contrary to the constitution across the country. Subsequently, the Congress maliciously attempted to introduce reservations based on religion.

He continued, "The ulterior

motive of the then Congress government was to cut 6 per cent of the 27 per cent reservation meant for OBC and give it to a community as part of its appeasement politics. Similarly, through the Sachar Committee, efforts were made to include certain Muslim castes by encroaching upon the reservations allocated for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes."

The chief minister emphasised that the strong opposition from the Bharatiya Janata Party thwarted the intentions of the then Congress government.

"Otherwise, within the same UPA government, the Congress would have endeavoured to undermine OBC and SC-ST reservations by introducing religion-based reservations nationwide," he pointed out.

Yogi said that the Congress has already initiated religion-based reservations in Karnataka by infringing upon the OBC reservation. "The Election Commission has also sought a report from the Karnataka government regarding this issue," he added. Yogi said that the BJP fully respects Baba Saheb Dr Ambedkar and all the framers of the Constitution.

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE

Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

S. No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
1	83245023A	Endoscopic Spine System as per pdf attached	1	27.05.2024

NOTE-1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained.

Tender Notice No.: 83245023A/MD/Part-IV Date: 30.04.2024 1231/24

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005

PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation

This is to bring to your notice that **DILIP BHATNAGAR / MINNI BHATNAGAR** (borrowers) has availed Home loan facility under agreement number **LBND00002953098** located at **FLAT NO. 101, 1ST FLOOR BLOCK-B ANTRIKSH VALLEY PLOT NO GH 15D SECTOR-1 GREATER NOIDA**. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement. The Bank has informed the same to the borrower through letter dated **April 18, 2024**, informing that **DILIGENT BUILDERS PVT. LTD.** has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication. Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder.

Dated: May 01, 2024
Place: Delhi/ NCR

For ICICI Bank Limited
Sd-

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005

PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation

This is to bring to your notice that **PRIYANK ASHOK KUMAR SHAH / LAXITA KUMARI SANGHVI** (borrowers) has availed Home loan facility under agreement number **LBGHZ00003427857** located at **FLAT NO-1907, 19TH FLOOR, TOWER-A, ANTRIKSH VALLEY, PLOT NO GH-15D, SECTOR-1, GREATER NOIDA, NOIDA, UTTAR PRADESH**. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement. The Bank has informed the same to the borrower through letter dated **April 18, 2024**, informing that **DILIGENT BUILDERS PVT. LTD.** has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication. Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder.

Dated: May 01, 2024
Place: Delhi/ NCR

For ICICI Bank Limited
Sd-

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005

PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation

This is to bring to your notice that **SUMAN / ARUN KUMAR** (borrower/s) has availed Home loan facility under agreement number **LBDEL00003202527** located at **FLAT NO. 1805, 18TH FLOOR, TOWER-A, ANTRIKSH VALLEY PLOT NO. GH-15D SECTOR-1 GREATER NOIDA, NOIDA, UTTAR PRADESH- 201307**. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement. The Bank has informed the same to the borrower through letter dated **April 18, 2024**, informing that **DILIGENT BUILDERS PVT. LTD.** has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication. Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder.

Dated: May 01, 2024
Place: Delhi/ NCR

For ICICI Bank Limited
Sd-

Lost & Found

I, Satish Kumar Aggarwal S/o Shri Tiak Raj Aggarwal Resident of B-39, Preet Vihar, Delhi-110092 have to inform that I have lost/ misplaced my all original previous documents / chain in respect of property No B-39, Preet Vihar, Delhi-110092. I have also filed a complaint in respect of lost/ misplaced of above said documents Vide SO No - 430/2014 and LR No-1673747/2024 dated 25-04-2024.

Satish Kumar Aggarwal

PUBLIC NOTICE

MY Clients, Dhruv Singh Chauhan and SMT. Kamlesh Chauhan, R/o Friends Enclave, Near It Park, Sahasradhara Road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, have debarred their daughter, Khushboo R/o H. No. 12, E Block, Krishna Nagar, Delhi-110051 from all their movable and immovable property and severed all their relations with her due to her misbehaviour. My clients will not be liable for any of her act or transaction.

A K TIWARI ADVOCATE.

Urgently Required

Office space around 1000 Sq. Feet on ground floor in the Vicinity of Guru Ravi Das Road, Kalkaji Extension, New Delhi on lease. Interested parties may submit their proposal within 7 days at following email ID.

hr@jamiacoopbank.com

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Surender Kumar S/o Bharam Pal Singh R/o 5572, Rajgar Pura, Gali No.75, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 have changed my Son's name Prince to Prince Gautam for all future purposes.

PD(394)A

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all concerned that my client Sh. Khushi Ram Yadav S/o. Late Sh. Vijay Singh R/o. G-126, Ground Floor, Gazipur Village, Delhi-110096, has debarred and disowned his son Nitin Yadav, his wife Shikha Yadav and his daughters namely Angel, Kashi, all R/o. G-126, First Floor, Gazipur Village, Delhi-110096, from his all movable and immovable properties and severed all kind of relations with them due to their complete disobedience, disrespect, mistreatment, humiliation and cruel behaviour and undesirable activities and even out of control of my client they reside separately, at first floor; they used to subjecting mentally and physically torturing and falsely accusing to my client. Hence my client has duly disowned them through this public notice and my client will not be responsible and liable for any acts, deeds on his part as above said person in any manner, if anybody deals with them shall do his own cost, risk and consequences.

SOMDUIT GUPTA (Advocate) Seat No.14, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110032

PUBLIC NOTICE

Please take notice that my clients, Sh. Ajay Gupta S/o Sh. Brij Kishore Gupta and Smt. Sunita Gupta W/o Sh. Ajay Gupta Both R/o A-3/38, Sec-8, Rohini, Delhi, have disowned/debarred their sons Kasis Gupta and Achin Gupta and their wives Vaishali Gupta and Manika Gupta respectively, from all their movable and immovable properties/assets due to their disrespectful behaviour towards my clients. They have no concern with my clients properties. Any person whomsoever dealing with them shall do entirely at his/her own costs, risk and consequences. My clients shall not be responsible for any criminal or civil wrongs of the above said persons in any manner whatsoever.

ANKIT GUPTA (Advocate) Ch.No. 332, Lawyers Chamber Building, Rohini Courts, Delhi-110085

EXTENSION OF SUMMER SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of rail passengers, Railways have decided to extend the periodicity of run of following Summer Special Trains as per details given below :-

Train No.	Train Name	Days of Run	Notified upto	Extended upto
09617	Rewari Jn.-Rohtak Jn. Unreserved Special	Daily	30.04.2024	01.05.2024 to 31.05.2024 (31 Trips)
09618	Rohtak Jn.-Rewari Jn. Unreserved Special	Daily	01.05.2024	02.05.2024 to 01.06.2024 (31 Trips)

Note : Rest Hold Goods.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table of other stations enroute and composition etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

Please join us on

RailMadad Helpline No. 139

Visit RailMadad Website- www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in

Download RailMadad app.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Your Convenience - Our Concern

Visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Shree Shyam Textiles, Anil Khajanchi, 112605000163, Represented By Proprietor Anil Khajanchi 6241, 1st Floor, Aggarwal Market, Mukerji Gali, Gandhi Nagar, New Delhi New Delhi-110031	Residential Property Free Hold Dda Built-Up Mig Flat No. 19, on First Floor, in Block-D, Pocket-2, Sector-15, Situated In The Layout Plan of Rohini Residential Scheme, Delhi-110085.	03/04/2024 Rs. 49,55,884.00/-	29-01-2024

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date : May 01, 2024
Place : Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Ratnesh, Pramesh, 164 Rajender Park, Extension Nanjoli, Delhi-110083 A/c- LBDEL00002377176	Flat No. 24, Ground Floor, Sector G-8, Pocket 3 Block B4 Narela Delhi-110090	19/02/2024 Rs. 6,36,353/-	02/08/2023
2.	Manoj Kumar, Neelam, R/o P-493, Pallawpuram Phase-II, Pargana Dourala Tehsil Sardhana District Meerut-250111 A/c- LBMRTO00005730383 / LBMRTO0005730384 / LBMRTO0005743114	House No C.L-98 (L.I.G.), Village Pallawpuram, Residential Colony Phase-I, Pargana Dourala, Tehsil Sardhana, District Meerut, Uttar Pradesh- 250001	02/03/2024 / Rs. 10,88,467/- / Rs. 11,15,374 /- / Rs. 1,03,880/-	06/12/2023
3.	Anupam Srivastava, Shashi Srivastava, House No. 173, 2nd Floor, Sant Nagar, Srinivaspuri South Delhi-110065 A/c- LBGRU00004878820	Plot No. A-34, Amaya Greens, Sector-3, Farrukh Nagar, Gurgaon, Haryana- 122001	13/03/2024 Rs. 17,21,434/-	04/12/2023
4.	Anupam Srivastava, Shashi Srivastava, House No. 173, 2nd Floor, Sant Nagar, Srinivaspuri South Delhi-110065 A/c- LBGRU00004878827	Plot No. A-33, Amaya Greens, Sector-3, Farrukh Nagar, Gurgaon, Haryana 122001	13/03/2024 Rs. 17,10,003/-	04/12/2023
5.	Brijesh Mani Tripathi, Vaidehi Tripathi, Village 712A/7, Ground Floor, Govind Puri, Kalkaji, Ahuja Sweet, New Delhi-110019 A/c- LBDEL00004640420	Flat No. B-1406, 14th Flr, Tower-B, Project Name Floridaa, Sector-82, Revenue Estate Of Village Bhatola, Tehsil Tigoan, District Faridabad, Haryana- 121001	13/03/2024 Rs. 19,91,018/-	04/12/2023
6.	Santosh Kumar, Archana, Plot No.107, Second Floor, Vikash Nagar, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059 A/c- LBDEL000005650784	D.D.A Built-up Free-Hold L.I.G. Flat Bearing No.902, On Ground Floor, Situated In Pocket-D, Lok Nayak Puram (Bakkarwala), New Delhi 110041	20/03/2024 Rs. 1,10,170/-	28/01/2024
7.	Mohit Kumar, Shweta Tyagi, 283 Kisolva, Bulandshahar-245403 A/c- LBMRTO0006125903/ LBMRTO0006234495	Flat No. 63-a On First Floor, Part of Khalsa No. 379 And 380, Situated At Shyam City, Fafrana Road, Modinagar Ghaziabad-201204	21/03/2024 Rs. 20,49,533/- / Rs. 1,12,128/-	27/01/2024
8.	Dharmendra Nagar, Poonam Nagar, A-11/19, Sector-18, Rohini, Delhi-110085 A/c- LBDEL00001970432	Property No. 179, Block E, Vide Allotment No. B-011-0159, Situated At Sector Beta-1, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar Industrial Development Area, Greater Noida, Noida Uttar Pradesh 201301	26/03/2024 Rs. 26,03,824/-	09/07/2023
9.	Om Prakash Batra, Mamta Batra, Chanchal Kanta Batra, House No.da-371, Second Floor, Sheesh Mahal Apartment, Shalimar Bagh, New Delhi-110088 A/c- LBDEL00003957237 / LBDEL00005383999 / LBDEL00003957157	Free Hold D.D.A. Built Flat No.371, Second Floor, Under Mig Category, Pocket-A, Sector-D, Situated At Shalimar Bagh, Delhi-110088	30/03/2024 Rs. 13,59,558.5/- / Rs. 3,11,021/- / Rs. 37,27,253/-	03/01/2024
10.	Chirag Singhal, Mintu Singhal, Lila Rani, 4547, Gali No. 12, Jai Mata Market, Tri Nagar, Delhi-110035 A/c- LBDEL00005472662	Property Bearing No.301, Second Floor, Without Rooftop Rights, Block-d, Situated In The Layout Plan Of Prashant Vihar Residential Scheme, (alongwith The Proportionate 1/4 Free-hold Rights Of The Land Under The Said Property) Delhi 110085	30/03/2024 Rs. 55,09,282/-	06/01/2024
11.	Manoj Kumar, Asha Devi, Ground Floor, Guranank Building, Chutia Ranchi, Ali Mandir, Near Hostel Chuta Ranchi, Jharkhand, Ranchi- 834001 A/c- LBDEL00005440452	Flat No-2174, 17th Floor, Tower 2, Crsclubmisi, Situated At Gh-11A, Sector-1, Greater Noida West, Uttar Pradesh, 201307	30/03/2024 Rs. 44,06,642.58/-	03/01/2024
12.	Manoj Priyadarshi, Pallavi Jaiswal, Flat F-108, Katarwa Sarai, New Delhi-110016 A/c- LBDEL00001907069	Flat No-0905, 9th Floor, Tower-G-1, Unihomes Ph-I Situated At Plot No. Ghp-0001, Sector-117, Noida, Uttar Pradesh.	30/03/2024 Rs. 27,26,171/-	08/01/2024
13.	Sanjay Kumar, Archana Kumar, Neo Nilika Projects Private Limited, House No. 244/12, 3rd Floor, Gali No.3, School Block Mandawali, New Delhi-110092 A/c- LBGHZ00003191006 / LBGHZ00003106040	Flat No 2103, 21st Floor, Tower A-8, Saviour Greenliss, Situated At Plot No. GH-11, Crossing Republic, NH-24, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh- 201001	30/03/2024 / Rs. 3,86,003.86/- / Rs. 39,61,069.87/-	03/01/2024
14.	Anchal, Chandrakanta, Manish Kumar, C-117 Hari Nagar, Vistar Part 2, Badarpur Jaitpur, South Delhi, Delhi-110044 A/c- LBDEL00005153250	Flat No. 4-402, On The 4th Floor, Tower 4, Adore Samridhi, Sector-89, Faridabad Haryana 121001	02/04/2024 Rs. 18,59,722/-	11/01/2024
15.	Minni Tiwari, Sanjay Kumar Tiwari, Vivek Tiwari, Flat No.19h, Pocket-4, E.H.S. Flat Mayur Vihar, Phase-3, Delhi-110096 A/c- LBDEL00003876309	Flat No. 147, 1st Floor, New LIG Flats, Village Kondli Gharoli, Mayur Vihar, Phase-3, Delhi-110096	02/04/2024 Rs. 15,88,929/-	03/01/2024
16.	Shadab Ahmad, Zebnees Ahmad, RZ, 2076, 3rd Floor, RZ, 2076, 3rd Floor, Kalkaji South, Delhi-110019 A/c- LBDEL00006289923 / LBDEL0000629447	DDA Janta Flat No. 615 and 619 On Second Floor, In Block-B, Pocket 11, Situated At Jasola Metro, New Delhi-110025	02/04/2024 Rs. 25,17,489/- / Rs. 49,397/-	03/01/2024
17.	Seema Baweja, Deepak Baweja, F-96, 1st Floor, Sudarshan Park, Moti Nagar, New Delhi, Delhi-110015 A/c- LBDEL00001296676 / LBDEL00001282076	Property Bearing No. 5/37-a, 1st Floor (without Roof Rights), Moti Nagar, New Delhi, Delhi 110015	02/04/2024 Rs. 35,306/- / Rs. 1,16,364/-	07/12/2023
18.	Narayan Singh Mehra, Surendra Singh, Shanti Devi, Flat No. 527, Pocket-7, D D A Flat, Dwarka Park, Nasir Pur, West Delhi, New Delhi-110045 A/c- LBDEL0000457200/ LBDEL00004554010	Dda Janta Flat No-527, 3rd Floor, Cat-A, Pocket-7, Phase-1, Nasirpur, Dwarka, Delhi-110045	04/04/2024 Rs. 84,924/- / Rs. 5,11,464/-	04/12/2023
19.	Satish Kumar Juneja, Jagdish Lal, Manoj Kumar, R/o 309 Dda Flats, New Ranjit Nagar, West Delhi, Opposite Mother Dairy, New Delhi-110008 A/c- LBDEL00002387203	Flat No 50, 2nd Floor, L.I.G. Block C7, Pocket-3, Sector G-8, Narela, Delhi-110040	04/04/2024 Rs. 3,72,536.8/-	03/01/2024
20.	Suman Jain, Rajesh Jain Huf, Rajesh Jain, Anshul Jain, Flat No.E-304, Btp Resort Nagar Park, Sector-75, Faridabad- 121004 A/c- LBFD800002441050	Plot Bearing No.R1-02, Block-R, Situated At Parklands, Sector-75, Faridabad, Haryana- 121001	04/04/2024 Rs. 58,42,760.26/-	03/01/2024
21.	Balbir Singh, Param Jeet Kaur, Plot No-1, Rajinder Nagar Industrial Area, Mohan Nagar, Ghaziabad-201007 A/c- LBND000002375685	Flat No. Am0A205A07, 5th Floor, Tower A2, Aman-III, Jaypee Greens Sport City East, Greater Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh- 201007	04/04/2024 Rs. 3,75,306/-	03/01/2024
22.	Satbeer Singh, Suman, House No. 243, Gali No.5, Jagatpur Village Burari, Delhi-110084 A/c- LBDEL00002906542	Shop No. DgJ033, Ground Floor, Plot No-01b, Mayur Palace District Centre, Dlf The Galleria, Mayur Vihar Phase-1, Delhi-110091	04/04/2024 Rs. 47,46,029/-	01/01/2024
23.	Shahina Paryez, Pervez Khan, Shop No-36-D, Shjra Sunita, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad-201010 A/c- LBND00002006482	Apartment No. BS203D0302, Buddh Circuit Studios-II, Tower-3, Jaypee Greens Sport City East, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, 201301	04/04/2024 Rs. 6,13,595/-	08/01/2024
24.	Tarun Chopra, Ramesh Kumar Chopra, Ginni Chopra, Mahadevan & Co, R/o G-4068, Gaur Green City, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, Akbarpur, Ghaziabad- 201010 A/c- LBDEL00002031620	Flat No A-001, Upper Ground Floor, (without Roof Rights), Tower-a, Type Iv, Situated At Residential Group Housing Complex, Plot No. C1gh-3, Vaibhav Khand, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201001	04/04/2024 Rs. 5,53,938/-	08/01/2024
25.	Deepak Agarwal, Khushi Agarwal, R/o B-592 Trans, Yamuna Colony, Agra-282006 A/c- LBAGR00002081891	Apartment No. 502, 5th Floor, Tower 4, Naturevue Apartment, Japee Greens Sport City East, Tower 4 And 5, Greater Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh- 201307	04/04/2024 Rs. 4,60,504/-	03/01/2024
26.	Abhishek Malik, Rameshpal Singh Malik, Usha Malik, Flat No-171, Harsush Apartment Plot No-4, Sector-7, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075 A/c- LBDEL00001958577	Flat No-B-106, 1st Floor, Avj Heights, Situated At Plot No. GH-12/2, Sector-Zeta-1, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, 201301	04/04/2024 Rs. 4,53,756.6/-	30/01/2024
27.	Rohan Sahani, Lata, Meenakshi, Ved Prakash, Plot No 149, 4th Floor Block A, Sector 8 Dwarka Bagdola, Delhi-110077 A/c- LBDEL00004961412/ LBDEL00004965262	Property No. 149, Entire 4th Floor With Roof Rights, Block A, Sector 8, Dwarka, Delhi-110075	04/04/2024 Rs. 63,58,666.27/- / Rs. 10,30,444.27/-	03/06/2023
28.	Harsh Kumar, Meenu, F-2.14, Sector 16, Rohini, Delhi-110085 A/c- LBDEL00000860980	Property No. 14, Pocket F-2, Sector 16, Rohini, Delhi-110085	04/04/2024 Rs. 3,61,499.06/-	06/12/2023
29.	Arali Singh, Village Shivpur Birdpur, Basti Siddharth Nagar, Basti- 272202 A/c- LBND000006717927/ TBND00006687825	Residential Apartment No. 403, 4th Floor, Plot No. Gh-6A Located, Tower		



