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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 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 Covidshield 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 Covidshield 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 Covidshield vaccine, Bhardwaj 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 thrombocytopenia 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 (Thrombocytopenia Syndrome) is happening. In rare events, I can say that the vaccine has caused certain consequences and TTS."

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Amit Shah deepfake video singses 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 the 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.

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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 Prajwal Revanna has been suspended with immediate "delayed" action by the Karnataka Government.

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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.

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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 Almor 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.

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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.

BSP candidates file nomination papers

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party candidate Mohammed Sarwar Malik filed his nomination for the Lucknow Lok Sabha constituency, while Rajesh Kumar, also from the BSP, filed his nomination for Mohanlalganj on Tuesday.

A total of five nominations were filed, including three for the Lucknow Lok Sabha constituency and two for Mohanlalganj.

The BSP candidates' nominations were marked by a distinctive lack of fanfare. The candidates arrived at the venue with a small group of supporters from the party.

Sarwar Malik was accompanied by his wife, former mayoral candidate Shahin Bano, and his proposers as he made his way to the collectorate.

Malik expressed confidence in winning the Lok Sabha elections. "I am no less than other candidates and am a dedicated member of the BSP," he said. He pledged to focus on addressing unemployment among the city's youth if elected. "There are impoverished people residing in the narrow lanes of the city, and I aim to create job opportunities for them. Additionally, I plan to prioritise education and healthcare. Currently, there are no government clinics in the city's neighborhoods, which we intend to establish to improve healthcare access. Improving road infrastructure and water provision are also among our



BSP candidates (left) Mohammed Sarwar Malik, and Rajesh Kumar filed their nominations for Lucknow and Mohanlalganj, respectively, on Tuesday

priorities if we win the elections," he added. On competing against Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Malik responded, "Rajnath Singh has undertaken development work due to being in power. However, Behenji (Mayawati) has accomplished even more, as widely recognised." Regarding the prospects of SP candidate Ravi Das Mehrotra in the same constituency, Malik dismissed the party's relevance. "Our main competition is with Rajnath Singh. The SP candidate, being an MLA, has not gained acceptance in Lucknow," he added. Reminded of his past electoral defeats, Malik said he

would emerge victorious this time. Sarwar Malik's financial disclosures reveal total assets worth Rs 25.2 crore, including movable assets worth Rs 1.52 crore for himself and Rs 14.9 lakhs for his wife, along with immovable assets valued at Rs 23.7 crore for himself and Rs 52 lakh for his wife. Rajesh Kumar, who filed his nomination for the Mohanlalganj Lok Sabha constituency, expressed confidence in winning the elections. Rajesh has previously contested zila panchayat elections. Predicting BJP candidate Kaushal Kishore's defeat in

Mohanlalganj, he said: "The public has seen the truth about Kaushal Kishore and PM Narendra Modi. The public desires change." Rajesh Kumar criticised the BJP's distribution of free rations as a ploy to deceive the public. "The key issue is employment generation, not merely distributing Rs 100 worth of ration at the cost of Rs 1,000 per household. The current inflation has made essential commodities expensive, including gas cylinders, fertilisers, diesel, petrol, and mustard oil. Additionally, the alleged free ration is funded by excessive taxation on the public," he added. If elected,



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Rajesh emphasised his commitment to enhancing educational facilities and quality, as private schools are unaffordable for many. Rajesh Kumar's financial disclosures reveal movable assets worth Rs 61.2 lakh for himself and Rs 6.4 lakh for his wife, with no declared immovable assets. Meanwhile, Gopal Prasad Jaiswal (75) from the Gandhian People's Party also filed his nomination for the Lucknow Lok Sabha constituency, disclosing movable assets worth Rs. 82,900. Shatrohan Lal Rawat (56) filed his nomination from the

Mohanlalganj constituency representing the Suraksha Samaj Party, declaring immovable assets worth Rs 2 crore. Brijesh Kumar Yadav (56) from Kisan Brij Party filed his nomination for the Lucknow Lok Sabha constituency. Brijesh, a three-time Vidhan Sabha contestant, expressed his commitment to serving the people and establishing efficient governance. Brijesh Yadav's financial disclosures include movable assets worth Rs 3,37,000 for himself and Rs 30,000 for his wife, along with immovable assets valued at Rs 70 lakh for himself and Rs 30 lakh for his wife.

DM for minimum assured facilities at all polling booths

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

District Election Officer and District Magistrate Surya Pal Gangwar has issued directives to ensure minimum assured facilities (MAF) at all polling booths. He emphasised that any deficiencies in facilities should be promptly addressed, especially in booths lacking adequate amenities.

During a meeting, the district election officer provided a 23-point format to all zonal magistrates for verifying and documenting the facilities available at each booth.

The officers were instructed to personally inspect their designated booths and rectify any shortcomings immediately by coordinating with the block development officers in rural areas and zonal officers of the municipal corporations in urban areas. Special attention should be given to the condition of toilets, drinking water arrangements, and electricity, he said.

"All officers should dedicate significant time to their assigned zones, conducting regular inspections while maintaining communication with their Sector Magistrates," Gangwar said.

Furthermore, the responsibilities of zonal magistrates on polling day were outlined, particularly emphasising the safekeeping of reserve electronic voting machines (EVMs).

"It is your duty to ensure the security of EVMs at all times. EVMs should never be left unattended and must always be accompanied by officers and police personnel. If a zonal magistrate needs to leave the vehicle for any reason, a police personnel should remain in the vehicle," the district election officer said.

Additionally, polling personnel will receive essential information, including booth assignment, bus number, sector, and zonal magistrates' details, via SMS the night before departure to streamline logistics.

To facilitate the departure of polling parties, arrangements for WiFi and network boosters at Smriti Upvan are being made, along with paid counters for food and drinking water.

"All officers should ensure that polling personnel carry mobile chargers and power banks during duty," the district election officer said.

Luxury car owner held for falsely reporting theft

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Chintah police arrested the owner of a luxury car (Audi) worth around Rs 1 crore on Tuesday for falsely reporting a car theft and transporting the vehicle to an auto workshop in Delhi with the intention of dismantling it.

The accused, Ankur Srivastava, had filed a theft case on April 27 at Vibhuti Khand police station. During interrogation, Ankur admitted to orchestrating the plan to file a false theft report to claim insurance money and profit from dismantling the car. "Ankur's car had been involved in an accident in 2019, causing

its resale value to drop significantly. Unable to sell the vehicle for more than Rs 10 lakhs due to its accident history, Ankur and his friend Hitesh, who owns a car workshop in Delhi, devised the scheme to register a fake theft case and later claim insurance to maximize profits from dismantling the car," stated Prabal Pratap Singh, DCP, East zone, noting that Hitesh is currently absconding. Ankur, a resident of Para in Lucknow, had initially informed the police that his car was stolen while parked outside his office in Nirman Nigam at Vibhuti Khand. Following his complaint, a police team was

formed to investigate the alleged theft. "After reviewing footage from 150 CCTV cameras, it was discovered that Ankur was en route to Delhi from Lucknow to carry out his plan when he was apprehended by police at Mohan road cut, Sarosa Bharosa, along with the vehicle he was driving towards New Delhi," added the DCP.