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Repeat offenders

Pro-Khalistan slogans raised again at Toronto event in front of Trudeau; India hits back

Yet another event which saw pro-Khalistan slogans being raised, this time in Toronto, has triggered diplomatic tensions between India and Canada. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was also present in the programme, which made it look like the Canadian Government was condoning the act. It prompted India to summon in New Delhi a Canadian diplomat and express strong disapproval. The event, celebrating cultural diversity and inclusivity, took an unexpected turn when a group of individuals began chanting slogans in support of Khalistan, a separatist movement. The unfortunate incident is indeed a setback to ongoing discussions between the countries on various issues. For India, the incident struck a sensitive chord as it perceives the Khalistan movement a threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Indian authorities view any display of support for Khalistan, especially in the presence of heads of State, with utmost seriousness. The Indian Government, therefore, wasted no time in conveying its concerns to Canadian authorities. The summoning of their diplomat serves as a clear signal of India's displeasure and underscores the gravity with which it views the matter. Meanwhile, in Canada, the incident has sparked discussions about the limits of freedom of expression and the implication of such incidents on diplomatic relations.



While Canada may uphold the principles of free speech and assembly, the chanting of pro-Khalistan slogans on its soil in the presence of its Prime Minister raises questions about the appropriateness of such actions, particularly in a diplomatic context. Trudeau, who has been an advocate for multiculturalism and

diversity, has yet to publicly comment on the incident. However, it is expected that he will address the matter in due course, considering the diplomatic ramifications and the need to maintain constructive relations with India. Given the history of the roots of Khalistanis in Canada, it was a foregone conclusion that something of this sort might come up. The Canadian Prime Minister should have ensured in advance such a thing would not happen as it reflects badly on his Government and strains relations with India. Indeed, pampering Khalistanis on its soil is going to be a problem for Canada as history repeats itself and all those regimes that once harboured such elements have paid a heavy price for it. The incident also underscores the complexities of managing diaspora politics, particularly when it intersects with sensitive geopolitical issues. Canada is home to a significant Sikh population, many of whom have strong ties with India and hold varying views on the Khalistan movement. Ultimately, the Toronto incident highlights the interconnectedness of global politics and the need for vigilance in safeguarding the principles of sovereignty, unity and respect for diverse perspectives. It is a stark reminder that actions and words uttered in one corner of the world can have far-reaching implications, shaping the course of international relations for years.

PICTALK



Fireworks light up the sky at the Golden Temple on the birth anniversary of Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur, in Amritsar

Why is the BJP avoiding China in campaigning?



ASHOK K MEHTA

The BJP's election focus has shifted away from recent China tensions, opting instead to highlight Nehru's actions during the 1962 conflict

China has been generally missing from election manifestos and campaigning so far. Former Army Chief Gen Naravane at a literary festival in Ajmer recently called China India's primary threat adding confrontation along LAC was a good thing as it exposed this ground reality that Delhi was shy to admit. EAM S Jaishankar and especially Defence Secretary Giridhar Armane have made unkind references to Beijing. In his book Four Stars of Destiny Naravane has written extensively about the India-China confrontation which started under his watch. It was a serious failure of intelligence which allowed the Chinese PLA to occupy nearly 2000 square km of territory on the Indian side of LAC corresponding to their 1956 claim line. The avoidable tragedy at Galwan and the refusal of the Chinese to restore the status quo ante April 2020 even after 21 rounds of military dialogue (the last round on 21 February) place India at a serious disadvantage. In 1998 India gave China as the reason for conducting nuclear tests which incensed the Chinese, requiring then foreign minister Jaswant Singh to travel to Beijing to "untie the knot". I was witness to the repair exercise in Beijing even as then our Army was retaking Tololing Heights, Kargil. Singh had to say that China was not a threat. Later then defence minister George Fernandes called China the number one threat though it was misreported as "No 1 enemy". This caused a diplomatic furore as China is acutely sensitive to being seen as or worse a threat by any country. The Government is careful in its articulations on China as it hopes to secure full disengagement diplomatically. But the gloves came off Feb /Mar. Jaishankar speaking at the Raisina dialogue said that China should not be allowed to play mind -games to counter which India must use other means (implying US help) to seek better equilibrium. His comments came a day after Armane at the INDUS-X FORUM in Delhi unprecedentedly called Beijing a bully adding "we expect our friend US will be



there in case we need their support". Not since 1962 have we sought unequivocally US military support. This is bound to have upset China. Worse, no Indian official had ever called China a bully. Surprisingly China has not reacted.

Naravane's book and excerpts have been withheld by the Government in damage control after publishers circulated excerpts of Operation Snow Leopard Night 29/30 August 2020 which belittle the Government's political control in war and explosive comments on Agniveer. Armed with material from the horse's mouth, the opposition is targeting the Government in China and Agniveer — during election rallies where foreign policy is an issue. How Army intelligence cleared the book for publication is a mystery. In parliament on 10 Feb 2021, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had informed Parliament about withdrawals in the North Pangong Tso Lake Fingers area. But he made no mention of vacation from Kailash Heights, which presumably was implied in 'mutual withdrawal'. But Singh added: "Chinese side is aware of our resolve not to allow an inch of territory to be taken". Former NSA, Shiv Shankar Menon in his writings has observed: "we don't know what happened in South Bank (Kailash heights) as we know



FORMER ARMY CHIEF GEN NARAVANE RECENTLY HIGHLIGHTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S CAUTIOUS ARTICULATIONS ON CHINA AIM TO SECURE FULL DISENGAGEMENT DIPLOMATICALLY, DESPITE THE SERIOUS INTELLIGENCE FAILURE ALLOWING CHINESE OCCUPATION OF INDIAN TERRITORY ALONG THE LAC

about North Bank (Pangongtso Lake)". Recently Congress leader Jairam Ramesh cited an X post by Chushul Councillor Konchok Stanzin of autonomous Ladakh Hill Development Council that the Rezangla battle 1962 memorial was dismantled as it fell in the 'buffer zone' negotiated with China during the vacation of Kailash Heights. That undisputed Kailash Heights in Indian territory had been made a buffer zone is a revelation that the Government never even informed parliament. In the critical operational situation replete with vertical and horizontal escalation that developed at Kailash Heights that critical night, no political guidance had been provided by CCS/RM/PM to Naravane which became clear from his conversation with Singh urgently seeking orders. With Naravane's book and excerpts embargoed for release, the book may never materialise as it showed the political direction of a war-like situation in poor light. But Naravane will know why he didn't become CDS even as critical Kailash heights are lost for perpetuity. In the election campaign, no BJP leader has so far mentioned Galwan or Kailash heights which were examples of valourous use of force against China as it could open a can of worms. Keeping Naravane

out of the fray, the opposition is attacking the Government for losing 2000 sq km of land as well as 26 of 65 patrolling points. Campaigning in Pune and speaking to the media on 12 April, Jaishankar emphasized "there was no encroachment by China; it has not occupied any of our land; but the situation is sensitive, competitive and challenging." The PM, HM and RM have all also denied loss of territory.

In his interview with Newsweek in response to a question on China, PM Modi's terse reply was: "New Delhi ties with Beijing are important and the prolonged situation at the border should be addressed urgently, for peace and tranquillity to be restored and sustained at the borders". The Chinese welcomed the statement adding sound and stable ties were in common interest. Restoring the LAC to April 2020 as sought by India, the Chinese will never do. It's tough to conceive of a compromise formula. Consequently, the C word is almost missing from the BJP election discourse, cleverly diverted to Nehru's follies in 1962. But Naravane deserves praise.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka and a founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHALLENGES FOR NEW GOVERNMENT

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Challenges loom ahead of the July Union Budget," published on April 30, this is my response. The forthcoming union budget already stirs anticipation, underscoring the critical juncture India faces. Economic discourse dominates electoral debates, eclipsing divisive issues. However, the electorate's focus on core economic woes signals a paradigm shift. Spiralling inflation, mounting household debts and sluggish job creation demand urgent attention. Yet, electoral promises veer towards populism rather than pragmatic solutions. The fiscal landscape is daunting, with staggering debt repayments curtailing budgetary flexibility. Amid global economic headwinds, India's export slump exacerbates trade deficits. Addressing structural issues like low productivity and high taxation is imperative for sustained growth. Furthermore, infrastructural development must align with socio-economic welfare, assuage rural discontent and foster inclusive growth. A judicious blend of public and private sector involvement and prudent fiscal policies can steer India towards its lofty economic aspirations. Ultimately, the onus lies on the new Government to navigate these challenges deftly, prioritising the populace's wellbeing over partisan agendas.

Neha Iyer | Pune

ENGAGING YOUTH IN POLITICS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Why are the young not joining politics?" published on April 30, this is my response. Witnessing the apathy of young voters towards participating in the political process is disheartening. While some may feel disillusioned with the quality of politicians, others might believe their voices won't make a difference. However, by abstaining from voting, they relinquish their right to shape the nation's future. On the other end of the spectrum, the

State Assembly sessions



Apropos the news article, "Delhi, other state legislative meetings dwindle," published on April 29, this is my response. As someone who follows daily news, the pattern of state assembly sessions raises concerns. The data compiled by PRS Legislative Research reveals a significant disparity in the number of days assemblies convene. While some states meet

the constitutional mandate of at least one session every six months, others fall drastically short. The emphasis on budget sessions, evident from the majority of sittings concentrated within these periods, indicates a rushed legislative process. Such haste might compromise the quality of debate and scrutiny essential for robust policymaking. Moreover, the prolonged sessions in some states, stretching beyond a year in extreme cases, question the efficiency and accountability of legislative bodies. The instances of bills being passed swiftly after introduction raise doubts about thorough deliberation and stakeholder consultation. Efforts to streamline legislative processes and ensure meaningful engagement during sessions are imperative to uphold democratic principles and deliver effective governance.

Nisha Menon | Bhopal

lack of interest among older individuals in entering politics is concerning. The decline in ethical and social values, coupled with the high cost of electioneering, deters many from pursuing political careers. Addressing these issues requires systemic changes, such as the delimitation of electoral constituencies and measures to reduce election expenses. Compulsory voting could also enhance participation and diminish the influence of vote-bank politics. Moreover, curbing the distribution of freebies is crucial to prevent elections from devolving into mere transactions. True democracy demands active engagement from all citizens, irrespective of age or background.

Meera Patel | Ahmedabad

NUTRITION FOR ORAL HEALTH

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Diet, Mint, Ginger Impact," published on April 29, this is my response. Maintaining oral health extends beyond brushing and flossing; it's about what we eat too. Sugary and starchy foods can

feed harmful mouth bacteria, leading to gum disease. A balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, protein, calcium-rich foods and whole grains not only supports a healthy body but also promotes a bright smile. Opting for natural foods over processed ones is key to oral and overall wellbeing. Remember, oral health impacts your entire body; bacteria from the mouth can spread, increasing the risk of various diseases. Mint and ginger offer natural remedies for oral care. Mint's antiseptic properties combat bacteria, freshen breath and prevent cavities. Meanwhile, ginger, with its gingerol compound, fights infections and inflammation, strengthening teeth. Incorporating these ingredients into a refreshing drink like Mint & Ginger Healthy Drink adds flavour and health benefits to your routine, promoting a radiant smile and robust health.

Arjun Reddy | Hyderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Recognising workers' resilience and struggle

On International Labour Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to worker welfare and advocate for fair, empowering policies

On May 1st, as we celebrate International Labour Day, these words of Karl Marx resonate with renewed significance. May Day is not merely a day of rest; it is a powerful reminder of the resilience and collective strength of workers worldwide. It is a day to honour the countless individuals who have fought for the rights and dignity of labourers and to recognise the ongoing struggle for justice in the workplace.

Every year on May 1st, International Labour Day serves as a poignant reminder of the struggles, sacrifices and triumphs of workers worldwide. It is a day to honour the contributions of labourers across various countries and industries, while also acknowledging the ongoing battle for labour rights and social justice. As we commemorate International Labour Day on May 1, 2024, let us reflect on the significance of this day and recommit ourselves to advocating for the rights and welfare of workers.

The roots of International Labour Day trace back to May 1, 1886, when workers in



Chicago staged a massive protest demanding an eight-hour workday. This pivotal event led to the establishment of International Workers' Day, symbolising the collective struggle for fair labour practices. Since then, May Day has evolved into a global movement, with workers from all walks of life coming together to advocate for their rights. May Day holds immense significance in highlighting the importance of workers' rights. It serves as a platform to address issues such as fair wages, equal opportunities, maternity benefits, healthcare and safe working conditions. By amplifying the voices of workers, May Day fosters solidarity and empowers individuals to strive for better living standards and dignity in labour.

In India, May Day was first celebrated in 1923 by the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan in Madras (now Chennai). Led by visionary leaders like Singaravelu Chettiar, this event marked the beginning of a movement to champion the rights of workers. Since then, May Day has been observed with fervour across the country, with various labour organisations leading rallies and campaigns to advocate for workers' welfare. Dr BR Ambedkar, a towering figure in India's labour movement, played a pivotal role in advocating for the rights of marginalised labourers. He emphasised the principles of equal pay for equal work, maternity benefits, eradication of discrimination and fair treatment of workers.

Through his leadership and advocacy, Dr Ambedkar laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and equitable society. While we have made significant strides in advancing labour rights, challenges persist. Many workers, especially those in the informal sector, continue to face exploitation and lack of protection. We must address these issues and work towards creating a more just and equitable working environment for all. As we celebrate International Labour Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to the welfare of workers. We must advocate for policies that promote fair labour practices, empower workers and ensure their wellbeing. As International Labour Day dawns upon us once again on May 1st, 2024, let it serve not just as a commemoration of past struggles, but as a beacon lighting our path towards a future where every worker's dignity is honoured, every voice is heard and every dream finds its fulfilment in a world of equality and justice. (The writer is an associate professor, views are personal)



SANTOSH MATHEW



FIRST COLUMN

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Visual storytelling can promote sensitivity and empathy



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

A scared figure crouching in a corner, a large hand covering a mouth trying to muffle a scream, outstretched arms pleading for help, tattered clothes. More often than not, images like these accompany media reports of sexual violence against women. As a survivor of sexual harassment, Ankita Anand felt insulted looking at these images. She didn't want to be depicted this way.

What upset her most were drawings meant to represent the survivors and create awareness that served to titillate. She decided to take matters into her own hands. The activist-turned-journalist started a campaign with a Change Org petition and directed her attention to one of the major news channels to set an example by not using disrespectful images of women in sexual violence reporting. What was needed to transform the way society perceived women was images that were not about helplessness but about the rage that challenged the oppression. Pictures that showed that women are "doers," not always the "done-upon-s." were shared by Anand in her piece about her innovative campaign for the Network of Women in Media, India.

While her 2018 petition garnered over 47,000 signatories and also helped to spotlight an earlier Redraw Misogyny campaign by Breakthrough, an organisation working to end violence against women, many media platforms continue to churn out images that strip the victim of agency and perpetuate shame and stigma attached with rape and sexual harassment, creating a biased perception of women who have experienced sexual violence.

But now Anand and the many survivors in India and the region, no longer have to be depicted in this disempowering way thanks to the just-launched free-to-use image bank reframing visual narratives around women and sexual violence in South Asian media.



Conceptualised by the Hri Institute for Southasian Research and Exchange, Kathmandu and developed with the help of a team of artists and photographers from India and Nepal, the image bank re-imagines visual depiction of women and sexual violence to address the wide spectrum of women's experiences. It is an outcome of a unique collaborative effort to explore the role images play in forming perceptions around sexual assault, women and gender equality. The project 'Challenging Visual Depiction of Women and Sexual Violence in Southeast Asia' led by Laxmi Murthy and Pawas Manandhar united researchers, activists, filmmakers, and artists to redefine visual portrayals of gender-based violence in cinema, media, and popular culture across Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

The one-year project focused on challenging problematic imagery and promoting more meaningful depictions of violence and trauma. South Asian artists utilised textiles alongside illustrations and photos to narrate stories of injustices against women. It is an important artistic medium of expression, especially for those who have suffered violence, repression and discrimination as textiles are inextricably linked to the lives of people, particularly women. "I Never Ask For It," a campaign by Blank Noise, a Bengaluru-based volunteer-led project, has been working to generate awareness of gender-based violence and end victim shaming/blaming by building testimonies of clothing. Images from this campaign can also support survivors of violence to feel heard and believed.

A picture is worth a thousand words. It can transform the way sexual violence against women is framed in the media when used sensitively and appropriately. It just needs the will to do it.

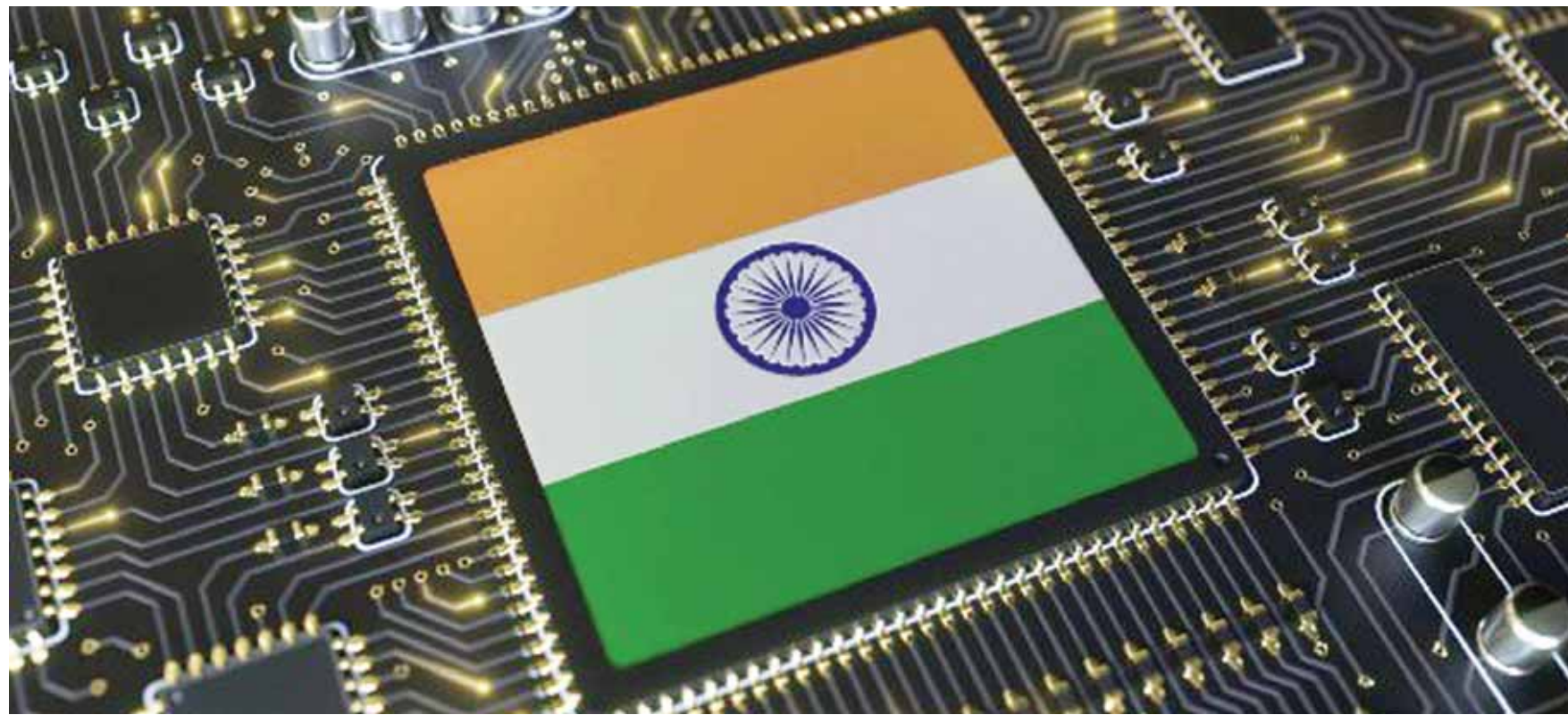
(The author is a journalist writing on development and gender. The views expressed are personal)

Semicon ecosystem: A revolution in India



A S MITTAL

India's talent, resources and infrastructure position it to excel in the semiconductor sector and becoming a global leader



As our lives become increasingly reliant on technology, semiconductors have become the essential foundation of society. These tiny chips are the powerhouses behind our electronic devices, communication systems and even the functioning of our agricultural implements medical equipment and vehicles. India has recognised the enormous socio-economic potential and strategic importance of this silent revolution of technology and is taking the lead in building a robust semiconductor ecosystem and developing a talented workforce.

India's goal of becoming self-sufficient and a global leader in semiconductors is supported by the fact that the semiconductor industry is expected to generate over one million job opportunities for semiconductor design engineers, manufacturing engineers, R&D scientists, operators, technicians and skilled workers in chip design and semiconductor fabrication, packaging and sales facilities over the next five years. "Around 30 per cent of the new global capability centres established in India during the December quarter of last year were in the semiconductor space, indicating a growing interest in leveraging the local talent pool in areas such as front-end design, performance testing and post-silicon validation", according to the National Association of Software and Service Companies (Nasscom) and Zinnov latest report. The world's leading chip design companies, including Intel, Texas Instruments, AMD, Nvidia and Qualcomm, have design and R&D centres in India. AMD recently inaugurated its largest global design centre in Bengaluru. In March, an event- 'India's Techade: Chips for Viksit Bharat', witnessed the foundation stone of three semiconductor projects worth Rs 1.25 lakh crore.

Tata Electronics in partnership with Taiwan's Power Chip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC), set up the country's first semiconductor fab plant in Dholera (Gujrat) with an investment of Rs 91,000 crore and another plant in Morigaon (Assam) with investment of Rs 27,000 crore, with the first chips to



INDIA'S SEMICONDUCTOR MARKET IS VALUED AT AN ESTIMATED \$15 BILLION AND IS EXPECTED TO REACH \$55 BILLION BY 2026. SMARTPHONES AND WEARABLES, AUTOMOBILE COMPONENTS, COMPUTERS AND DATA STORAGE ACCOUNT FOR MORE THAN 60 PER CENT OF THE MARKET

begin coming off the production line in 2026. US-based semiconductor manufacturer Micron India plant with an investment of Rs 22,500 crore in Sanand (Gujarat), is expected to roll out the first "Made in India" memory chips by December. It is contributing its bit to the Chandrayaan-3 mission Semiconductor Corporation of India (SCL) proposed to update and expand its chip facility in the Mohali plant with an investment of Rs 20,000 crore, to enhance its contribution to ISRO and other space research organisations globally.

95 Percent Import Dependency: Despite the upward trajectory of India's current semiconductor chip ecosystem, the country remains dependent on the US, Taiwan, China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea, with over 95 per cent of semiconductors imported from these countries.

To reduce this dependency on imports, India recognised the strategic importance of a robust domestic semiconductor industry. It unveiled the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) offering 50 per cent capital expenditure support to new entrants, production-linked incentive (PLI) and design-linked incentive (DLI) schemes with an outlay of Rs 76,000 crore, as well as state Government incentive support, international partnerships and a focus on talent development. The Electronic and IT Ministry plans to train over 85,000 engineers in chip design over the next five years to address the skill gap. Such focused efforts aim to steer the ecosystem through nurturing policymaking to develop a self-sufficient ecosystem.

Moreover, the geopolitical uncertainties involving the China-US trade war have compelled companies to seek alternative production bases or sourcing locations outside

China. Amid this relocation in the industry, India and Southeast Asian nations like Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia have been preferred for front-end manufacturing in the future. India's entry into this ecosystem is timely and strategically important for diversifying the global supply chain and positioning India as a global hub for semiconductor design, manufacturing and technology development, fostering the creation of employment opportunities for the nation's youth.

Present Landscape and Scope of Growth: Bengaluru and Hyderabad together host about two-thirds of India's semiconductor global capability centres (GCCs), which is over two-thirds of the total 55 semiconductor GCCs in the country. With more than 95 GCC units and a specialised workforce of 50,000, this demonstrates India's strong commitment to the semiconductor industry. Presently, India's semiconductor market is valued at an estimated \$15 billion and is expected to reach \$55 billion by 2026. Smartphones and wearables, automobile components, computers and data storage account for more than 60 per cent of the market.

Challenges: Semiconductor manufacturing is an extremely complex process that requires precision at the smallest level. Since the global chip world is closely connected, Indian companies need to collaborate with countries like Taiwan and South Korea to gain access to advanced technology that will enable them to support emerging applications with more chip content, such as autonomous machines, smart medical devices, futuristic communications at 6G onward and AI across electronics. Bridge the skill gap: India needs to bridge the skill gap, especially for advanced chip design and fabrication. The global semiconductor

manufacturing industry has a talent pool of 2.3 million, with nearly 25 per cent of senior talent being Indian.

To attract and retain this talent, Indian companies are holding roadshows in Taiwan's chip manufacturing centre of Hsinchu. Communications and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw says, "The engineers who have decided to return to India from the US are younger, while those from Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia are generally over 45 years and with more experience. We expect many of them to come back to participate in India's high-tech manufacturing revolution."

Road Ahead: The future of the semiconductor industry in India holds immense promise. It will play a crucial role in shaping the country's advanced technological landscape, driving economic growth and positioning India as a global leader in innovation. The semiconductor industry will also generate opportunities for an entrant and Indian talent working in this sector globally, many of whom wish to return to their roots.

India's ambition to become a self-reliant and dominant player in the semiconductor industry is clear. With the talent, resources and infrastructure in place, India is poised to make significant strides in the semiconductor sector and establish itself as a global leader in the years to come.

-The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet Minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President, of Tractor and Mechanisation Association (TMA).

Views expressed are personal

Driving innovation: Role of intellectual property in India

India can emulate Japan's post-Meiji transformation by harnessing innovation, embracing change and cultivating a risk-taking culture

In the 76th Independence Day speech on August 15, 2022, the Prime Minister called for innovation with a focus on indigenous innovations highlighting "Jai Anusandhan". Innovation is the key to India realising a self-reliant, competitive and USD 30 trillion economy by 2047. Innovation has the potential to unlock major productivity gains and will allow the nation to leapfrog towards higher value-added products and services across sectors.

In the last few years, globally we have witnessed a fundamental and rapid shift from a knowledge economy to an era of artificial intelligence (AI) and virtuality. During the same time, the unprecedented nature and



KRISHNA SARMA

scale of the pandemic affirmed the importance of having an innovation ecosystem for finding new cures — vaccines, medicines and diagnostics.

For a country with a legacy of scientific and technical knowledge base, the private sector in India has previously made modest investments in research and development (R&D). India has taken a different approach to innovation

to meet its unique challenges. The transformational digital public infrastructure, starting with the Aadhar platform, is a case in point.

Similarly, against the backdrop of concerns regarding public health, access and affordability of medicines and protecting the domestic industry, India's approach to innovation in the biopharmaceutical sector is primarily based on public-sector-led collaborative innovation, where the private sector has merely been 'encouraged' to invest in R&D in priority areas.

While in many cases, publicly supported research provides a wellspring of initial discovery, it is the private sector that must develop new technologies and bring them to the

market. To be a leader in a rapidly changing marketplace across sectors, private sector innovation is critical. How does one measure innovation? One way could be to determine how much a company spends on R&D as a percentage of its revenue annually. As patents secure exclusive rights to an invention, the innovative index of a company can be additionally judged by the number of granted patents, patent applications filed, whether the filings are in multiple countries, the quality of the patents and so forth.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce's 161st Report on IPR Regime in India (July 2021) expresses concern that the rate of increase in the number of

patents in India in the last four years has been very low compared to the US and China. It goes on to say that this is co-related to the microscopic spending on R&D which is a meagre 0.7 per cent of India's GDP. Globally, companies with the highest R&D spend are big tech US companies like Amazon, Meta, Alphabet, Microsoft, Intel Corp. and bio-pharmaceutical companies like Roche, J&J, Pfizer, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Merck & Co. This list also includes three companies from China — Huawei, Tencent Holdings and Alibaba; Samsung from S. Korea; and European automobile manufacturers like Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz.

Regarding the biopharmaceutical sector, the removal of product patent protection for drugs in 1970 allowed reverse engineering, which led to the exponential growth of the domestic generic industry and helped India be 'the pharmacy of the world'. At the same time, however, the lack of effective patent protection profoundly impacted corporate investment in R&D and the discovery of new molecules. Zydus Cadila's Saroglitazar, launched in 2013, remains so far, the only compound that was entirely indigenously discovered.

India has the potential to spur its innovative spirit by leveraging its strengths, embracing change and fostering a risk-taking culture.