In another incident, an unidentified individual engaged in WhatsApp conversations impersonating Principal Secretary, Transport, and Director General, Uttar Pradesh Administration and Management Academy, L Venkateshwar Lu. A complaint was lodged by the personal secretary of the IAS officer, Jagdish Prasad, prompting an investigation by Hazratganj police.

"The perpetrator communicated via WhatsApp with advisor Avnish Sharma and Deputy Director Sant Kumar of the Uttar Pradesh Administration and Management Academy without the knowledge of the principal secretary, regarding departmental matters," noted the complaint. Police are actively searching for the suspect involved in this impersonation case.

Private firm owner accused of criminal breach of trust

Lucknow (PNS): The owner of a private firm and his staff were accused of criminal breach of trust and forgery by a shop owner dealing in laptops at Naza Market in Hazratganj on Tuesday.

The victim, Gaurav Agarwal of Sagar Enterprises, reported that a person named Vinod from Hindustan Corporation approached him on February 29 requesting five laptops. Vinod claimed his company needed the laptops and arranged for Gaurav to speak with the company owner, Rajesh, over the phone.

On March 5, Rajesh contacted Gaurav by phone and requested him to send the five laptops along with the bills to their office at Saran Chamber. Gaurav sent his employees to deliver the laptops to the office, where they were received by a woman receptionist.

Subsequently, an employee from the firm approached the reception and took possession of the laptops, with the receptionist indicating that payment would be made after a brief delay. Despite waiting, Gaurav's employees did not receive the payment, and subsequent attempts to contact Rajesh were unsuccessful as his phone was switched off. Police have registered a case in connection.

Lucky escape for 9 female jail inmates as vehicle catches fire

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Nine female jail inmates had a miraculous escape when the prison vehicle transporting them to court suddenly caught fire near Raj Bhavan Gate Number 14, close to Mall Avenue on Tuesday afternoon. Approximately 8-9 female police officers promptly initiated a rescue operation, demonstrating exceptional bravery as they ensured the safety of the inmates without regard for their own lives.

None of the officers sustained injuries, and they successfully rescued all the inmates in a timely manner. According to the driver of the prison van, Balendra Singh, the fire originated from sparking near the GPS and camera installed in the driver's cabin.

"The van was carrying a total of 18-19 individuals, including women prisoners headed to court for their hearings," Fire Station Officer of Hazratganj RK Rawat said. The fire department of Raj Bhavan was enlisted to control the blaze that had engulfed the jail van. Lucknow fire department officials received the alert at 11:46 am from the Hazratganj fire



The vehicle carrying female jail inmates goes up in flames

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station control room. A fire tender unit from Hazratganj was dispatched to the scene, and the fire tender assigned to Vidhan Sabha duty was directed to join the rescue operation. Upon arrival, firefighters encountered intense flames emanating from the vehicle. The fire was successfully extinguished with the assistance of water pumped from a fire tender, utilising resources from the

Raj Bhavan fire service unit and fire hydrant. Meanwhile, another fire broke out at an e-rickshaw shop and garage on Tuesday afternoon, causing panic among staff and patients at a nearby private hospital in Gomti Nagar. However, no injuries were reported. According to the fire department, multiple vehicles were damaged in the fire, likely triggered by a short-circuit in one

of the shops. The fire quickly spread and engulfed the shop and garage, generating a thick cloud of smoke that filled the vicinity of Metro Hospital.

"We received the emergency call around noon. A single fire tender was dispatched and successfully extinguished the fire without any casualties," a fire official said.

Eyewitnesses described the fire as intense, exacerbated by the lack of water supply arrangements at Rajdhani garage. Due to heavy traffic obstructing the route, firefighters faced delays in reaching the scene. In response, one of the hospital's surgeons directed over half of the hospital staff to assist in spraying water onto the blaze.

"We witnessed flames and thick smoke rising into the air. We immediately began spraying water from our terrace and swiftly relocated 25 ICU patients to the ground floor as a precautionary measure," recounted a hospital staff member. He also noted that the affected shops had been constructed illegally, with no prior action taken against the owners despite complaints lodged with relevant authorities. "We will be filing an FIR with the department concerned," he added.

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NOTICE

I, Rakesh Kumar Gupta R/o 16/306, Gopinathpuram, Shuklaganj, Distt. Unnao, have to inform that the present name of daughter is Janhvi Gupta (formerly Rashika Gupta). She should now be known by the name of Janhvi Gupta in school, college, bank and other places in future always.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from ZULFIKHAR TO ZULFIQAR AHMAD S/O Peer Mohammad R/O 105/337, Chamanganj Plot No-3, Kanpur Nagar

NOTICE

Be it known to all that in my earlier issued passport no. R-884674 my name is registered as Mohammad Wasif Jafari and my mother's name is Asma Jafari and my father's name is registered as Einul Haq which is wrong. The correct name is Mohd. Wasif Jafari and Mother's name is Asma Jafari and Father's name is Ainul Haq. Now I should be known and regarded with the same name for all future purposes. Mohd. Wasif Jafari Son of Late Ainul Haq Resident of - C 80 G.T.B Nagar, Kareli, P. S. Kareli, Pargana and Tehsil Sadar, Prayagraj

NOTICE

15457215X SEP ALUK DAS VILL+P.O - CHENGELIMARI TEHSIL - CHARIDUAR DIST - SONITPUR STATE-ASSAM 784103 HERE BY DECLARE THAT MY MOTHER NAME WRONGLY ENTERED IN MY SERVICE AS PABITRA DAS INSTEAD OF CORRECT NAME NIBHA DAS VIDE AFFIDAVIT DATED NOTARY AT

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mohammad Aslaan to Muhammad Arsalan S/o Abdul Quddus R/o Mohalla Bhatpuri Distt. Kannauj for all future purpose

NOTICE

I Arjun Singh Mehra (Army No. 4203351H), son of Shri Balwant Singh Mehra, Tehsil Kanda, District Bageshwar, declare that in my army record, my wife's name is wrongly recorded as Tanuja Mehra whereas the correct name is Tanuja Mehra (Tanuja Mehra).

NOTICE

The high school Marksheet (2018) of my daughter Janvi Sonker her father's name is erroneously spelling as Ajnani Kumar Sonker the correct spelling is Anjani Kumar Sonker, resides at plot no.3049 Awasth Vikas 3, Kanpur

NOTICE

Through owner/Applicant (Tulsidas Khatri)

NOTICE

Govt to spend ₹4,000 crore on protection of animals

Lucknow (PNS): The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh will spend nearly Rs 4,000 crore on the protection, treatment, and service of animals, including cows. The department of Animal Husbandry, Dairy, and Fisheries has prepared an annual plan in this regard while a budget of Rs 3,907.1 crore has also been proposed for the same.

This includes complete details of the expenditure incurred in cow protection, veterinary education as well as other areas including veterinary hospital, polyclinic and service centre. According to the annual plan, a total amount of Rs 1,140 crore will be spent on cow conservation of which Rs 140 crore will be used to establish cow protection centres, while the remaining Rs 1,000 crore will be given as a grant for the maintenance of stray cows.

Additionally, there is a plan to spend Rs 179.74 crore on veterinary education. This includes Rs 100 crore for the establishment of veterinary colleges in Gorakhpur and Bhadohi, Rs 61.74 crore for providing salary assistance and grants to Pandit Deen Dayal Veterinary Science University and Cow Research Institute in Mathura, and Rs 18 crore as non-salary assistance aid.

7 newly-recruited govt employees booked for using fake certificates

Lucknow (PNS): Seven people, including a woman, who were recently recruited in the UP Horticulture and Food Processing department, have been booked for allegedly using fake diploma certificates in food processing as part of their eligibility for the post. A case was registered with Hazratganj police. The deputy director of Horticulture and Food Processing filed a complaint against seven candidates who had submitted counterfeit one-year diploma certificates in food processing, which was a requirement for the position of Supervisor Category-3 in the department. The complaint also implicates an unidentified individual involved in the scam. The complaint was filed by Praveen Kumar.

The accused named in the case are Alok Agrahari from Sultanpur, Pankaj Kumar Yadav from Pratnagarh, Amit Kumar from Kannauj, Anuradha Verma from Barabanki, Ved Prakash Singh from Prayagraj, Raj Kishor Patel from Hamirpur, and Ravindra Singh from Prayagraj (a contractual employee). An unidentified man was also mentioned in the complaint.

It was alleged that Alok Agrahari and Ravindra Singh submitted diploma certificates from Krishna Dev Arya University, Andhra Pradesh, while Pankaj

Kumar Yadav, Amit Kumar, and Anuradha Verma submitted certificates purportedly from their respective home districts. Raj Kishor Patel did not disclose his diploma during the interview but later submitted a certificate from Krishna Devo Arya University.

However, upon verification request from Krishna Deo University, it was revealed that the university did not offer any diploma course of this nature, rendering the certificates invalid. The deputy director confirmed that the certificates of the named candidates were found to be fraudulent. As a result, the employment of Alok Agrahari, Pankaj Kumar Yadav, Amit Kumar, Anuradha Verma, and Ved Prakash Singh was terminated.

Disciplinary action was initiated against contractual employee Ravindra Singh, and Raj Kishor Patel also faced repercussions. Patel filed a writ at the Allahabad High Court stating that he did not use the fake diploma cited by Krishna Deo Arya University. He acknowledged completing a diploma from the university and provided an affidavit consenting to the recovery of his salary and termination of his employment. Police have registered a case under relevant sections of the IPC based on the complaint.

Prisoner found hanging in jail

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A convicted prisoner, lodged in the Etah district jail, has been found dead under suspicious circumstances inside the prison campus, officials said on Tuesday.

Etah Jail Superintendent Amit Chaudhary said that a convicted prisoner named Sajid was found hanging from a fan with a towel tied around his neck in the jail. The prisoner was sentenced to 10 years under IPC Section 376 and 20 years under the POCSO Act. The relatives of the deceased have been informed.

The jail official said that a magisterial inquiry would be held into the matter. He was found dead on Monday night. Sajid (24), a resident of Hindu Nagar, Etah, was in jail since 2021. The body has been sent for autopsy and further investigation is on.

Meanwhile in Chitrakoot, a woman allegedly ended her life along with her two sons following a dispute with her husband over a sum of Rs 200. According to reports, the woman tied her two sons to her waist and jumped into a well after she discovered that her husband had given Rs 200 to his mother, who was going to visit her ailing mother. Sambit Kol, a resident of Jhalamal Colony in the Unchahar area of Manikpur police station, had given his mother Rs 200. He left for some work thereafter. When he came

back, he found his wife and children missing.

After a hectic search, the bodies of the trio were recovered from a well outside the village. SP Arun Singh, and SDM Manikpur Pankaj Singh reached the spot with police force and a forensic team. Siyawati, mother of Sambital Kol, living in Majra Jhalamal of Unchadhil village of Manikpur police station, was going to her maternal home in Lamhi village of Bargharh police station. His 22-year-old wife Anju got angry over the issue and had a heated exchange with him. When Sambital returned from Unchadhil, he did not find his wife and two children — three-year-old Sudhir and eight-month-old Sudeep — at home. Villagers informed him that they had seen Anju heading towards the fields with the children.

During the search, he reached a well situated in the middle of the fields, about a kilometre away from his house. There, he discovered the bodies of all

three. Police station incharge Rita Singh oversaw the retrieval of the bodies.

The superintendent of police stated that Anju, along with her children, had committed suicide over a dispute involving just Rs 200.

Meanwhile in Binore, two trucks collided with each other and one of them overturned on a car, leaving its driver dead, the police said on Wednesday. Binjor police station in-charge Sushil Kumar said the accident occurred Tuesday morning at the Barrage road when Imran (32) was travelling with his family to Haryana.

Two trucks, one loaded with rice sacks, collided and overturned on Imran car and it caught fire, Kumar said. Five of Imran's family members were rescued safely but he got trapped between the steering wheel and the car seat. Police tried to pull him out but his car caught fire. However, by the time a fire brigade could control the blaze, Imran had died, he said.

D.A-V. College Kanpur - 208001
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TENDER NOTICE
Ref. No. 23/Nivida/2024 Dated: 30-04-2024
Tenders are invited from suitable firms for planning and execution of Rain Water Harvesting system in our college. Tender Form by paying Rs. 500/- can be obtained from the office of the college during office hours. Interested parties are required to send sealed tenders to the college office within 05 days of this publication. Principal will have right to reject tenders without any notice.
PRINCIPAL

'People won't accept those giving quota to specific religious group'

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 Gorakhnath 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 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.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with a child inside the Gorakhnath Temple premises on Tuesday

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 religious-based reservations in Karnataka by infringing upon the OBC reservation. "The Election Commission has also sought a report from the Karnataka government regard-

ing this issue," he added. Yogi said that the BJP fully respects Baba Saheb Dr Ambedkar and all the framers of the Constitution. He stated, "The BJP is committed to fulfilling its constitutional obligations with sincerity, in accordance with the vision of the Constitution makers, recognising the Constitution of India as the supreme guiding principle. BJP is the only party which has fully respected the values and ideals of Baba Saheb Ambedkar. Panchatheerthas have been constructed. The idea of celebrating the year 2025 as the National Tribal Pride Year has been included in our Sankalp Patra."

In response to a question, Yogi remarked that the Congress leadership has proven to be a complete failure. "Even members within the Congress itself lack trust in their leadership," he said. He elaborated, "This is evident as the Congress candidates are withdrawing from electoral contests in certain regions, state presidents are resigning, and at some places the declared candidates are

withdrawing their candidature and taking membership of the Bharatiya Janata Party. As a result, in their frustration, the remaining leaders of Congress are resorting to baseless and concocted accusations."

'GAU SEVA'

Despite his busy schedule amid the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited the Gorakhnath Temple on Monday evening, engaged with children and performed 'gau seva', before departing for West Bengal for the party's election campaign early Tuesday morning. Following his overnight stay, CM Yogi worshipped at Gorakhnath Temple and sought blessings from his guru, Mahant Avaidyanath, at his memorial site early Tuesday morning. Subsequently, Yogi arrived at the temple's cowshed where he fed the cows roti and jaggery. While touring the temple premises, the CM noticed a child named Shreyansh, accompanied by his relatives. He blessed the child and offered him chocolates.