Japan's transformation after the Meiji Restoration from being an importer and imitator of foreign technologies, to a global powerhouse in innovation that has defined the world's technological landscape exemplifies that necessity is the mother of invention.

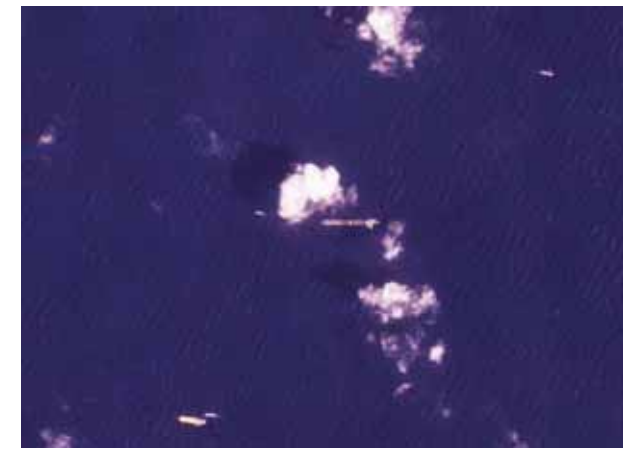
There is no silver bullet for creating an enabling environment for innovation. Bryce Hoffman in his book Red Teaming shows how disruptive innovation requires critical and contrarian thinking. So, to inculcate the scientific temper and risk-taking and entrepreneurship spirit, there is a dire need to shift the emphasis of our education system from rote memorisation and conformity. Second, we must vigorously

pursue closer collaboration between academia and industry to commercialise innovation. It is a matter of great pride that Prof. Rahul Purwar, IIT Mumbai obtained marketing approval for the first indigenously developed cell and gene therapy for the treatment of cancer.

Last but not least, a robust, meaningful and predictable intellectual property rights system can most optimally provide economic incentives to inventors and investors to invest risk capital in inventive activity — a very high-risk undertaking.

(The author is Managing Partner, Corporate Law Group, a New Delhi-based law firm; views are personal)

US military ships working to build pier for Gaza aid



This satellite photo from Planet Labs PBC shows the USNS Roy P. Benavidez, center, in the Mediterranean Sea off shore from the Gaza Strip on Monday. AP/PTI

AP ■ JERUSALEM

US Navy ship and several Army vessels involved in an American-led effort to bring more aid into the besieged Gaza Strip are offshore of the enclave and building out a floating platform for the operation that the Pentagon has said will cost at least USD 320 million. Sabrina Singh, Pentagon spokeswoman, told reporters the cost is a rough estimate for the project and includes the transportation of the equipment and pier sections from the United States to the coast of Gaza, as well as the construction and aid delivery operations.

Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press on Tuesday show the USNS Roy P. Benavidez about 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) from the port on shore, where the base of operations for the project is being built by the Israeli military. The USAV General Frank S. Besson Jr., an Army logistics vessel, and several other Army boats are with the Benavidez and working on the construction of what the military calls the Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore, or JLOTS, system.

Satellite images from Sunday and Monday by Planet Labs PBC showed pieces of the floating pier in the Mediterranean Sea, alongside the Benavidez. Measurements of the vessel match known features of the Benavidez, a Bob Hope-class vehicle cargo ship operated by the Military Sealift Command. A US military official confirmed late last week that the Benavidez had begun

construction and that it was far enough off shore to ensure that the troops building the platform would be safe. Singh said on Monday that next will come the construction of the causeway, which will then be anchored to the beach.

The US military's Central Command early Tuesday published images of the floating pier's construction online, after the AP's publication of the satellite photos.

"The pier will support USAID and humanitarian partners to receive and deliver humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza," the statement on the social platform X said.

US and Israeli officials have said they hope to have the floating pier in place, the causeway attached to the shore and operations underway by early May. The Pentagon said on Monday the operation will cost at least USD 320 million. The cost was first reported by Reuters. Under the plan by the US military, aid will be loaded onto commercial ships in Cyprus to sail to the floating platform now under construction off Gaza. The pallets will be loaded onto trucks, which will be loaded onto smaller ships that will travel to a metal, floating two-lane causeway. The 550-meter (1,800-foot) causeway will be attached to the shore by the Israeli Defense Forces.

The US military official said an American Army engineering unit has teamed with an Israeli military engineering unit in recent weeks to practice the installation of the causeway, training on an Israeli beach just up the coast.

Antony Blinken presses Hamas to accept new proposal for Gaza ceasefire

Cairo (AP): The United States stepped up pressure Monday for a cease-fire deal in Gaza as the secretary of state said a new proposal had been put to Hamas, whose officials were in Cairo talking to Egyptian mediators. Israeli airstrikes killed 26 people in Gaza's southernmost town of Rafah, according to hospital records.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, ahead of a visit to Israel this week, urged Hamas to accept the latest proposal, calling it "extraordinarily generous" on Israel's part.

The terms were not made public. But according to an Egyptian official and Israeli media, Israel has softened its position, lowering the number of hostages it demands that Hamas free during the initial six-week phase of the cease-fire in return for the release of hundreds of Palestinians from Israeli prisons.

One question is whether that will be enough to overcome Hamas concerns over the cease-fire's second phase.

Hamas has demanded assurances that an eventual release of all hostages will bring a complete end to Israel's nearly seven-month assault in Gaza and a withdrawal of its troops from the devastated territory. Israel has offered only an extended pause, vowing to resume its offensive once it is over. The issue has repeatedly obstructed efforts by US, Egyptian and Qatari mediators during months of talks.

Some Israeli commentators depicted Israel as at a crossroads: Go for a deal with a potential end to the war, bringing benefits that could include normalisation of ties with Saudi Arabia, or push ahead with plans including an attack on Rafah in the hope of crushing Hamas and risk international isolation.

Protesters take over Columbia University

AP ■ NEW YORK

Dozens of protesters took over a building at Columbia University in New York early Tuesday, barricading the entrances and unfurling a Palestinian flag out of a window in the latest escalation of demonstrations against the Israel-Hamas war that have spread to college campuses nationwide.

Video footage showed protesters on Columbia's Manhattan campus locking arms in front of Hamilton Hall early Tuesday and carrying furniture and metal barricades to the building, one of several that was occupied during a 1968 civil rights and anti-Vietnam War protest on the campus. Posts on an Instagram page for protest organizers shortly after midnight urged people to protect the encampment and join them at Hamilton Hall. A "Free Palestine" banner hung from a window. "An autonomous group reclaimed Hind's Hall, previously known as 'Hamilton Hall,' in honor of

Hind Rajab, a martyr murdered at the hands of the genocidal Israeli state at the age of six years old," CU Apartheid Divest posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, early Tuesday.

The student radio station, WKCR-FM, broadcast a play-by-play of the hall's takeover — which occurred nearly 12 hours after Monday's 2 pm deadline for the protesters to leave an encampment of around 120 tents or face suspension.

Representatives for the university did not immediately respond to emails requesting comment early Tuesday but the Public Safety department said in a statement that access to the Morningside campus has been limited to students living in the residential buildings and employees who provide essential services, such as dining, public safety and maintenance staff. There was just one access point into and out of campus.

"The safety of every single member of this community is paramount," the advisory said.

In the X post, protesters said they planned to remain at the hall until the university conceded to the CUAD's three demands: divestment, financial transparency and amnesty. Universities across the US are grappling with how to clear out encampments as commencement ceremonies approach, with some continuing negotiations and others turning to force and ultimatums that have resulted in clashes with police. Dozens of people were arrested Monday during protests at universities in Texas, Utah, Virginia and New Jersey, while Columbia said hours before the takeover of Hamilton Hall that it had started suspending students.

The nationwide campus protests began as a response by some students to Israel's offensive in Gaza after Hamas launched a deadly attack on southern Israel on October 7. Militants killed about 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took roughly 250 hostages. Vowing to stamp out Hamas,

Israel has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, according to the local health ministry.

Israel and its supporters have branded the university protests as antisemitic, while critics of Israel say it uses such allegations to silence opponents. Although some protesters have been caught on camera making antisemitic remarks or violent threats, organizers of the protests, some of whom are Jewish, say it is a peaceful movement aimed at defending Palestinian rights and protesting the war.

At the University of Texas at Austin, an attorney said at least 40 demonstrators were arrested Monday. The confrontation was an escalation on the 53,000-student campus in the state's capital, where more than 50 protesters were arrested last week. Later Monday, dozens of officers in riot gear at the University of Utah sought to break up an encampment outside the university president's office that went

up in the afternoon. Police dragged students off by their hands and feet, snapping the poles holding up tents and zip-tying those who refused to disperse. Seventeen people were arrested. The university says it's against code to camp overnight on school property and that the students were given several warnings to disperse before police were called in.

At Princeton University, 13 people were arrested Monday night including 11 students, after briefly occupying a building that houses its graduate school. They received summons for trespassing and have been barred from campus, President Christopher Eisgruber said in a statement.

"The plight of students who have been arrested has become a central part of protests, with the students and a growing number of faculty demanding amnesty for protesters. At issue is whether the suspensions and legal records will follow students through their adult lives.

up in the afternoon. Police dragged students off by their hands and feet, snapping the poles holding up tents and zip-tying those who refused to disperse. Seventeen people were arrested. The university says it's against code to camp overnight on school property and that the students were given several warnings to disperse before police were called in.

At Princeton University, 13 people were arrested Monday night including 11 students, after briefly occupying a building that houses its graduate school. They received summons for trespassing and have been barred from campus, President Christopher Eisgruber said in a statement.

"The plight of students who have been arrested has become a central part of protests, with the students and a growing number of faculty demanding amnesty for protesters. At issue is whether the suspensions and legal records will follow students through their adult lives.

Netanyahu vows to invade Rafah with or without deal

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged Tuesday to launch an incursion into the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are sheltering from the 7-month-long war.

Netanyahu said Israel would enter Rafah to destroy Hamas' battalions there "with or without a deal." Israel and Hamas are negotiating a cease-fire agreement meant to free hostages and bring some relief to the Palestinians in the besieged enclave.

"The idea that we will stop the war before achieving all of its goals is out of the questions. We will enter Rafah and we will eliminate Hamas' battalions there — with a deal or without a deal, to achieve the total victory," Netanyahu said in a meeting with families of hostages held by militants in Gaza, according to a statement from his office.

Netanyahu has vowed to achieve "total victory" in the war and has faced pressure from his nationalist governing partners to launch an offensive in Rafah, which Israel says is Hamas' last major stronghold.

Hopes have risen in recent days that the sides could move toward a deal that would avert an Israeli incursion into Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million population are sheltering. The international community, including Israel's top ally, the US, have raised an alarm over the fate of civilians in Rafah if Israel invades. Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected stopping the war in return for hostage releases, and says an offensive on Rafah is crucial to destroying the militants after their Oct. 7 attacks on Israel triggered the conflict. His government could be threatened if he agrees to a deal because hard-line Cabinet members have demanded an attack on Rafah.

King Charles III returns to public duties with cancer centre visit

London (PTI): Britain's King Charles III, who was diagnosed with cancer earlier this year, on Tuesday resumed his public-facing duties with a planned visit to a cancer centre in London where he held hands with a number of patients. The 75-year-old monarch, still undergoing treatment which Buckingham Palace earlier said has been rated as "very encouraging" by his medical team, was also named Cancer Research UK's new patron as he joined wife Queen Camilla at the Macmillan Cancer Centre at University College Hospital. Smiling and cheerful Charles and Camilla spoke to staff and patients at the centre where the King was overheard saying it was important to get enough people diagnosed early. "This visit will be the first in a number of external engagements His Majesty will undertake in the weeks ahead," Buckingham Palace has said. "His Majesty's treatment programme will continue, but doctors are sufficiently pleased with

the progress made so far that the King is now able to resume a number of public-facing duties. Forthcoming engagements will be adapted where necessary to minimise any risks to His Majesty's continued recovery," the palace said.

The royals also handed out presents to children and received some flowers in return. The King, who is also patron of Macmillan Cancer Support, said he was "much better" when people shouted out to ask how he was feeling. The royal couple were introduced to clinicians to hear more about all the new technology at the hospital, including CT scanners which are being used to help with the early detection of cancer. The King met Cancer Research UK's chief clinician, Professor Charlie Swanton, who has led a project called TRACERx — a collaboration with 250 researchers and clinicians based at 19 centres across the UK, to investigate how lung cancer evolves.

Man arrested after stabbing spree in London, teen dies

PTI ■ LONDON

A sword-wielding man on Tuesday smashed a vehicle into a home and then went on a stabbing spree in a "serious incident" near an east London Tube station, killing a 13-year-old boy and wounding four people, before being arrested, the Metropolitan Police said. The police said the incident did not appear to be linked with "any act of terrorism" and that of the five people injured, a boy has died from his injuries and the others, including two police officers, remain in hospital after the attack in Hainault area of the city.

"A 13-year-old boy was taken to hospital after being stabbed and sadly died a short while after. The child's family are being supported by local officers and are now with some specialist officers," said Met Police Chief Superintendent Stuart Bell in a statement. He confirmed the 36-year-old suspect was tasered within 22



Police talking to members of the public at the scene in Hainault, north east London, Tuesday after reports of several people being stabbed at a Tube station. AP/PTI

minutes of the first call and remains in custody. "I cannot even begin to imagine how those affected must be feeling. My thoughts are with the injured, their families and the wider community as we all begin to come to terms with what has happened and try to understand what has happened

here. "I know that there will be clearly and understandably a desire for answers and an explanation to what happened. Our investigation is in its very early stages and my officers are working right now to establish the full facts as a priority," he added.

Judge holds Trump in contempt, fines him \$9k in hush money trial

AP ■ NEW YORK

Donald Trump was held in contempt of court Tuesday and fined \$9,000 for repeatedly violating a gag order that barred him from making public statements about witnesses, jurors and some others connected to his New York hush money case. If he does it again, the judge warned, he could be jailed. Prosecutors had alleged 10 violations, but New York Judge Juan M. Merchan found there were nine. The ruling was a stinging rebuke for the Republican former president, who had insisted he was exercising his free speech rights. Merchan wrote that Trump "is hereby warned that the Court will not tolerate continued willful violations of its lawful orders and that if necessary and appropriate under the circumstances, it will impose an incarceration punishment."

Trump stared down at the table in front of him as the judge read the ruling, frowning slightly. The ruling came at the start of the second week of testimony in the historic case. Manhattan prosecutors say Trump and his associates took part in an illegal scheme to influence the 2016 presidential campaign by burying negative stories. He has pleaded not guilty. Trump must pay the fine by the close of business on Friday, Merchan said in a written ruling. He must remove seven offending posts from his Truth Social account and two from his campaign website by 2:15 pm EDT, Tuesday, Merchan said. Merchan is also weighing other alleged gag order violations by Trump and will hear arguments Thursday. Court was resuming Tuesday with Gary Farro, a banker who helped Trump's former attorney Michael Cohen open accounts, including one that Cohen used to buy the silence of porn performer Stormy Daniels. She alleged a 2006 sexual encounter with Trump, which he denies. For his part, the former presi-

dent and presumptive Republican nominee has been campaigning in his off-hours, but is required to be in court when it is in session, four days a week. Outside the courtroom, Trump criticized prosecutors again. "This is a case that should have never been brought," he said.

Jurors so far have heard from two other witnesses. Trump's former longtime executive assistant, Rhona Graff, recounted that she recalled once seeing Daniels at Trump's office suite in Trump Tower and figured the performer was a potential contestant for one of Trump's "Apprentice"-brand shows. Former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker laid out how he agreed to serve as the Trump campaign's "eyes and ears" by helping to squelch unflattering rumors and claims about Trump and women.

Through detailed testimony on email exchanges, business transactions and bank accounts, prosecutors are forming the foundation of their argument that Trump is guilty of 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in connection with the hush money payments. The prosecution is leading up to crucial testimony from Cohen himself, who went to federal prison after pleading guilty to campaign finance violations and other crimes. Trump has denied any wrongdoing and pleaded not guilty. It's unclear when Cohen will take the stand; the trial is expected to go on another month or more. And with every moment Trump is in court as the first of his four criminal trials plays out, he's growing increasingly frustrated while the November election moves ever closer.

"Our country's going to hell and we sit here day after day after day, which is their plan, because they think they might be able to eke out an election," Trump declared last week in the courthouse hallway.