Govt plan to amend Constitution to deny quota to SC/ST: Cong

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Continuing the war of words over 'reservation', the Congress on Tuesday accused the Narendra Modi-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the Centre of planning to amend the Constitution to end reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Earlier, BJP leaders accused the Congress of planning to re-allocate reservation from Dalits to Muslims.

Addressing a press conference at the UPCC headquarters on Tuesday morning, former MP and senior Congress leader PL Punia stated that as soon as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government came to power at the Centre, it began exploiting Dalits and other marginalised communities, indicating that the BJP would intensify its actions in the future.

Punia claimed that following their significant majority, the BJP would challenge the Constitution drafted by Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar. He alleged that since coming to power in 2014, the Modi government first targeted the Fair Compensation Law for Farmers' Land and later introduced harsh agricultural laws to undermine farmers' incomes.

This government action directly affected 17.34 million SC families, 12.67 million ST families, and over 70 million OBC category farmer families nationwide, he pointed out. Punia highlighted that the Modi government initiated a second major assault by privatising public sector enterprises. He argued that after privatisation, maintaining SC/ST and



Congress leader PL Punia (left) during a press conference in Lucknow

OBC reservations in the private sector would be challenging. Approximately 10.31 lakh employees work in Central Public Sector enterprises, including 1,81,000 SC, 1,02,000 ST, and 1,97,000 OBC employees. He alleged that Modi intends to privatise these public sector enterprises to eliminate reservations.

Punia also accused the Modi government of undermining reservation through outsourcing in government jobs. He cited statements from senior BJP leaders like former ministers Anant Hegde, Lallu Singh, and Jyoti Mirdha, who suggested that Modi needed 400 seats to amend the Constitution. He mentioned old videos of Modi's current allies discussing the abolition of caste-based reservations. Additionally, Punia highlighted comments from Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh leaders questioning the reservation system.

Meanwhile, industrialists close to the Modi government reportedly earn Rs 1,600 crore daily, whereas 80% of SC/ST

and OBC farmers earn only Rs 27 per day, he said.

Punia claimed that the situation is similar for 20 crore SC/ST and OBC MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) labourers. He criticised Modi for increasing MNREGA wages in Uttar Pradesh by just Rs 7, reaching Rs 237, despite a parliamentary committee recommendation of Rs 375 per day.

Punia emphasised Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi's demand for a caste census from the "anti-reservation Modi government." He asserted that the Congress had planned to conduct a social, economic, and caste census in 2021, but the Modi government kept running away citing Covid. He added that the Congress would conduct a caste census as soon as it came to power. "MNREGA wages will be given at Rs 400 per day and we will also bring legal rights of support price to facilitate farmers," he added.

Cong workers demand Gandhi family member in Amethi

Amethi: Congress workers here in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday held a sit-in, demanding that the party name a member of the Gandhi family as its candidate from the Amethi Lok Sabha seat. The constituency goes to polls on May 20 in the fifth round of the seven-phase general elections. Only three days are left for the filing of nomination papers but the Congress is yet to declare a candidate for the seat, the party's district spokesperson, Anil Singh, said. Leaders and workers, including Congress district president Pradeep Singhal and former district president Yogendra Mishra, were gathered at the party office here with posters reading "Amethi maange Rahul Gandhi. Amethi Maange Priyanka Gandhi (Amethi wants Rahul Gandhi or (his sister) Priyanka Gandhi Vadra)".

"People of the constituency and Congress workers want a member of the Gandhi family as their candidate. We want Rahul Gandhi to contest from Amethi to bring back its lost honour," Singh said. The demonstrators demanded that the Congress immediately declare a candidate in Amethi and that its nominee be from the Gandhi family. The seat was won by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in 2014. In 2019, Gandhi had fought the general elections from Wayanad in Kerala and Amethi. He lost Amethi to BJP's Smriti Irani. Irani is the BJP's candidate this time too and she filed her nomination papers on April 29 for contesting from the constituency that was once regarded as a Gandhi family bastion. **PTI**

SP nominee's student life pictures go viral

Budaun: After his purported photographs surfaced on social media with some girls, Samajwadi party candidate Aditya Yadav on Tuesday alleged that some of his pictures from his student life were made viral by the BJP IT department. In the pictures that surfaced on the internet, Yadav was seen posing in a swimming pool with some girls.

"These photographs are of my student life. Some of the girls shown in the pictures are my friends and some are sisters, who tie Rakhi on my hand," he told reporters. "As I am married, some are my wife's friends also. By making these photos viral, BJP has violated the right to privacy of these girls. It shows their (BJP) character. For politics they can go down to any level," he said. "It is possible that they (BJP) might release my obscene videos using AI (Artificial Intelligence)," he said. Yadav further claimed that SP would comfortably win the polls from the Budaun Lok Sabha constituency because of which the BJP was frustrated. Polling in Budaun will be held in the third phase on May 7. **PTI**

'Vote jehad' appeal: Police book Salman Khurshid, niece Maria

Farrukhabad: The Uttar Pradesh Police Tuesday booked Congress leader Salman Khurshid and his niece Maria Alam after she called for a "vote jehad" in favour of the INDIA bloc candidate from Farrukhabad Lok Sabha seat. Seeking votes for INDIA bloc candidate Naval Kishore Shukla on Monday, Alam, a Samajwadi Party (SP) leader, made an appeal for "vote jehad", terming it as necessary in the current situation for the minority community to drive away the BJP government.

Taking cognisance of the remarks made by Maria Alam, a case was registered against her for violating the provisions of the IPC and Representation of People Act following a complaint made by the Flying Squad and Surveillance Team. "The case was registered under sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) of the IPC and section 125 (promoting enmity between classes in connection with election) of the Representation of People Act," he said.

Alam, while addressing an election meeting, made an appeal for "vote jehad", saying "in the current situation, 'vote jehad' is necessary for the minority community". She said, "Together do vote jehad - with intelligence, without being sentimental and with silence. As we can only do vote jehad to drive away this Sanghi government." Stressing that it was time to join hands, she said otherwise this "Sanghi government will succeed in wiping out our existence". "People say that Constitution and democracy are under threat. But I say that insanity

at (humanity) is under threat. "Now there is an attack on 'insaniyat'. If you want to save the country, its beauty and 'ganga-jamuni' (composite) culture, then vote very intelligently without getting influenced by anyone," she stressed. The video of Alam's statement has also gone viral on social media.

Asked to comment on the statement of his niece, Khurshid said generally he avoids using such words because its literal meaning is misinterpreted. "Jehad means to fight against a situation. Her intention must have been to carry out vote jehad to protect the Constitution," he said. On his candidature from INDIA bloc from the Farrukhabad seat, Khurshid said he was offered a Congress ticket from Aligarh. But he politely declined saying that "I am Salman Khurshid from Farrukhabad and I stay that only". This was the first public meeting of the INDIA bloc in Farrukhabad with most of the senior leaders of the Congress and the SP present together on the dias. **PTI**

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PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, while campaigning in Etawah on Tuesday, cautioned the voters against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, emphasising that it cannot be trusted as it has landed the people in trouble by a series of ill-conceived policy decisions. "The BJP government's decisions like demonetisation, GST and electoral bonds not only caused huge inconvenience to the people but added fuel to the fire of inflation," Akhilesh said while addressing whistle-stop meetings in Etawah on Tuesday. Etawah goes to polls in the fourth phase on May 13. With an eye on seats of the Yadav belt going to polls in the third phase on May 7, Akhilesh is campaigning in surrounding areas where the members of his family are contesting. In the third phase, 10 Lok Sabha constituencies are going to polls, including Sambhal, Hathras, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Etah,

Badaun, Bareilly, and Aonla. The key seats in the third phase are Mainpuri, Firozabad, Etah, and Budaun. Akhilesh's wife Dimple Yadav is in fray from Mainpuri, while his cousin Aditya Yadav is contesting from Budaun. Akshay Yadav, another cousin of Akhilesh, is contesting from Firozabad. It remains to be seen whether Dimple retains the Samajwadi Party pocket borough or BJP's Jaiveer Singh springs a surprise in Mainpuri.

Constituencies that will see a three-way fight between the NDA, INDIA bloc and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) are Sambhal, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Mainpuri, and Aonla. A two-way contest between the BJP and the Samajwadi Party will be observed in seats like Hathras, Firozabad, Etah, and Budaun. Akhilesh said the demonetisation of the high-value currency notes was a disaster for the economy as it destroyed the informal sector, causing huge job losses due to the closure of

the running enterprises in medium small and micro enterprise sector.

He said the BJP leaders who earlier praised demonetisation as a land-mark decision of the government are now maintaining silence on the issue. Targeting PM Narendra Modi on the issue of electoral bonds, Akhilesh said: "The BJP launched an extortion drive across the nation and corporate entities were forced to pay as enforcement agencies like Enforcement directorate, CBO and Income Tax department were unleashed to raid their premises."

He said the poor are forced to cough up more and more for diesel, petrol and LPG cylinders. "The introduction of GST in 2017 dealt a huge blow to the trade and industry, and small traders were thrown out of business," the SP chief said, adding: "The BJP is a party of liars and there is a huge gap in their promises and actions." "The BJP constantly made false promises to the people. They promised to double the

income of farmers but ditched them. They promised two crore jobs to the youth each year. However, the youth were left in the lurch and many lost their jobs due to the policies of the BJP government. During the last ten years, the Modi government abysmally failed to live up to the aspirations of the people and the Constitution framed by Dr Ambedkar. The BJP inflicted damage to the constitutional framework by misusing and weakening the constitutional institutions," Akhilesh alleged.

"The BJP has used the constitutional bodies to target its political opponents and deprived the people of their constitutional rights like reservation in government jobs and other institutions. The united front put up by the opposition block (INDIA) has unnerved the BJP which is in search of new tactics to deflect the attention of the people from its failures," said the SP chief, who will address election meetings in Etawah and Mainpuri on Wednesday.

Samajik Nyay Navlok Party, Gondwana Gantantra Party to support BJP

Lucknow: The Samajik Nyay Navlok Party and the Gondwana Gantantra Party on Tuesday announced their support to the BJP, the party's Uttar Pradesh unit said. In a statement, the BJP said the two parties declared their support in the presence of state BJP chief Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary and state Jal Shakti Minister Swatantra Dev Singh. They took this decision as they are impressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policies of service, good governance and welfare for the poor, it said. Samajik Nyay Navlok Party national president Lekhraj Singh and Gondwana Gantantra Party state president Ramnath Gond along with officials of their parties handed over letters of support to the BJP leaders. Chaudhary lauded the parties for supporting the BJP's works under the leadership of the Prime Minister Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. "We all will work together with the resolve to make Modi ji the prime minister for a third time," he said. **PTI**

Will remember 'unilateral action', says SP's Sambhal candidate

Sambhal: The Samajwadi Party's Sambhal candidate has said he will remember the "unilateral action" after a case was registered against him for alleged inflammatory statements, and alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is speaking in a language not spoken by even ministers and MLAs.

Ziaur Rehman Barq was on Monday booked for allegedly making inflammatory statements regarding gangster-politicians Atiq Ahmad and Mukhtar Ansari, officials said. Ahmad was gunned down in police custody in Prayagraj last year while Ansari died of cardiac arrest in a hospital in Banda last month. Speaking in the Sarai Tareen town late on Monday, Barq said, "I want to ask the Election Commission, police and administration officials, nothing is done if BJP leaders violate the model code of conduct but cases are lodged against us even if we say the right thing within limits."

"Remember, that these days will not last forever. Remember, times change. I will never forget the one-sided action taken against us," he warned. Barq also lashed out at Modi

over his recent speeches. "We are surprised that the country's prime minister has started using the kind of language that even a minister or an MLA should not use ... such words are being used for us, for our community." "There is a Constitution, this country should be run according to the Constitution. The entire opposition is contesting the elections to save the Constitution. This government wants to suppress the opposition," he alleged. The Samajwadi Party leader also claimed that the BJP wants to change the Constitution. "Their (BJP's) intention is to change the Constitution. In the first phase, where BJP was strong, the INDI alliance and the Samajwadi Party are now

winning that phase. This storm is not going to stop till the seventh phase. This will stop only after changing the government," he asserted. Police on Monday said four to five unidentified people besides Barq have also been named as accused in the case. Addressing an election meeting in Sambhal on Sunday, Barq appealed to not to let the "sacrifices of Atiq Ahmad, Mukhtar Ansari and other leaders go in vain". Circle Officer (Sambhal) Anuj Kumar said Barq portrayed "criminals as heroes" in his "objectionable speech". He has been booked under sections 171C (undue influence in elections), 153A (promoting enmity) and 188 (disobedience) of the Indian Penal Code, Kumar said. **PTI**

RLD throws weight behind Kaushal Kishore

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

National spokesperson of Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) Anil Dubey attended a meeting organised by senior BJP leader Rajesh Shukla in the Omnagar locality of Alambagh in support of NDA candidate and Union Minister Kaushal Kishore for the Mohanlalganj parliamentary constituency. Dubey announced RLD's support for Kaushal Kishore and urged the public to ensure his victory for the third consecutive term with a significant majority. In the presence of MLA Yogesh Shukla, former MLC Arvind Tripathi Guddu, senior BJP leader Narendra Singh Rana, and RLD state general secretary Manoj Singh Chauhan, Dubey emphasised

the importance of electing Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a third term and urged voters to support the NDA candidate with resounding votes. Dubey highlighted the dedicated efforts of RLD workers across the state in fulfilling the mission set forth by RLD national president Jayant Chaudhary to secure victories for NDA candidates. He mentioned that RLD workers had initiated an extensive public relations campaign in every village and locality within the Mohanlalganj constituency to ensure Kaushal Kishore's success, with a significant turnout of RLD workers. Meanwhile, former Congress Party leader Ruchi Sharma, along with hundreds of her female colleagues, officially joined the Rashtriya Lok Dal

during a membership drive at the party headquarters. The event, presided over by national secretary Anupam Mishra, witnessed the participation of state spokesperson Ankur Saxena, who attributed the successful recruitment of Ruchi Sharma and her associates to the diligent efforts of RLD leader Shalini Singh. Saxena highlighted that Ruchi Sharma was inspired by the ideologies of Bharat Ratna Chaudhary Charan Singh and expressed confidence in the leadership of Chaudhary Jayant Singh. During the event, national secretary office incharge Suresh Kumar Srivastava, Ramavati Tiwari, Preeti Srivastava, and members of Sarvpratham Nari Shakti Sangathan paid respects

to Chaudhary Charan Singh's statue with floral tributes and exchanged greetings with flower bouquets.