Missile attack by Houthi rebels damages ship in Red Sea

Jerusalem (AP): A missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels damaged a ship in the Red Sea on Monday, authorities said, the latest assault in their campaign against shipping in the crucial maritime route. The attack happened off the coast of Mokha, Yemen, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said. The ship was damaged in the attack, the UKMTO said, though its crew was safe and heading to its next port of call. The agency urged vessels to exercise caution in the area.

There was "an explosion in close proximity to a merchant vessel," the UKMTO said. "Vessel and crew are reported safe."

The US military's Central Command identified the ship damaged as the Cyclades, a Malta-flagged, Greece-owned bulk carrier. The military separately shot down a drone on a flight path toward the USS Philippine Sea and USS Laboon, the military said Tuesday.

Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed the attack on the Cyclades and targeting the US warships in a statement early Tuesday.

Meanwhile Monday, the Italian Defence Ministry said its frigate Virgino Fasan shot down a Houthi drone that morning near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

"A missile exploded in the water in the vicinity of the escorted vessel, causing only minor superficial damage," the Italian Defence Ministry said, not identifying the commercial vessel being escorted. "The frigate Fasan and the protected merchant vessel are continuing their southward route as planned to the Red Sea." Saree did not acknowledge that attack, though he claimed the Houthis also targeted a ship in the Indian Ocean.

There was no immediate report or evidence to support that claim.

COVID sequencing scientist protests eviction from lab

Shanghai (AP): The first scientist to publish a sequence of the COVID-19 virus in China staged a sit-in protest outside his lab after authorities locked him out of the facility — a sign of the Beijing's continuing pressure on scientists conducting research on the coronavirus. Zhang Yongzhen wrote in an online post Monday that he and his team had been suddenly notified they were being evicted from their lab, the latest in a series of setbacks, demotions and ousters since the virologist published the sequence in January 2020 without state approval.



widely on Chinese social media and Zhang told a colleague he slept outside the lab — but it was not clear Tuesday if he remained there.

"I won't leave, I won't quit, I am pursuing science and the truth!" he wrote in a post on Chinese social media platform Weibo that was later deleted.

In an online statement, the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center said that Zhang's lab was being renovated and was closed for "safety reasons." It added that it had provided Zhang's team an alternative laboratory space.

But Zhang wrote online that his team wasn't offered an alternative until after they were notified of their eviction, and that the lab offered didn't meet safety standards for conducting their research, leaving his team in limbo.

Zhang's latest difficulty reflects how China has sought to control information related to the virus: An Associated Press investigation found that the government froze meaningful domestic and international efforts to trace it from the first weeks of the outbreak. That pattern continues to this day, with labs closed, collaborations shattered, foreign sci-

entists forced out and Chinese researchers barred from leaving the country.

When reached by phone on Tuesday, Zhang said it was "inconvenient" for him to speak, saying there were other people listening. In an email Monday to collaborator Edward Holmes seen by AP, Zhang confirmed he was sleeping outside his lab after guards barred him from entering.

An AP reporter was blocked by a guard at an entrance to the compound housing Zhang's lab. A staff member at the National Health Commission, China's top health authority, said by phone that it was not the main department in charge and referred questions to the Shanghai government. The Shanghai government did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Zhang's ordeal started when he and his team decod-

ed the virus on Jan. 5, 2020, and wrote an internal notice warning Chinese authorities of its potential to spread — but did not make the sequence public. The next day, Zhang's lab was ordered temporarily shut by China's top health official, and Zhang came under pressure by Chinese authorities.

Around the time, China had reported several dozen people were being treated for a respiratory illness in the central city of Wuhan. Possible cases of the same illness had been reported in Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan involving recent travelers to the city. Foreign scientists soon learned that Zhang and other Chinese scientists had deciphered the virus and called on China to release the sequence. Zhang published it on Jan. 11, 2020, despite a lack of government permission.

'4 law officers killed, 4 hurt in North Carolina home shootout'

AP ■ CHARLOTTE

Four police officers serving a warrant for a felon wanted for possessing a firearm were killed and four other officers were wounded in a shootout Monday at a North Carolina home, police said. Some of the officers who rushed to the Charlotte neighbourhood to rescue the first wave of downed officers were wounded as a second shooter began firing on them after they killed the wanted man, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief Johnny Jennings said. "Today we lost some heroes who were out simply trying to keep our community safe," Jennings said at a news conference. After a three-hour standoff, the suburban Charlotte home was torn open. Armoured vehicles smashed into it, ripping off windows and entire doorways

that were left broken. Several armoured vehicles were parked across yards, some with tree branches dangling off them. The US Marshals Task Force was fired on by the wanted suspect as they approached the house and the man was killed in the front yard, Jennings said. His name was not released, but the chief said he was wanted as a felon illegally possessing a weapon. A second person then fired on officers from inside the home where a high-powered rifle was found, Jennings added. A woman and a 17-year-old male were found in the home after the standoff. The two are being questioned, Jennings said. The Marshal's Service confirmed one of its agents was killed. Two officers from the state Department of Adult Correction also were killed, said North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper. The governor was in

Charlotte and was speaking to the families of the officers killed and hurt. Their names have not been released. Charlotte-Mecklenburg police officer Joshua Eyer died a few hours later at the hospital, Jennings said. Eyer was named the officer of the month for the force for April a few weeks ago, the chief said. "He certainly gave his life and dedicated his life to protecting our citizens," Jennings said. One other member of the task force, which is made up of federal agents and other officers from across the region was injured. Three other Charlotte-Mecklenburg police officers who responded to the scene were shot while trying to rescue the wounded officers. Neighbors said gunfire lasted for several minutes. WSOC-TV said their helicopter captured an armoured vehicle driving through yards and

knocking over recycling bins before officers removed a person with blood on their shirt who was then loaded into an ambulance. After the home was cleared, the helicopter pilot said he couldn't show the front lawn of the home because the scene was too graphic and disturbing. "A lot of the questions that need to be answered, we don't even know what those questions are now," Jennings said, somberly briefing reporters less than four hours after the shooting. "We have to get a full understanding of why this occurred and also uphold the integrity of the investigation." Many roads in the area including Interstate 77 were closed so ambulances could get to hospitals faster. TV footage showed ambulances speeding to hospitals escorted by vehicles both in front and behind with their sirens wailing.

IMF approves immediate disbursement of \$1.1 bn loan tranche to Pakistan

AP ■ WASHINGTON/ ISLAMABAD

The IMF has approved an immediate disbursement of the final tranche of USD 1.1 billion to Pakistan as part of a bailout package, emphasising that the cash-strapped country needs to take tough measures to bring its economy back on track. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Board's decision on Monday came after the global lender completed the second and final review of Pakistan's economic reform programme supported by the IMF's Stand-By Arrangement (SBA). With this development, the disbursements under the SBA reached around USD 3 billion. All board members favoured the release of the last instalment. India, however, abstained from voting. "Given the significant challenges ahead, Pakistan should

capitalise on this hard-won stability, persevering — beyond the current arrangement — with sound macroeconomic policies and structural reforms to create stronger, inclusive, and sustainable growth," said IMF's Deputy Managing Director Antoinette Sayeh. Continued external support will also be critical, she said. Achieving strong, long-term inclusive growth and creating jobs require accelerating structural reforms and continued protection of the most vulnerable through an adequately financed Benazir Income Support Programme, she said. She said that advancing the reform of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and ensuring that all SOEs fall under the new policy framework, strengthening governance and anti-corruption institutions, and continuing to build climate resilience will be the priority. The IMF official said Pakistan will receive the loan payment

this week. Sayeh emphasised Pakistan needed to adhere to "a market-determined exchange rate to absorb external shocks and broadening of structural reforms to support stronger and more inclusive growth". "Moreover, stronger action to address undercapitalised financial institutions and, more broadly, vigilance over the financial sector are needed to ensure financial stability," she said in a statement. The development came a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In his first meeting with the IMF chief since his re-election as premier, Sharif also discussed Pakistan's demand for another IMF programme as the country still needs the global lender's crutches to wobble on to get its economy back on track. An IMF team is expected to visit Pakistan in May to initiate talks

for a new long-term Extended Fund Facility (EFF) ranging between USD 6 to USD 8 billion with the possibility of augmentation through climate financing. However, the exact size and time frame will only be determined after evolving consensus on the major contours of the next programme in May 2024. If secured, it would be Pakistan's 24th IMF bailout. Separately, former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said all indicators of the economy were negative and the government's decision to seek another bailout from the IMF was an admission of their "failure", The Express Tribune newspaper reported. "Economic growth stalls and inflation rises due to such agreements with the IMF," he said, adding that the IMF "keeps you alive, but your economic condition deteriorates on every parameter."

Japan's PM denies he will step down over his party's loss in special polls

AP ■ TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Tuesday his governing party's major defeat in last weekend's by-elections was largely due to a political fundraising scandal and that he would not step down or replace party executives to take responsibility. Instead, Kishida said he will push anti-corruption measures and political reforms. "As I take the results seriously, I believe as president of the governing party we must tackle the challenges we face one by one and achieve results, and this is the way I will take responsibility," Kishida said. "By doing so, I will regain the people's trust." Kishida said the scandal dealt "a big and heavy hindrance" to the party. The scandal centres on dozens of lawmakers in Kishida's Liberal Democratic Party who allegedly pocketed profits from ticket sales to political events by falsifying accounting reports.



Asked if he would take responsibility for the election loss, Kishida denied he would step down or replace top LDP posts, and pledged to pursue party and political reforms, including a revision to the political funds laws. He also vowed to tackle economic issues. The conservative Liberal Democratic Party lost all three seats in Sunday's parliamentary by-elections in Nagasaki, Shimane and Tokyo. Kishida's party only fielded its own candidate in Shimane, a conservative stronghold, while the liberal-leaning main opposition

Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan clinched all three seats previously held by LDP. The loss is seen as a punishment by voters for the governing party's scandal, which erupted last year and has undermined Kishida's leadership. The party is unlikely to lose power because the opposition is fractured. But Sunday's defeat marks a further setback for Kishida, who will seek reelection as his party's leader in the fall. Political analysts say Kishida was hoping to call a snap election possibly after the current parliamentary session ends in late June, seeking to receive a public mandate, and then win another term in the party presidential vote in September. Kishida's state visit to the US earlier this month was perceived as a success, but Sunday's losses could erode his clout and LDP lawmakers may try to bring him down in favor of a fresh face ahead of the next general election.

Mexico taking Ecuador to top UN court

AP ■ THE HAGUE

Mexico is taking Ecuador to the top UN court on Tuesday, accusing the nation of violating international law by storming the Mexican Embassy in Quito to arrest a former vice president who had just been granted asylum by Mexico. The April 5 raid, hours after Mexico granted asylum to former Vice President Jorge Glas, spiked tensions that had been brewing between the two countries since Glas, a convicted criminal and fugitive, took refuge at the embassy in December. Leaders across Latin America condemned the raid as a blatant violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Ecuador said Glas was wanted on corruption convictions and not for political reasons, and has argued that Mexico granting asylum to a convicted criminal was itself a violation of the Vienna convention. Two mornings of preliminary hearings at the International Court of Justice

are focused on Mexico's request for interim orders known as provisional measures to be put in force while the case progresses through the court — a process likely to take many months. Among the measures Mexico is seeking are for the world court to order Ecuador to take "appropriate and immediate steps to provide full protection and security of diplomatic premises" and prevent any further intrusions. It also wants Ecuador to let Mexico clear its diplomatic premises and the homes of its diplomats in the country. In its case filed April 11, Mexico also asked the court to award reparation and suspend Ecuador from the United Nations. On Monday, Ecuador also filed a case at the International Court of Justice, accusing Mexico of using its embassy to "shield Mr. Glas from enforcement by Ecuador of its criminal law" and arguing that the actions "constituted, among other things, a blatant misuse of the premises of a diplomatic mission".

Chinese coast guard fires water cannons at Philippine vessels

AP ■ MANILA

Chinese coast guard ships fired water cannons at two Philippine patrol vessels Tuesday near a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, damaging both in the latest flare-up in an increasingly tense territorial conflict. There were no immediate reports of injuries in the incident off Scarborough Shoal, one of two hotly disputed areas where confrontations between China and the Philippines have flared on and off since last year. A Philippine coast guard ship and an accompanying fisheries vessel were patrolling the waters off Scarborough Shoal when four Chinese coast guard ships, backed by six suspected militia ships, executed dangerous blocking maneuvers. Philippine coast guard spokesman Commodore Jay Tarriela said. A Chinese coast guard ship used a water cannon against

the fisheries vessel, the BRP Bankaw, and two other Chinese coast guard ships hit the Philippine coast guard ship, the BRP Bagacay, simultaneously from both sides, damaging part of its deck railing and a canopy, Tarriela added. "China's coast guard and maritime militia vessels harassed, blocked and rammed vessels of the Philippine coast guard and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources," a Philippine government task force dealing with the territorial disputes said. The Philippine fisheries vessel sustained damages, including to its electrical, navigation and radio systems, the task force said. A number of journalists who were invited to join the patrol witnessed the hostilities, it added. "China's latest illegal and irresponsible behaviour highlights its egregious disregard for the Philippines' lawful exercise of its rights and entitlements in our own

Exclusive Economic Zone," the task force said. The Philippine vessels pressed on with their patrol despite the Chinese coast guard's actions, according to the Philippine coast guard. "They were not deterred and would persist in carrying out their legitimate operations to support Filipino fishermen and ensure their safety," it added. China called its action Tuesday a "necessary measure". "The Philippines has violated China's sovereignty with its actions," said Gan Yu, spokesperson for China's coast guard. "It will continue to carry out actions to defend its rights in the Chinese waters according to law, and will resolutely uphold our country's maritime rights," he insisted. The Chinese coast guard has also re-installed a floating barrier across the entrance to the shoal's vast fishing lagoon. The Philippine coast guard removed a similar barrier in the past to allow Filipinos to fish there.

Microsoft will invest \$1.7 bn in AI, cloud infrastructure in Indonesia

AP ■ JAKARTA

Microsoft will invest USD 1.7 billion over the next four years in new cloud and artificial intelligence infrastructure in Indonesia — the single largest investment in Microsoft's 29-year history in the country — Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said Tuesday. Microsoft runs one of the world's largest cloud computing operations and has taken a significant step into artificial intelligence by incorporating an AI chatbot into its search engine, Bing. Its earnings report Thursday said profit rose 20 per cent for the January-March quarter as it tries to position itself as a leader in applying artificial intelligence technology to make workplaces more productive. "This new generation of AI is reshaping how people live and work everywhere, including in Indonesia," said Nadella, in Jakarta on the first stop of a tour of Southeast Asia. "The investments we are



Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella speaks as the logo of GitHub, a subsidiary of Microsoft Corp, is displayed on the screen during an event titled "Microsoft Build: AI Day" in Jakarta, Indonesia, Tuesday. AP/PPTI

announcing today — spanning digital infrastructure, skilling, and support for developers — will help Indonesia thrive in this new era," he said. Microsoft sees Southeast Asia

as a growing market and potential location for more AI product development. The rise of AI in the region is expected to significantly impact its economic landscape. A study held by Kearney, a global consulting firm, said that AI could contribute nearly USD 1 trillion to Southeast Asia's GDP by 2030, of which Indonesia is expected to capture USD 366 billion. The investment announced Tuesday will include AI training for 840,000 people, as well as support for Indonesia's growing community of tech developers. Indonesia is home to the third-largest developer community in the Asia-Pacific region after India and China. More than 3.1 million developers in Indonesia use GitHub, a Microsoft-owned platform for software development, collaboration, and innovation. It is projected to be one of the top five developer communities on GitHub globally by 2026. Apple CEO Tim Cook met Widodo on April 17 and said the company would "look

at" manufacturing in Indonesia. Indonesia, under President Joko Widodo's administration, has emphasised development of digital technology and information sectors, aiming to achieve the government's Golden Indonesia 2045 Vision, which projects Indonesia becoming one of the world's top five economies with GDP of up to USD 9 trillion, exactly a century after it won independence from Dutch colonisers. Nadella met Widodo on Tuesday in the Presidential Palace. During the meeting, Widodo proposed building an AI research centre in Indonesia, and a Microsoft data centre based in Bali or Nusantara, the country's new capital city on Borneo island, according to Indonesia's Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Budi Arie Setiadi. The CEO's regional visit began in Indonesia and will be followed by Thailand and Malaysia over the next two days.