Anupam Mishra thanked the new members for joining RLD, stating that their inclusion strengthened the Nari Shakti Organisation within the party. He emphasised that their support would bolster the political standing of Chaudhary Jayant Singh and highlighted the growing participation of women within RLD. Mishra encouraged the participants to view RLD as a family rather than just a political party and urged women attendees to vote for NDA candidates, including Defense Minister Rajnath Singh and Mohanlalganj contestant Kaushal Kishore.

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TENDER NOTICE

Ref. No. 24/Nivida/2024 Dated: 30-04-2024
Tenders are invited from G.S.T registered firms for Audio System solution. Details for required accessories can be obtained from the office. Tender Form by paying Rs. 500/- can be obtained from the office of the college during office hours. Interested parties are required to send sealed tenders to the college office within 05 days of this publication. Principal will have right to reject tenders without any notice. **PRINCIPAL**

Air Marshal reiterates need to be geared up for advancement in military technologies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Air Marshal Vibhas Pande AVSM AVSM VSM Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Maintenance Command along with Ruchira Pande, President Air Force Family Welfare Association (Regional) paid a two-day visit to Air Force Station, Kanpur, from April 29 to 30. They were received by Air Commodore MK Praveen Vayusena Medal Air Officer Commanding, Air Force Station Kanpur and Megha Praveen, President Air Force Family Welfare Association (Local). The Air Marshal released the 2500th Viper Aero engine of Kiran MK IIA Aircraft which has been the backbone of fighter pilot training of Indian Air Force (IAF). This achievement by the Overhaul Line, which was established in 1974, is a significant milestone as it produces approximately 50 engines per year. He also visited the other units and recommissioned the Painting Hangar of AN-32 aircraft which is a one of its type

facility in the IAF. The Air Marshal, who has close to 40 yrs of service experience, addressed all airwarriors of the station and reiterated the need for all to be geared up for the advancement in the mili-



Air Marshal Vibhas Pande visiting Air Force Station, Kanpur.

tary technologies and war fighting capabilities and to be prepared for changing ecosystem of cyber warfare. He stressed on 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat'. He appreciated the personnel for displaying their outstanding mettle in overhauling vintage machines

despite adversities of obsolescence. He also asked personnel to be careful on their personal front and to be on the lookout for anti-establishment forces. He appreciated the efforts of Air Force Station Kanpur

The Air Marshal and the President AFFWA (R) witnessed a spectacular cultural programme organised by Air Force Family Welfare Association which highlighted cultural unity and diversity of the country.

MISHAP: A bike-borne couple was killed and their son was seriously injured when a speeding dumper knocked them down near Ghatu Kheda bridge in Maharajpur police station area on Tuesday. The residents got the injured son admitted to Kashiaram Hospital. The villagers staged an agitation and blocked the road. They caught hold of the mud-laden dumper while its driver escaped from the spot. ACP Chakeri Dilip Singh along with SDM and circle force rushed to spot and pacified the issue. Munshilal Nishad (60) of Tilsabri Khurd village along with Nankhi Devi (55) and son Sriram (32) was going to Jahanabad on the bike when the speeding dumper knocked them down and in a bid to escape from the spot, ran over the couple.

75-year-old man murdered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 75-year-old man was murdered by crushing his head in Ganganagar. The body of the elderly man was found on Tuesday afternoon. The reason for the murder is not clear. The police are interrogating the family members in this connection. Asharam of Fazilabad Kalpur village under Bahria police station went to sleep on the upper floor late on Monday night. He used to wake up late in the morning. When he did not come down till 12 noon, the people of the house went

upstairs and were shocked to see Asharam's body. On getting information the Bahria police took the body into possession. The forensic team also conducted the investigation. DCP Ganga Nagar Abhishek Bharti reached in the afternoon. He interrogated the neighbors along with the family members. The old man has serious wounds on his head. The DCP said investigation is being done on many points.

On the other hand the Prayagraj police arrested a man posing himself as a sub-inspector. He who was committing

fraud in the name of police in many districts of the state. The police had been receiving complaints about him from Bhadohi for a long time. The police was trying to catch him red-handed. The accused was caught from Trivenipuram Khali Maidan under Jhansi police station area. The police recovered a fake identity card, PAN card in three different names and a bike from him. DCP City Deepak Bhukar said the accused Dilip Kumar Shukla confessed during interrogation that he had duped people of districts like

Prayagraj, Kaushambi, Pratapgarh, Bhadohi, Varanasi etc.

CLEANLINESS DRIVE: Member of Uttar Pradesh Kinnar Welfare Board and Mahamandaleshwar of Kinnar Akhara, Kaushalya Nand Giri has been made the brand ambassador of the cleanliness campaign by the Municipal Corporation. Municipal Corporation will now be spreading the message of cleanliness through Kinnars. Assistant Municipal Commissioner Deepshikha Pandey announced this here.

64 polling personnel found absent

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A total of 64 polling personnel, including 27 presiding officers and 37 first polling officers, were found absent during the electronic voting machine (EVM) related training on the first day in Uday Pratap College campus on Monday. For the smooth conduct of Lok Sabha General Elections-2024, the first training of polling personnel was held in two shifts at Uday Pratap Inter College, Uday Pratap Public School and RSMT located in Uday Pratap College campus. The first shift was conducted from 10 am to

1 pm while second from 2 pm to 5 pm. A total of 3,040 personnel were called to all three centres for training. In Uday Pratap Inter College, 11 presiding officers and 11 first polling officers were found absent in both the shifts while in RSMT, eight presiding officers and 13 first polling officers were found absent and in Uday Pratap Public School, eight presiding officers and 13 first polling officers were found absent. Hence, a total of 27 presiding officers and 37 first polling officers were found absent on the day. Chief Development Officer/in-

charge Personnel Himanshu Nagpal directed the heads of departments concerned to stop the salaries of the day of all the absent employees and asked the absent employees to get the training next day. If they do not do so, the chief development officer instructed all the departmental officers to inform them by filing a First Information Report (FIR) under the relevant sections of the Election Commission against the absent employees.

Before this, the chief development officer while getting introduced to the election staff, gave them various elec-

tion related information and provided guidelines regarding training.

CHEQUE PRESENTED: On instructions of Consolidation Commissioner Uttar Pradesh (Lucknow), a cheque of ₹10.02 lakh was presented to Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya Cancer Centre / Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital Varanasi by District Magistrate S Rajalingam here on Tuesday. This charity money has been made available jointly by 16 districts of the state for the construction of sports fields for children suffering from cancer.

BLW GM given emotional farewell

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Eight officers and employees including General Manager (GM) Basudev Panda retired on Tuesday. Panda assumed the charge of GM of Banaras Locomotive Works on March 19, 2023. In a programme organised at BLW, the 'Guard of Honour' was given by the Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel in the honour of General Manager Basudev Panda, after which Panda inspected the contingents. On the occasion, the principal department heads, department heads, officers and employees of Banaras Locomotive Works bid an emotional farewell to the GM.

Before assuming this charge, Panda was holding the post of Additional Member (Traction) in Railway Board. Panda, an officer of the Indian Railway Electrical Engineering Service of 1986 batch, has completed his B Tech in Electrical Engineering from IIT Kanpur and topped the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) examina-



Retiring GM Basudev Panda being given emotional farewell at BLW in Varanasi on Tuesday.

tion. After training, he worked on various electrification projects of Railways. He has the credit of successfully commissioning the first 2X25 kilo volt electrification project of Indian Railways in Anuppur-Katni railway section of Bilaspur Division. He discharged various challenging responsibilities like Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (SDEE/Loco Shed),

Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction), Chief Electrical Loco Engineer, Chief Power Distribution Engineer, Chief Project Manager (Railway Electrification). He has also rendered notable services on the posts of Divisional Railway Manager, Sealdah and Principal Chief Electrical Engineer, East Coast Railway (ECR).

During his tenure, the work of improving the overhead equipment of tunnels in Kothavala-Kirandul line of Waltair Division and Chakradharpur Division was successfully completed. During his tenure, he has received management training in Singapore, Malaysia and Italy and training in China for heavy goods transportation.

While holding the post of general manager in BLW, he laid emphasis on many important tasks like vendor development and took Banaras Locomotive Works to new heights by achieving unprecedented heights in the direction of production of electric locomotives.

In his tenure, during the financial year 2023-24, the Banaras Locomotive Works set a new record by manufacturing 475 locos, which is the highest loco production in any financial year since the inception of BLW.

During his tenure, Banaras Locomotive Works achieved a milestone by producing the 10,000th locomotive.

Seminar on optimisation of resources for bioenergy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

An all India seminar on "Planning and Optimisation of Resources for Bioenergy" was organized at National Sugar Institute here on Tuesday. The event was jointly organised by National Sugar Institute (NSI), Kanpur, The Asian Association of Sugar Cane Technologists, Lucknow, and Spray Engineering Devices Limited, Chandigarh.

Executive presidents, chief executive officers, general managers and senior level officials of sugar factories and distillery units located in major sugar producing states of India participated in this seminar. In the inaugural session of the seminar, Director of NSI, Professor D Swain, Director General of Vasantdada Sugar Institute Sambhaji K Patil, Professor and Head Biochemistry Department Dr Seema Paroha, President of The Asian Association of Sugar Cane Technologists KP Singh, Chairman and Managing Director of Spray Engineering Devices Ltd Vivek Verma and



A seminar on "Planning and Optimisation of Resources for Bioenergy" was organised at NSI Kanpur on Tuesday.

Secretary General of The Asian Association of Sugar Cane Technologists PKN Singh shared the dais. The programme was started with lighting the lamp and garlanding of Maa Saraswati by the Director of the Institute Prof D Swain and other dignitaries present on the dais. While addressing the seminar, Prof Swain said that merely by using feedstocks from the sugar industry and grains, the targeted 20 per cent ethanol blending in petrol may not be achieved by 2025 and non-food feedstocks may be

developed for ethanol production to cope up with the blending requirements, which also avoid food vs fuel conflict. He emphasised on production of raw sugar over plantation of white sugar which is not only healthier for human consumption but also a cost economical process. He also said that sugar industry has to look forward towards balancing sugar demand-supply equilibrium and to emerge as a promising hub for bio-based products and green technologies.

During his welcome

remarks, President of Association KP Singh, told about the relevance and importance of the theme of the seminar with the current scenario of sugar and its allied sector. Director General Vasantdada Sugar Institute Sambhaji K Patil, said that sugar industry which is a hub for production of clean, green and renewable energy can be a potential source of green hydrogen a fuel for the future. Professor and Head Biochemistry Department, Dr Seema Paroha, said the commercial proven technologies such as utilisation of filter cake for production of bio-gas/CBG to the extent of about two million metric tonnes per annum may prove to be a tool for producing bio-energy and adding value to the revenue pot of the sugar factories, which is also need of the hour. Chairman and Managing Director SEDL, Vivek Verma explained efficient utilisation of bio-mass for ethanol, fertiliser, bio-degradable polymers, organic chemicals etc. rather than burning it into the boiler and emphasised on the possi-

bilities for implementing MVR technologies as replacement of boiler in the sugar and grain based distillery units. Secretary General of Association PKN Singh delivered a vote of thanks. Seven abstract research papers were presented in the seminar on the topics related to the latest development and opportunities in Indian sugar industry for energy efficiency in both the aspects electrical and thermal energy as well, potential of green hydrogen from the sugar industry, supply chain and process parameter optimisation, viability of natural crystal sugar and bio-based sustainable economy.

SK Trivedi, Ashok Garg, Sanjay Chauhan, Vinay Kumar, Dr. R. Ananthakalshmi, Dr. Ashok Kumar, Virendra Kumar, Dr. Sudhashu Mohan, Mahendra Yadav, VP Singh, K Konde, AK Nanda, Amar Singh and Amit Negi etc were present in the seminar. It ended with concluding remarks given by the convener of the programme and Assistant Professor of Sugar Engineering, Anoop Kumar Kanaujia.

MC inspects progress of works

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Municipal Commissioner (MC) Shivsharanappa GN inspected the progress of works being carried out at the Central Park, Shastri Nagar, on Monday. He was accompanied by zonal engineer Diwakar Bhaskar, Uday Superintendent Dr VK Shanker, zonal officer-6 Vijay Shanker Shukla and the contractor concerned. During the inspection, he found that under the approved projects, plantation of grass was over.

He directed the zonal engineer Diwakar Bhaskar to get two practice pitch, cement astro pitch and two pitch ready in the middle of the park under any circumstances within next 15 days for cricket. With the preparation of these pitches, the training/practice of around 100 children would be possible every day there, he said.

Portable ultrasound, echo machines inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The newly-procured two portable ultrasound and echocardiogram machines of the Department of Geriatric Medicine of the Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) were inaugurated by Director of IMS-BHU Prof SN Sankhwar here on Tuesday. The director appreciated the initiatives taken by the department for selfless care of the older patients of Purvanchal (eastern UP) and encouraged the resident doctors, nursing staff, paramedics and other support staff to continue working hard for patient benefit. The department has been providing free in-house bedside electrocardiogram and spirometry facilities and has facilities for body composition analyzer and hand grip dynamometer for frailty assessment, all of which are provided as free facilities at present. The head of the Department Dr SS Chakrabarti informed that bedside ultrasound and echo facilities will be

a boon for elderly patients. He said for several procedures, they will not need a referral to the Department of Radiodiagnosis or Cardiology. Routine screening ultrasound of the abdomen, chest ultrasound for pleural effusion, respiratory distress syndrome, pneumonia, and basic investigations for cardiac conditions will be possible in the geriatric ward itself. Diagnostic procedures such as aspiration of ascitic fluid (abdominal), pleural fluid, and joint fluid will be started using ultrasound guidance in due course, he added. "Emergency conditions such as deep vein thrombosis, pulmonary embolism, and acute myocardial infarction may be diagnosed at the bedside, and fluid management of elderly patients which is of great importance in the hot summer months will be possible using ultrasound guidance as per the latest protocols", he said. Prof Ashok Chaudhary, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Prof Anup Singh of the Department of Geriatric Medicine and others were present.