Facebook, Instagram face EU scrutiny

AP ■ LONDON

The European Union said Tuesday that it's investigating Facebook and Instagram over a range of suspected violations of the bloc's digital rulebook, including not doing enough to protect users from foreign disinformation ahead of EU-wide elections. The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, said its opening formal proceedings into whether parent company Meta Platforms breached the Digital Services Act, a sweeping set of regulations designed to protect internet users and clean up social media platforms under threat of hefty fines worth up to 6% of annual revenue. Brussels has been cracking down on tech companies since the DSA took effect last year, opening investigations into social media sites TikTok and X, formerly known as Twitter, and e-commerce platform AliExpress. TikTok bowed to EU pressure last week and halted a reward feature on its new app after the Commission started demanding answers about it. The investigation includes an urgent request for Meta to provide information about its move to discontinue a key tool for monitoring elections. "We have a well established process for identifying and mitigating risks on our platforms," Meta said in a statement. "We look forward to continuing our cooperation with the European Commission and providing them with further details of this work." European Commissioner Thierry Breton said in a social media post that the bloc is probing Meta "for suspected breach of DSA obligations to protect integrity of elections." The EU is stepping up measures to safeguard elections as citizens of the bloc's 27 nations prepare to vote in June for European Parliament lawmakers, amid widespread fears that the latest generative AI systems



could be used to disrupt the many votes around the world this year. The Commission said it's looking into whether Meta is doing enough to curb the spread of "deceptive advertisements, disinformation campaigns and coordinated inauthentic behaviour" that could pose a risk to "electoral processes" and consumer protection. Officials said they suspected the Meta's content moderation system for advertisements was inadequate, allowing ads made with generative AI including deepfakes to be exploited by malicious foreign actors seeking to meddle in elections even as the company makes money from them. The EU also suspects that Facebook and Instagram might be reducing the visibility in recommendation feeds of political content from accounts that pump out a lot of it - a practice known as shadow-banning - and not being transparent about it with users, which would violate the DSA. A third concern is Meta's decision to phase out Crowdtangle, a tool used by researchers, journalists and civil society groups for real-time monitoring of trending social media posts including during elections. The Commission is giving Meta five days to respond with information on how it will remedy the lack of such a tool. The Commission is also investigating whether Meta's mechanism for users to flag illegal content is good enough under the DSA, because it suspects it's neither easy to access nor user-friendly.

Taliban working to woo tourists to Afghanistan

AP ■ KABUL

Around 30 men are crammed into a Kabul classroom, part of the debut student cohort at a Taliban-run institute training tourism and hospitality professionals. It's a motley crew. One student is a model. Another is 17 and has no job history. They're all men — Afghan women are banned from studying beyond sixth grade — and they don't know anything about tourism or hospitality. But they are all eager to promote a different side of Afghanistan. And the Taliban are happy to help. Afghanistan's rulers are pariahs on the global stage, largely because of their restrictions on women and girls. The economy is struggling, infrastructure is poor, and poverty is rife. And yet, foreigners are visiting the country, encouraged by the sharp drop in violence,

increased flight connections with hubs like Dubai, and the bragging rights that come with vacationing in an unusual destination. The numbers aren't huge — they never were — but there's a buzz around Afghan tourism. In 2021, there were 691 foreign tourists. In 2022, that figure rose to 2,300. Last year, there were 7,000. Mohammad Saeed, the head of the Tourism Directorate in Kabul, said the biggest foreign visitor market is China because of its proximity and large population. Afghanistan also has advantages over some of its neighbours. "They've told me they don't want to go to Pakistan because it's dangerous and they get attacked. The Japanese have said this to me also," Saeed said. "This is good for us." But there are disadvantages, too. Visas are difficult and

expensive to access. Many countries severed ties with Afghanistan after the Taliban returned to power, and no country recognizes them as the legitimate rulers of the country. Afghan embassies either closed or suspended their operations. There's an ongoing power struggle between Afghanistan's embassies and consulates staffed by people from the former Western-backed administration, and those under the Taliban administration's full control. Saeed concedes there are obstacles for Afghan tourism to develop but said he was working with ministries to overcome them. His ultimate aim is to have a visa on arrival for tourists, but that could be years away. There are problems with the road network, which is half-paved or non-existent in some parts of the country, and airlines large-

ly avoid Afghan airspace. The capital Kabul has the most international flights, but no Afghan airport has direct routes with major tourist markets like China, Europe, or India. Despite the challenges, Saeed wants Afghanistan to become a tourism powerhouse, an ambition that appears to be backed by the Taliban's top leaders. "I have been sent to this department on the instructions of the elders (ministers). They must trust me because they've sent me to this important place." The students also have aspirations. The model, Ahmed Massoud Talash, wants to learn about Afghanistan's picturesque spots for Instagram posts and its history for media appearances. Business school graduate Samir Ahmadzai wants to open a hotel but thinks he should

know more about tourism and hospitality first. "They hear that Afghanistan is backwards, poverty and all about war," said Ahmadzai. "We have 5,000 years of history. There should be a new page of Afghanistan." Classes include Afghan handicrafts and anthropology basics. An unofficial subject is how to interact with foreign women and how their behaviour or habits could clash with local customs and edicts. Examples might be women smoking or eating in public, to mixing freely with men who are not related to them by blood or marriage. The Taliban have imposed a dress code for women and requirements for them to have a male guardian, or mahram, when they travel. Dining alone, travelling alone, and socialising with other women in public have become harder. With gyms closed to women and

beauty salons banned, there are fewer places where they can meet outside the home. In a sign that the country is preparing for more overseas visitors, the country's only five-star hotel, the Serena, has reopened its women's spa and salon for foreign females after a month-long closure. Foreigners must show their passport to access services. Women with "born in Afghanistan" on their ID are barred. The restrictions on Afghan women and girls weigh on overseas travel companies, who say they try to focus on the positive aspect of cultural interactions by making donations, supporting local projects or only visiting family-run businesses. Shane Horan, the founder of Rocky Road Travel, said visiting Afghanistan should not be seen as an endorsement of any particular government or political regime.

Indian economy likely to grow over 7 per cent in 2024-25: NCAER

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian economy could grow more than 7 per cent during the current fiscal amid a benign global outlook and expected above-normal monsoon, economic think tank NCAER said.

In its April 2024 issue of Monthly Economic Review (MER), NCAER said a range of high-frequency indicators reflect the resilience of the domestic economy with the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for manufacturing at a 16-year high and UPI, the leading digital payments system, touching the highest volume since its inception in 2016.

"Projected acceleration in both global growth and trade volumes, as well as a forecast of an above-normal monsoon, indicate that the Indian economy can again attain growth rates higher than 7 per



cent during the current fiscal year," said NCAER Director General Poonam Gupta.

According to NCAER, Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections reached Rs 1.8 lakh crore in March, the second best since its rollout in 2017, while UPI recorded 13.4 billion transactions (in volume) in March 2024, the highest since its introduction, registering a growth of 55.3 per cent on a year-on-year basis.

"These high-frequency indicators, coupled with a more benign global outlook

projected by the IMF and WTO bode well for the Indian economy during the current year," Gupta added.

According to the report, Consumer Price Index (CPI) headline inflation was down to 4.9 per cent in March from 5.1 per cent in February, while core inflation came down to 3.2 per cent during the same period.

The report said employment indicators again showed mixed trends, with an increase in the number of net new subscribers under the Employees'

Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) on a year-on-year basis.

However, the overall online hiring activities, as per the Naukri JobSpeak Index, moderated year-on-year, it added.

While the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Fitch Ratings have estimated India's growth at 7 per cent, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), S&P Global Ratings and Morgan Stanley projected a 6.8 per cent growth rate for FY25.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided to keep the policy rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept projections for India's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth for FY2024-25 at 7 per cent and Consumer Price Index (CPI) headline inflation at 4.5 per cent, in line with their previous projections.

Central Bank of India Q4 profit jumps 41 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Central Bank of India on Tuesday reported a 41 per cent jump in its net profit to Rs 807 crore for the March quarter, helped by a decline in bad loans and a rise in interest income.

The Mumbai-based lender had earned a net profit of Rs 571 crore in the year-ago period.

During the quarter, the bank's total income increased to Rs 9,699 crore as against Rs 8,567 crore a year ago, Central Bank of India said in a regulatory filing.

Interest income grew to Rs 8,337 crore during the period under review from Rs 7,144 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago.

On the asset quality side, the bank's gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) were reduced to 4.5 per cent of gross advances as of March 31, 2024, compared to 8.44 per



cent by the end of March 2023.

Net NPAs also came down to 1.23 per cent of the advances over 1.77 per cent at the end of 2024.

The fall in bad loans ratio helped cut the provisions towards NPAs for Q4FY24 to Rs 509 crore compared to Rs 789 crore a year ago.

The board also approved raising of capital up to Rs 5,000 crore through a Follow-on Public Offer (FPO) or

rights issue, Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) issue, or any other mode or through issue of BASEL III Compliant Tier I and Tier II bonds or such other securities as may be permitted under applicable laws etc, it said.

Provision Coverage Ratio stood at 93.58 per cent as on March 31, 2024.

The bank's capital adequacy ratio declined to 15.08 per cent from 14.12 per cent at the end of FY23.

Sterlite Power bags projects worth ₹2,500 crore in Q4

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sterlite Power on Tuesday announced securing new orders worth Rs 2,500 crore during the quarter ended March 31.

This takes the company's cumulative order wins in FY24 to Rs 7,000 crore, up 35 per cent year-on-year (YoY) over FY23, Sterlite Power said in a statement.

"Sterlite Power has capped off a successful fiscal year FY24 with new orders worth Rs 2,500 crore for its Global Products and Services (GPS) business unit in Q4. This growth underscores the growing global and domestic demand for robust power transmission infrastructure, particularly to support the integration of renewable energy sources critical for a net-zero future," the company said.

Pratik Agarwal, Managing Director, Sterlite Power, said, the company's GPS business is experiencing significant growth. These products are essential in driving the sector's expansion over multiple decades, spurred by the global shift towards energy transition and decarbonization.

In Q4, some of the projects secured by the company are for conductor supply to green energy power transmission projects in Rajasthan including the Farhad Transmission line project. The company also bagged export orders for OPGW (Optical Ground Wire) in Africa and CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) markets.

Besides, Sterlite Power has secured multiple orders to supply Extra High Voltage (EHV) & High Voltage (HV) cables for large-scale infrastructure projects that are underway in Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Odisha, and Gujarat.

The company's specialized EPC services unit signed a turnkey project contract with Odisha state transmission utility to upgrade its existing 132 kV Pratapsasan-Kesura-Ransinghpur transmission line using high performance conductors (HPC).

Sterlite Power is a leading private sector power transmission infrastructure developer and Global Products and Services provider.

Markets wipe out early gains on fag end sell off

Nifty slips from record

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Tuesday as a fag-end sell-off wiped out early gains, with IT and power stocks playing spoilsport amid a mixed trend in global markets.

Snapping its two-day winning run, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 188.50 points or 0.25 per cent to settle at 74,482.78. During the day, it had jumped 404.11 points or 0.58 per cent to 75,111.39.

The NSE Nifty dipped 38.55 points or 0.17 per cent to finish at 22,604.85. In the late afternoon trade, the benchmark hit its all-time peak of 22,783.35, up 139.95 points or 0.61 per cent.

From the Sensex basket, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, Larsen & Toubro and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the biggest laggards.

Mahindra & Mahindra, Power Grid, Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank and Maruti were the major gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul,



Tokyo and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Shanghai ended lower.

European markets were mostly trading lower. Wall Street ended with gains on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.21 per cent to USD 88.59 a barrel.

"Global markets remained mixed ahead of the US FED policy meeting, as markets appear to have already factored in the slim chance of a near-term rate cut. Profit booking ensued towards a close given the sharp rally in the last couple of days and a holiday-led truncated week,"

said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Monday after continuous offloading. They bought equities worth Rs 169.09 crore, according to exchange data.

In the previous session, the BSE benchmark jumped 941.12 points or 1.28 per cent to settle at 74,671.28 on Monday. The NSE Nifty went up by 223.45 points or 1 per cent to 22,643.40.

Domestic equity markets will remain closed on Wednesday on account of Maharashtra Day.

India's oil import bill could swell in FY25: ICRA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's net oil import bill could widen to USD 101-104 billion in current fiscal from USD 96.1 billion in 2023-24 and any escalation in the Iran-Israel conflict could impart an upward pressure on the value of imports, ICRA said on Tuesday.

The domestic rating agency said based on its analysis, lower value of Russian oil imports is estimated to have led to savings of USD 7.9 billion in 11 months (April-February) of 2023-24, up from USD 5.1 billion in 2022-23.

"With India's oil import dependency expected to remain high, if the discounts on purchases of Russian crude persist at the prevailing low levels, ICRA expects India's net oil import bill to widen to USD 101-104 billion in FY2025 from USD 96.1 billion in FY2024, assuming an average crude oil price of USD 85/bbl in the fiscal," ICRA said.

Additionally, any escalation in the Iran-Israel conflict and an associated rise in crude oil prices could impart an upward pressure on the value of net oil imports in the current fiscal year, it added.

As per ICRA's calculations, a USD 10/barrel uptick in the average crude oil price for this fiscal pushes up the net oil



imports by USD 12-13 billion during the year, thereby enlarging the current account deficit (CAD) by 0.3 per cent of GDP.

Accordingly, if the average crude oil price rises to USD 95/barrel in FY2025, then the CAD is likely to widen to 1.5 per cent of GDP from ICRA's current estimate of 1.2 per cent of GDP for 2024-25.

CAD, which is the difference between value of India's imports and exports, is estimated at 0.8 per cent in 2023-24.

India is more than 85 per cent dependent on imports for its needs of crude oil, which is converted into fuels such as petrol and diesel at refineries. ICRA said the value of India's

imports of petroleum crude and products declined by 15.2 per cent YoY during April-February of last fiscal, even as volumes rose slightly in this period.

This was supported by the fall in average global crude oil prices as well as savings from stepped up purchases of discounted Russian crude.

In volume terms, the share of crude petroleum imported from Russia jumped to 36 per cent in April-February FY2024 from 2 per cent in FY2022, while that from West Asian countries (Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait) fell to 23 per cent from 34 per cent, respectively.

ICRA estimates that the lower imputed unit value of imports of Russian oil, compared to imports from West Asia, has led to savings in India's oil import bill amounting to USD 5.1 billion in 2022-23 and USD 7.9 billion in 11 months of 2023-24, thereby compressing India's CAD/GDP ratio by 15-22 basis points in FY2023-24.

However, the extent of monthly discounts relative to price narrowed sharply over the fiscal, to 8 per cent on an average in September-February FY2024 from 23 per cent in April-August FY2024. Consequently, the savings related to purchase of Russian crude are likely to have dipped to USD 2 billion in September-February FY2024 from USD 5.8 billion in April-August FY2024, ICRA said.

Post the Ukraine war, some Western nations shunned Russian oil, leading to Moscow offering discounts. This led to Indian refiners lapping up the discounted oil. The recent conflict in the Middle East also poses threat to crude oil import route. Earlier this month, Iran first launched drone and rocket attacks on Israel, which retaliated by firing a missile.

India imports oil from Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the UAE as well as liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar through the Strait of Hormuz, which is a narrow sea passage between Oman and Iran.

Gold slumps ₹150; silver plunges ₹750

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Extending the losses for the second straight session, gold prices on Tuesday slumped Rs 150 to Rs 72,600 per 10 grams in the national capital amid fall in precious metal rates in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities.

The yellow metal had closed at Rs 72,750 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also plunged Rs 750 to Rs 83,750 per kg. In the previous close, it had ended at Rs 84,500 per kg.

"Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 72,600 per 10 grams,

down Rs 150 taking bearish cues from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,320 per ounce, down USD 13 from the previous close. "Gold prices continued to weaken... As this sell-off was attributed to the anticipation of a hawkish stance from the US Federal Reserve in the upcoming interest rate policy announcement scheduled for May 1.

"Additionally, the week ahead is expected to see continued

volatility in gold prices, driven by key data releases such as the Nonfarm Payroll and Unemployment data," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst — Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

Silver was also quoting lower at USD 26.80 per ounce. In the previous session, it had finished at USD 27.22 per ounce.

Investors will await for the key data, including the US consumer confidence due to release later on Tuesday, which if is reported lower than expectations then it could support bullion prices on the lower end, Navneet Damani,

RITES completes 50 years

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

RITES Limited, a leading engineering consultancy firm in India, celebrated its milestone 50th anniversary on Friday.

The month-long Foundation Day celebrations, 'Marking The Gold', that were carried across work sites culminated with a cultural evening at Shikhar, RITES' Corporate Office, Gurugram.

Members of RITES' cultural team 'Sankalp' presented RITES Anthem at the 50th anniversary celebrations.

On the occasion, Chairman & Management Director Rahul Mittal launched RITES' coffee

table book — Atulya, a compilation tracing the organisation's illustrious journey of becoming 'The Infrastructure People'. Also, it marked the unveiling of 'RITES Dhara', a novel initiative to treasure the organisation's legacy and encapsulate the essence of its core values — Integrity, Professionalism and Excellence.

Addressing the gathering and paying gratitude to the founding fathers, Mithal said, "From pioneering projects to fostering sustainable practices, RITES' five-decade journey has been glorious.

Rupee recovers 4 paise to 83.41 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee recovered 4 paise to 83.41 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, tracking foreign capital inflows and a strengthening greenback against major crosses overseas.

According to forex analysts, the domestic currency initially faced resistance from a strong greenback and upward momentum in the crude oil prices but recovered the lost ground

during the session on the back of a sharp rally in equities in the late afternoon trade.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.46 and traded between 83.41 and 83.52 against the greenback during the session.

The domestic currency finally settled at 83.41 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 4 paise from its previous closing level.

The rupee had settled 7 paise

lower at 83.45 against the US dollar on Monday after losing 10 paise in the preceding session on Friday.

Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst — Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said: "Volatility in the capital market kept the rupee range-bound. Participants are closely monitoring the upcoming interest rate decision in the US for potential price action in the rupee. Weakness persists in the rupee, albeit in a stable manner."

US tile industry seeks import tariff on India

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A coalition of US ceramic tile suppliers has urged the federal government to impose tariffs on ceramic tile imports from India as it is impacting domestic industry due to subsidised imports by the Indian government.

The Department of Commerce has instituted an investigation into this matter.

Import of ceramics and tiles from India has increased significantly over the past few years, an association of the US ceramic and tiles industry has claimed alleging that these are impacting their domestic industry as the imports are subsidised by the Indian government.

In a petition filed before the US International Trade Commission of the

Department of Commerce, the Coalition for Fair Trade in Ceramic Tile (TCNA), which claims to represent more than 90 per cent of US tile production, seeks the imposition of tariffs estimated between 408 per cent to 828 per cent, alleging that there is ongoing massive and widespread dumping from India.

"American tile manufacturers have always welcomed fair competition from imports. In fact, US manufacturers have plentiful deposits of clay and feldspar, an efficient and well-respected labour force, local community support, state-of-the-art equipment, and affordable energy - so much so that major exporters from Italy, Spain, Brazil, Mexico, and China have built facilities in the US from



which to compete on a global scale," stated Tile Council of North America executive director, Eric Astrachan.

"However, Indian tile producers enjoy substantial government subsidies, which in conjunction with selling excess capacity at dumped prices, has allowed them to flood the US market. Over the last 10 years, sales of tile from India have increased from a mere 344,000 square feet in 2013 to nearly 405 million square feet by the end of 2023," he alleged.

"Our domestic manufacturers had no alternative but to petition the federal government for relief from these unjust trading practices. The vitality of the US industry and the livelihoods of thousands of employees and their families within our member

companies depend on it," Astrachan said.

US International Trade Commission last week issued a federal notification giving notice of the institution of investigations and commencement of preliminary phase antidumping and countervailing duty investigation to determine whether there is a reasonable indication that the imports of ceramic tile from India impact US industry. June 10 is the last date for responses.

According to Barnes & Thornburg, trade counsel for the Coalition for Fair Trade in Ceramic Tile, if the US finds that Indian imports are unfairly traded and have injured or threatened to injure US tile manufacturers, the Government will impose tariffs on Indian tile imports.

The Government would first impose preliminary tariffs in a few months and would impose final tariffs at the conclusion of its investigation in approximately 16 months, with the calculation of such final tariffs applied retroactively to the date of preliminary tariffs, and possibly to the date of initiation, he said.

In its filing, the Coalition for Fair Trade in Ceramic Tile (FTCT) claimed that India is engaged in unjust trading practices by allowing low-priced ceramic tile imports into the United States, which undercut domestic manufacturers.

The scope of the investigation includes various types of ceramic tile, such as flooring tile, wall tile, paving tile, hearth tile,

porcelain tile, mosaic tile, and more.

These ceramic tiles are articles containing a mixture of minerals, including clay, that are fired to produce a finished product less than 3.2 cm in actual thickness. The investigation covers both glazed and unglazed tiles, regardless of end use, surface area, weight, or other factors.

The members of the Coalition for Fair Trade in Ceramic Tile include American Wonder Porcelain, Crossville, Inc., Dal-Tile Corporation, Del Conca USA, Inc., Florida Tile, Inc., Florim USA, Landmark Ceramics, and StonePeak Ceramics.

The US Department of Commerce has initiated investigations in response to the petition filed by the Coalition for Fair Trade in Ceramic Tile.



Vishvanath, Akash, Preet storm into semis at ASBC Asian U 22 & Youth Boxing Championships

PTI ■ ASTANA (KAZAKHSTAN)
Vishvanath Suresh, Akash Gorkha and Preet Malik advanced to the men's U-22 semi-finals after convincing wins in their respective bouts at the ASBC Asian U-22 and Youth Boxing Championships here on Tuesday.

Reigning youth world champion Vishvanath (48kg) led the charge for India as he beat Iran's Hassani Seyedarsham 5-0 in a one-sided quarterfinal bout.

Senior national champion Akash (60kg) outclassed Ebad Arman of Iran with an identical 5-0 scoreline. Preet (67kg) also didn't take much time before finishing the bout with a Referee Stopping the Contest (RSC) decision in the first round itself against Vietnam's Nguyen Duc Ngoc. Kunal (75kg), however, bowed out after losing 0-5 against Iran's Mahshari Mohammad in the quarter-finals.

Jugnoo (86kg), Rhythm (+92kg), Tammana (50kg), Preeti (54kg) and Priyanka (60kg) will have their U-22 quarter-final bouts later on Tuesday. The U-22 semi-finals will be played on Saturday. On Monday night, Rahul Kundu (75kg), Lakshay Rathi (+92kg), Laxmi (50kg), Tamanna (54kg), Yatri Patel (57kg) and Shrusthi Sathe (63kg) emerged victorious to enter the semi-finals in the youth category. On Wednesday, nine youth Indian boxers will compete in

US and Mexico drop bid to host 2027 World Cup

AP ■ NEW YORK

The U.S. Soccer Federation and its Mexican counterpart dropped their joint bid to host the 2027 Women's World Cup and said they instead will focus on trying to host the 2031 tournament. The decision left a proposal from Brazil and a joint Germany-Netherlands-Belgium plan competing to be picked for 2027 by the FIFA Congress that meets May 17 in Bangkok. The USSF said the 2031 bid will call for FIFA to invest equally in the men's and women's World Cups. FIFA said last year it planned to spend \$896 million in prize money for the 2026 World Cup in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. The governing body devoted \$110 million in prize money for last year's Women's

Brazil and joint German-Dutch-Belgian bids remain



World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. "Hosting a World Cup tournament is a huge undertaking — and having additional time to prepare allows us to maximize its impact across the globe," USSF President Cindy Parlow Cone said in a statement. "I'm proud of our commitment to provide equitable experiences for the

players, fans and all our stakeholders. Shifting our bid will enable us to host a record-breaking Women's World Cup in 2031 that will help to grow and raise the level of the women's game both here at home as well as across the globe." In detailing the bid in December, the USSF proposed U.S. Sites from among the

same 11 to be used in the 2026 men's World Cup. Mexico listed Guadalajara, Mexico City and Monterrey - its three sites for the men's World Cup - and in addition for 2027 listed as possibilities Leon and Querétaro. "We feel that moving our bid back to 2031 will allow us to promote and build up to the most successful Women's World Cup ever," MFF President Ivar Sissneg said in a statement. "The strength and universality of our professional women's leagues, coupled with our experience from organizing the 2026 World Cup, means that we will be able to provide the best infrastructure as well as an enthusiastic fan base that will make all the participating teams feel at home and to put together a World Cup that will contribute to the continued growth of women's football.

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona survived a tricky first half to beat Valencia 4-2 with the help of a second half hat trick from Robert Lewandowski and a red card to Valencia goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili. On a rainy night in Catalonia, the home side dominated possession but was behind at the break due to two defensive errors. Fermin López put Barcelona ahead with a lovely glancing header midway through the first half. Valencia levelled just five minutes later thanks to a useful intervention from keeper Marc Ter Stegen. He intercepted a long ball 25 yards from his goal but he tried to be too fancy and Hugo Duro easily dispossessed him and ran the ball into the empty net. Before halftime, Valencia took the lead thanks to another elementary mistake. Ronald Araújo's mistimed tackle felled Peter Federico in the box and Pepelu coolly converted the spot kick.

Lewandowski hat trick gives Barcelona comeback victory over Valencia



The balance of the match changed moments before the break when

Mamardashvili used a hand outside the box to thwart a scoring chance by Lamine Yamal and was red-carded. Lewandowski headed an equalizer from a corner kick after 50 minutes. However, it took Barcelona until the 82nd to regain the lead from another Lewandowski header after Valencia failed to clear another corner. The hat trick came in the third minute of stoppage time from a 25-yard free kick. "It wasn't easy," Lewandowski said. "In the first half we didn't find any space in attack." Barcelona replaced Girona in second place and was 11 points behind Real Madrid. Madrid needs five from its last five matches to guarantee a 36th Spanish league title.

Nadal tested in 3 hours win over Cachin at Madrid

AP ■ MADRID

After spending more than three hours on the court and earning a hard-fought victory, Rafael Nadal was feeling optimistic again. Nadal's body withstood its toughest test yet at this Madrid Open in a 6-1, 6-7 (5), 6-3 win over 91st-ranked Pedro Cachin on Monday. He didn't show any signs of physical limitations in a victory that earned him a spot in the round of 16 at the clay-court tournament where he is the record five-time champion. "It's positive, now I don't feel that something went wrong on my body, but I need to wait until tomorrow, being 100% honest," he said. "I am trying my best to keep dreaming. Tomorrow is another day to keep dreaming. To keep playing in front of this amazing crowd and, to me, that means

everything." Nadal will next face 31st-ranked Jiri Lehecka. He said he needs "to find a way to be able to play days in a row and still be competitive." "I don't know if I am in that moment yet," the 22-time Grand Slam champion said. "Let's see what can happen tomorrow." The 37-year-old Nadal is trying to get in shape for next month's French Open. Since his latest injury layoff, he's had two matches in Barcelona and was pessimistic about his physical condition after arriving in Madrid. But he's won three more times in the capital. Nadal again looked comfortable early on against Cachin. The Argentine rallied in the second but was broken twice while serving for the set before eventually prevailing in the tiebreaker.

Nadal didn't look as loose in the final set, but did look tired. He wasn't as consistent with his shots but picked up three breaks to seal the victory to the delight of the local crowd in the Caja Magica. "I took more risks in the third set, but it's hard after so many months without competing," Nadal said. "I hadn't played a match like this in a long time. I don't know how I'm going to wake up. But I'm already happy for having won three matches in a row." Cachin asked for Nadal's shirt after congratulating him at the net, and received the gift moments later. Top-seeded Jannik Sinner was not at his best but had enough to defeat Pavel Kotov 6-2, 7-5. Sinner, who has been dealing with a hip issue, will face 16th-seeded Karen Khachanov. "I have been struggling a little bit with my right hip," Sinner



said. "We're trying to find a solution and I don't think it's anything serious. Sometimes I feel it more like today and some days are a little bit better."

Third-seeded Daniil Medvedev was two points from defeat before he rallied to beat Sebastian Korda 5-7, 7-6 (4), 6-3.

Fifth-seeded Casper Ruud beat Cameron Norrie 6-2, 6-4. KEYS DOWNS GAUFF: Madison Keys rallied after trailing in the first and second

sets to beat Coco Gauff 7-6 (4), 4-6, 6-4 in an all-American fourth-round meeting. It will be the 20th-ranked Keys' first quarterfinal appearance in Madrid. She lost in the first round in seven of her nine previous trips to the Spanish capital. The third-seeded Gauff undermined herself with 38 unforced errors, including 13 double faults. Keys will face eighth-seeded Ons Jabeur, who eased past Jelena Ostapenko 6-0, 6-4. SWIATEK ADVANCES: Top-ranked Iga Swiatek remained on track for a first Madrid title with a 6-1, 6-0 win over Sara Sorribes Tormo. Swiatek dropped just five points in the second set en route to the quarterfinals of the only high-profile European clay tournament she is yet to win. The 27th-ranked Sorribes

Tormo was the last Spanish woman in the draw. Swiatek, who lost last year's Madrid final to Aryna Sabalenka, will next face 11th-seeded Beatriz Haddad Maia, who defeated fifth-seeded Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-4. Sabalenka, the champion in Madrid in 2021 and 2023, advanced by beating No. 15 Danielle Collins 4-6, 6-4, 6-3. The result ended Collins' 15-match winning streak, and sent Sabalenka into her first WTA 1000 quarterfinal of the season. Mirra Andreeva celebrated her 17th birthday with a 7-6 (2), 6-4 win over 12th-seeded Jasmine Paolini. The Russian teenager rallied from 5-2 down in the first set to reach the quarterfinals, a round further than she managed in Madrid a year ago. Fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina defeated teenage qualifier Sara Bejlek 6-1, 6-3.

Indian women blanked 0-5 by China in Uber Cup

PTI ■ CHENGDU (CHINA)

Teenage sensation Anmol Kharb left the badminton court in tears owing to an ankle injury as an under-strength Indian women's team suffered a 0-5 defeat to the mighty China in its final group A fixture of the Uber Cup here on Tuesday. Having already qualified for the quarterfinals by picking up successive wins against Canada and Singapore, Ashmita Chaliha sat out the contest against the 15-time champions. The team is competing without double Olympic-medallist P V Sindhu, who opted out of the tournament. It was a reality check for the young Indian team as it could not take a single game from the Chinese during

the five-match tie. To add to India's woes, 17-year-old Anmol was forced to retire after twisting her ankle during the second singles contest. Olympic champion and world no.2 Chen Yu Fei started off the proceedings for China with an easy 21-12 21-10 win over 83rd ranked Isharani Baruah. "A little disappointed in my game because I made too many errors, I thought I would play good with her but it was an easy win for her...The pace was really high, I had to increase my speed," Isharani said after her match. "Her variations were good, and all her strokes were going in the third court and it wasn't comfortable to hit well. It

was a tough game but it was a good experience," she added. National champions Priya Konjengbam and Shruti Mishra, ranked 67, were no match for reigning world champions Chen Qing Chen



and Jia Yi Fan, who doubled China's lead with a 21-13 21-12 win. After losing the first game 9-21 and trailing 1-4 in the second against Han Yue, Anmol rolled her right ankle while trying to defend a point. She received medical attention but the pain didn't seem to subside and the ankle looked swollen, forcing her to retire from the match giving China a 3-0 unassailable lead. In the next two matches, Liu Shen Shu and Tan Ning defeated Simran Singh and Ritika Thaker 21-9 21-10, while Tanvi Sharma lost 7-21 16-21 to Wang Zhi Yi as China completed the 5-0 drubbing of India. India will end the group stage proceedings in second place behind China.

MESSI TO MIAMI:



Soccer star, and a few teammates, show up for Heat Celtics game

AP ■ MIAMI

Lionel Messi took a night off to watch the Miami Heat. The Inter Miami star and eight-time Ballon d'Or winner as the world's best player - along with teammates Jordi Alba, Sergio Busquets and Luis Suarez - arrived just before tip-off of the Heat playoff game with the Boston Celtics on Monday night. Messi's group — some clad in Heat attire and Busquets wearing a Heat hoodie — arrived in the players' parking garage, then were brought in through a VIP entrance before making their way to their seats in a suite atop the lower level. Messi has been to the arena before for at least one other event, but never before had arranged to be at a Heat game since moving to Miami last year.

Inter Miami is 6-2-3 so far this season in Major League Soccer play, sitting in first place in the Eastern Conference and with the most points of any team in the league. Messi had two goals and an assist in Miami's 4-1 win at New England on Saturday, and has multiple goal contributions in five straight matches - the first MLS player ever to do that. He has nine goals and seven assists in seven matches with Inter Miami this season. Messi, who led Argentina to the World Cup title in 2022, has more than 800 goals in his career for club and country, making him one of the greatest scorers in soccer history. He scored twice in the 2022 World Cup final against France, a match that ended 3-3 with Argentina prevailing 4-2 on penalty kicks.

Real Madrid coach Carlo apologises for forgetting German on his Bayern Munich return

AP ■ MUNICH

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti has apologized upon his return to Bayern Munich for not remembering his German. "Ich habe vergessen Deutsch (I have forgotten German)," the Italian coach said on Monday in his only words in that language, albeit with the word order mixed up, before the teams meet on Tuesday for the first leg of their Champions League semifinal. Ancelotti coached Bayern for just over a year during 2016-17 and won the Bundesliga, but the league title alone is not always enough to sate ambitions at the Bavarian powerhouse. Bayern had won the previous four Bundesligas. After Ancelotti made it five in a row, Bayern won the next six.

Ancelotti was forced out after a shaky start to the 2017-18 season. Losing to Paris Saint-Germain 3-0 was the final straw for club chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. "Unfortunately, we weren't as successful back then as he is now at Real," Bayern midfielder Joshua Kimmich said on Monday. Under Ancelotti, Bayern's Champions League ambitions were ended by Madrid in the quarterfinals. Borussia Dortmund knocked his team out of the German Cup, leaving just the Bundesliga. "One title is a bit scant for us," Bayern president Uli Hoenes said at the time. Ancelotti departed the club that September, his reputation tarnished after failing in the previous season in the Champions League, a competition he had won three



times before. But Ancelotti said on Monday he had only fond memories of

his time in Munich. "I was fortunate to be coach of this club. It could have been for

longer, yes, but otherwise it was a nice time," he said. "I have fantastic memories and

remember it with a lot of affection." The Italian, who led Madrid to the 2014 Champions League title, returned to the Spanish giant in 2021 after stints in charge of Napoli and Everton. He won the Champions League again in 2022, his fourth success as coach including the two titles won with AC Milan in 2003 and 2007. "He's been successful almost everywhere he's been," Kimmich noted. Ancelotti has won domestic honors with Milan, Madrid, Chelsea, Paris-Saint-Germain and Bayern. Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel also praised his counterpart on Monday. "What Carlo has done for football as a player and as a coach is at the highest level. Yet he's always very polite and humble, it's extraordinary," Tuchel said.



CSK EYE ALL ROUND STABILITY AGAINST UNPREDICTABLE PBKS

PTI ■ CHENNAI

An inconsistent Chennai Super Kings will have to display all-round solidity when they face an unpredictable Punjab Kings in their Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday. The Super Kings have 10 points from nine matches, similar figures as that of Lucknow Super Giants, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Delhi Capitals, and the defending champions would certainly like to breakaway from that mid-table gridlock with a win. However, the defending champions will be a worried lot as Punjab Kings, who have six points from nine games, are coming to this match after scaling down 262 against Kolkata Knight Riders, the highest chase in the history of T20 cricket. But the Chepauk deck is a different beast, offering a semblance of assistance to the bowlers and it was evident in CSK's impressive 78-run win over SRH in their previous match. There was no dew in Chennai on that night, and the CSK bowlers defanged SRH's potent batting unit with their

accuracy and variations after their batters put on board a 200-plus total. They need an encore against Punjab, and all eyes will be on skipper Rituraj Gaikwad, who is on a hot streak. Gaikwad has registered scores of 108 and 98 in his last two innings and New Zealand man Daryl Mitchell too seemed to have regained his touch at just the right time with a 32-ball 52 against Hyderabad. However, the real storm-force in the CSK line-up is Shivam Dube, who has pulverised the opposition bowlers while coming as an Impact Sub. While Dube has always been a spin-basher, the left-hander has now added another angle to his batting with his effective tackling of pacers. Dube so far has made 350 runs, second highest for CSK behind Gaikwad's 447, and those runs came at a strike-rate of 172.41, second only to MS Dhoni's 259.45. However, the CSK opening combination continues to be a bit iffy. Gaikwad has been a solid presence but both now-dropped Rachin Ravindra and Ajinkya Rahane have not been able to play the support role to



their skipper. Rahane's last four outings as opener produced scores of 5, 36, 1, 9, and those numbers don't reflect his experience or skill-level. However, CSK in all likelihood will continue to back him. Batting coach Michael Hussey had remarked that the 35-year-old was close to getting a big knock under his belt. On the other hand, PBKS will be desperate to carry the momentum after that record chase and climb up the ladder from the current eighth place. For that, their batters need to fire in unison once again and the onus is on Jonny Bairstow, who made a hundred against KKR, Shashank Singh and Prabhsimran Singh. But they will eye a more impact outting from wicketkeeper batter Jitesh Sharma. However, PBKS' bowling department looks a bit shaky despite having experienced campaigners such as Kagiso Rabada, Harshal Patel, Arshdeep Singh and Sam Curran in their ranks. The visitors will also require a much-improved effort from their spinners — Harpreet Brar and Rahul Chahar - as they

have scalped just seven wickets among them this season. **TEAMS (FROM):** CSK: Rituraj Gaikwad (c), MS Dhoni (wk), Aravelly Avانش, Ajinkya Rahane, Shaik Rasheed, Moeen Ali, Shivam Dube, RS Hangargekar, Ravindra Jadeja, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Daryl Mitchell, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Nishant Sindhu, Deepak Chahar, Tuskar Deshpande, Mukesh Choudhary, Mustafizur Rahman, Matheesha Pathirana, Simarjeet Singh, Prashant Solanki, Shardul Thakur, Maheesh Theekshana and Sameer Rizvi. **PBKS:** Shikhar Dhawan (c), Matthew Short, Jonny Bairstow (wk), Prabhsimran Singh (wk), Jitesh Sharma (wk), Sikandar Raza, Rishi Dhawan, Liam Livingstone, Atharva Taide, Arshdeep Singh, Nathan Ellis, Sam Curran, Kagiso Rabada, Harpreet Brar, Rahul Chahar, Harpreet Bhatia, Vidvath Kaverappa, Shivam Singh, Harshal Patel, Chris Woakes, Ashutosh Sharma, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Shashank Singh, Tanay Thyagarajan, Prince Choudhary, Rilee Rossouw.



This IPL is different, need to mentally accept challenge, says Varun Chakravarthy

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakravarthy said the teams have understood the concept of Impact Player better in this iteration of IPL and now bowlers will have to find ways to counter the ultra-aggressive approach of batsmen to make an impact on the game. Chakravarthy's spell of three for 16 played a vital role in KKR's thumping seven-wicket win over Delhi Capitals on Monday. "The Impact Player rule was there last year also. The teams have now understood how to use the impact player rule better. So, they know that there is extra batting and they want to charge from the first ball. That's how it's going," Chakravarthy said in the post-match press meet. "However much the bowlers cry, that's how it is. We've to accept that this IPL is different and mentally accept that challenge. You can't change the side of the ground or you can't change anything." Chakravarthy also said the Eden Gardens pitch offered a good amount of help to the bowlers against Delhi. "The last two matches before this, we didn't defend that well because the wickets have become very placid in the second innings. But this pitch was a little bit more turning. That was the difference. The length is basically the same for all the matches. It's just how the wicket behaves." Chakravarthy said the KKR players and management went into a huddle to find solutions after Punjab Kings managed to chase a record 262 in their previous match. "Definitely, the last match (vs PBKS) was a very hard pill to swallow. We had many conversations with the management, everyone chipped in. We spoke with the coaches Carl Crowe, Bharat Arun sir, (Gautam) Gambhir, Chandrakant (Pandit) sir, Abhishek Nair." The 32-year-old said even the KKR owner Shah Rukh Khan

pepped them up with a quick motivational talk. "Even Shah Rukh bhai, he came up to me yesterday and spoke to me a lot he said 'don't take it personally, whatever is happening this IPL is just going at a crazy rate, just don't self-doubt yourself'." **DC OPTIMISTIC TO MAKE PLAYOFFS:** After their defeat against KKR, Delhi have slipped to sixth with three matches left for them, and bowling coach James Hopes said they are optimistic of making the playoffs. Delhi next face Rajasthan Royals at home on May 7, before travelling to Bengaluru (May 12). Their last fixture in the league is against Lucknow Super Giants at home on May 14. "We have a week off now. Our destiny is still in our own hands, you might say," Hopes said. "If we can win three games and get to 16 points, that should be good enough. But we do have a week off now where we can readjust and see if we need to think a little different about anything." "Yeah, tonight was a missed opportunity, and we won't hide behind any excuses there," he said. Hopes said they could have recalibrated the target on a slow pitch. "This has been a high-scoring venue, and even though we'd lost three wickets in the power play, we had no reason to really think it wasn't going to be anything other than that." "We were still going 11 and half an over. So, we were still thinking 200-220. But I think once the spinners started to grip the ball, we saw it in Sunil (Narine) first over, it gripped a bit for him in the sixth over. "So our mistake probably lay in that we didn't recalibrate our sights on something slightly lower. I think everyone assumed that it was going to be a 240 game." "The trick is understanding that it's not that way sometimes, and you have to actually put a defendable score on the board and not go too hard."

MI camp divided, they are not performing as a team, says Clarke

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Winning major tournaments hinges on teamwork rather than individual brilliance, according to former Australia captain Michael Clarke, who reckons the Mumbai Indians camp is divided into groups, hindering players from functioning cohesively. After the sudden pre-season change in captaincy when Rohit Sharma was unceremoniously replaced by Hardik Pandya, the five-time champions are in descension. They need to win all their remaining five matches to even have a shot at qualifying for the playoffs. "Yeah, I don't know (they will make it

to the playoffs). I think it's wishful thinking for Mumbai this entire IPL." "I think there's a lot more going on than what we are seeing on the outside and you can't have that many good players and perform this inconsistently. "So, I think there are different groups inside that changing room and something is not working, they are not gelling together, they are not playing as a team," Clarke said on Star Sports Cricket Live. Despite having proven match winners like Rohit, Suryakumar Yadav, Pandya, Tim David and Jasprit Bumrah, MI have found it difficult to find victories this season, slumping to six losses from nine outings. Their three wins can be attributed to



the individual brilliance of pacer Bumrah and the big-hitting Romario Shepherd. "Individual brilliance can get them over the line, if Rohit Sharma comes in and gets another hundred or Hardik does something with the bat or Bumrah bowls like a genius again, you never know," Clarke said. "I think to win big tournaments you need to be a team and not just have individual performances and unfortunately they haven't played well as a team so I hope they turn it around, but I can't see them winning this game," he added. MI, who occupy the penultimate spot on the points table, take on Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday in Lucknow.

T20 WC bound England players to leave IPL in time to play series against Pakistan: ECB

PTI ■ LONDON

The upcoming T20 World Cup-bound England players who are currently fulfilling their IPL commitments will "return in time" for a preceding four-match T20I series against Pakistan, the country's cricket board said on Tuesday. England on Tuesday named a 15-member squad for the T20 showpiece, which will be held across June in the USA and the West Indies, with Jofra Archer returning to international cricket after a hiatus of more than 14 months. The same squad has been selected for the T20I series against Pakistan, which commences on May 22 in



Bengaluru), Moeen Ali (Chennai Super Kings), Sam Curran, Jonny Bairstow and Liam Livingstone (Punjab Kings). The most affected teams will be Royals and Knight Riders as they are poised to make the playoffs at this stage of the tournament. The English stars' departure though may not hamper teams such as Punjab Kings and RCB as they are unlikely to qualify for the playoffs. The league matches of the IPL conclude on May 19. The England World Cup squad will fly to the Caribbean on May 31 ahead of England's opening group match against Scotland at the Kensington Oval, Barbados, on June 4.

Headingley. "Selected players, currently playing in the Indian Premier League, will return in time for the series against Pakistan, which gets underway at Headingley on Wednesday 22 May 2024," the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement after naming the T20 World Cup squad. Some of the prominent English players who would have to leave the IPL before the start of the Pakistan series are: Jos Buttler (Rajasthan Royals), Phil Salt (Kolkata Knight Riders), Will Jacks and Reece Topley (Royal Challengers

Dube lot more complete player, will make an impact in T20I World Cup: Stephen Fleming

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Shivam Dube's enhanced game Understanding and completeness have impressed Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming who is confident in the left-handed allrounder's ability to make an "impact" in the upcoming World Cup. The 30-year-old, who is the second leading run-scorer for the defending champions in the ongoing IPL, made the cut to the 15-member Indian squad for the T20 global showpiece in the USA and West Indies beginning on June 1. "He is a lot more complete in terms of what he is trying to do, understanding his game, and that comes from experience," Fleming said ahead of their match against Punjab Kings. "We have worked hard on areas he wasn't so strong, but also continuing to develop his strength. So, if that form continues, he is going to be an impactful player for India (at the World Cup)." Dube has 350 runs in nine outings at a strike rate of 172.41, including three half-centuries.



"He has been fantastic. He has proven this year that there is a lot more to him than just playing spin (better)," said the former Kiwi skipper. CSK skipper Rituraj Gaikwad, who is their leading scorer with 447 runs including one century and three fifties, missed out in the squad. Asked if it was harsh to Gaikwad, Hussey said: "No... I understand the quality of players India have to try and select, (it) is

very difficult. Rituraj has done what he can, and he must be close," he said. "We hold him in the highest regard. I love the craft that he shows, and his (last) two performances have been quite majestic. "It's not just wham-bham, but he has displayed the mastery of batting. And the form that he is right now and the control that he has, it's quite outstanding. "It's not now, but there will be another change for him. If he continues his form and keeps playing well throughout the year, I will be very surprised if he is not called in." Commenting further on his batting and leadership, Fleming said: "His batting has continued from what it was. He has been spectacular the last few years. "As for captaincy, he has taken it up in his stride as he has also led his domestic team. He is very much in the mould of CSK. Very understated, lowkey and incredibly calm." The Impact Player rule continues to be a topic of debate in this IPL, with some experts expressing their apprehensions about it, remarking that it could affect team selections.



Rana suspended for one match, fined 100 per cent match fees

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders seamer Harshit Rana was on Tuesday fined 100 per cent of his match fees and suspended for one match for breaching IPL Code of Conduct during their seven-wicket win over Delhi Capitals here. Rana, who was fined 60 per cent of his match fees for giving a flying-kiss send off to Sunrisers Hyderabad batter Mayank Agarwal in an earlier match, almost repeated the same offence when he knocked over Abhishek Porel in their game against Delhi on Monday. Rana was seen pointing his hand towards Porel, indicating him to go back to pavilion and was about to give another flying kiss before he stopped short of doing that. He was also seen appealing excessively after hitting Rasikh Salam high on his pads. "Rana committed a Level 1 offence under Article 2.5 of the IPL's Code of Conduct. He admitted to the offence and

accepted the Match Referee's sanction. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding," the IPL said in a statement. "The player was earlier penalised under the same level and article of the IPL Code of Conduct," it added. Rana will now miss KKR's next match against Mumbai Indians in an away game on Friday. Article 2.5 of the IPL Code of Conduct addresses offences related to "Using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a another player in the match." In KKR's IPL opener against SRH on March 23, Rana committed two Level 1 offences under Article 2.5 of the IPL's Code of Conduct. He was fined 10 per cent and 50 per cent of his match fees for the two respective offences. Rana is KKR's joint leading wicket-taker with the spin duo of Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy. The trio have 11 wickets each.