Farewell ceremony held



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A grand farewell ceremony was organised by the IFFCO Officers' Association on Tuesday in honour of the officers retiring from the IFFCO Phulpur unit - Vishwajeet Srivastava, SK Malhotra and Mahendra Kumar Pandey.

On the occasion the retiring officers recalled their old memories related to IFFCO and told about their journey so far. Senior Executive Director (Unit Head) Sanjay Kudesia in his message wished

the retiring officers a healthy, happy and long life. The programme was conducted by SK Awasthi. General Manager AP Rajendran, JGMs respectively PK Singh, Sanjay Bhandari, PK Patel, Ratnesh Kumar, Anita Mishra, Arun Kumar, Arvendra Kumar, SK Singh, HoD Human Resources Shambhu Shekhar, IFFCO Officers' Association president Anurag Tiwari, general secretary Swayam Prakash and all the office-bearers of IFFCO Officers' Association were present in the programme.

Talk on spondylitis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Associate professor in Department of Orthopedics, IMS-BHU, Dr Sanjay Yadav, delivered a talk on 'Spectrum of ankylosing spondylitis affecting the bone'. The programme was organised

by AIIMS, Jammu, under the aegis of the Asia Pacific Orthopaedic Association Young Surgeons Forum. It was attended by more than 100 delegates and faculties across the country and beyond. Dr Rashid Anjum was the organising secretary.

12 rly personnel retire

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 12 employees of North Eastern Railway (NER) retired on Tuesday.

On the occasion, a farewell function was organised at Fremchand Auditorium of the Divisional Railway Manager (DRM's) office under the chairmanship of Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Operation) Rajesh Kumar Singh in which the retiring employees were given farewell in a simple ceremony and were given their liquidation amount of ₹3,99,41,700. Senior Divisional Personnel Officer (SDPO) Sameer Paul was also present.

In his presidential address, the Additional Divisional Railway Manager (ADRM/Operation) Rajesh Kumar Singh said that all the employees of Indian Railways are an invaluable asset of the Railways. "The Railway employees have played an important role in whatever records are being established on Indian Railways today," he said, suggesting the retiring employees to do regular exercise, yoga etc to stay healthy and use their time in fulfilling social and moral responsibilities. Along with this, he said that all the employees of Varanasi Division who retired in the last few years were paid

their entire dues on the day of their retirement and this is due to the mutual coordination and hard work of the officers and employees of the Accounts and Personnel departments. He also presented service medals to all the retiring employees and congratulated them for their future life and expressed gratitude for their long and remarkable services.

Before this, Senior Divisional Personnel Officer Sameer Paul honoured all the retired employees by garlanding them. While congratulating the retiring employees, Paul explained in detail about all the documents related to I-Card, Service Certificate and PPO. He said that the retired employees should use the amount properly and not give it to an inappropriate person under the influence of any person or organisation or under the influence of emotions. He said that many people are looking for such opportunities. "Be cautious, this is the capital of your life, spend it only when absolutely necessary, try to keep your gains as safe as possible," he told them.

On the occasion, Divisional Finance Manager (DFM) Rajesh Kumar, Divisional Personnel Officer (DPO) Vivek Mishra, inspectors and employees of Accounts and Personnel departments were also present.

UCO Bank results: Total business grows by 9.50%

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Managing Director, UCO Bank, Ashwani Kumar, has announced the key highlights of the results - FY 2024 vis-a-vis FY 2023 on Tuesday. These include business growth - the bank has shown consistent growth where total business grew by 9.50% y-o-y.



MD, UCO Bank, Ashwani Kumar

Improved Profitability & Return - Operating Profit for the 12 months ended 31.03.2024 stood at ₹4,57,62,77,77,77,77 crore showing an increase of 5.43% y-o-y basis. The same has increased 13.74% q-q from ₹1,11,9 cr to ₹1,27,3 cr credit to deposit ratio registered an improvement of 620 bps to 71.02% on y-o-y basis. Dividend: After gap of nine years Bank has recommended for declaring dividend @2.80% of face value i.e. 28 paise per share. Business Highlights - Total Business grew by 9.50% y-o-y to ₹45,00,07,77,77,77,77 crore as on 31.03.2024 from ₹4,10,96,77,77,77,77 crore as on 31.03.2023. Total Deposits increased by 5.53% on y-o-y basis to ₹2,63,13,03,38 crore as on 31.03.2024 from ₹2,49,33,80,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023. Gross advances grew by 15.62% on y-o-y to ₹1,86,87,77,77,77,77 crore as on 31.03.2024 as against ₹1,61,62,90,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023.

q-o-q) and net NPA reduction by 40 bps to 0.89% (by 9 bps from 0.98% q-o-q) as on 31.03.2024. Strong Capital Adequacy Ratio - Capital Adequacy Ratio (CRAR) improved by 47 bps to 16.98% as on 31.03.2024 wherein Tier I Capital Ratio improved by 58 bps to 14.54% as on 31.03.2024 on y-o-y.

Improved Profitability & Return - Operating Profit for the 12 months ended 31.03.2024 stood at ₹4,57,62,77,77,77,77 crore showing an increase of 5.43% y-o-y basis. The same has increased 13.74% q-q from ₹1,11,9 cr to ₹1,27,3 cr credit to deposit ratio registered an improvement of 620 bps to 71.02% on y-o-y basis. Dividend: After gap of nine years Bank has recommended for declaring dividend @2.80% of face value i.e. 28 paise per share. Business Highlights - Total Business grew by 9.50% y-o-y to ₹45,00,07,77,77,77,77 crore as on 31.03.2024 from ₹4,10,96,77,77,77,77 crore as on 31.03.2023. Total Deposits increased by 5.53% on y-o-y basis to ₹2,63,13,03,38 crore as on 31.03.2024 from ₹2,49,33,80,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023. Gross advances grew by 15.62% on y-o-y to ₹1,86,87,77,77,77,77 crore as on 31.03.2024 as against ₹1,61,62,90,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023.

improvement of 13.88% on y-o-y basis. Retail Advances stood at ₹40,16,11,11,11,11 crore as on 31.03.2024 as against ₹35,03,90,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023 registering a growth of 14.62% on y-o-y basis, fuelled by home loan and vehicle loan portfolio which registered a growth of 21.23% and 31.24% respectively on y-o-y basis.

Agriculture advances stood at Rs 24,64,11,11,11,11 crore as on 31.03.2024 as against Rs 21,77,50,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023, showing a growth of 13.16% on y-o-y basis. Advances to MSME sector stood at Rs 32,71,40,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2024 as against Rs 28,81,50,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023 and registered a growth of 13.53% on y-o-y basis. Business per employee improved to Rs 20,93,00,00,00,00,00 as against Rs 18,90,00,00,00,00,00 for the same period of the preceding year. The operating profit for the 12 month ended 31.03.2024 stood at ₹4,57,62,77,77,77,77 crore registering a growth of 5.43% on y-o-y basis as against ₹4,34,11,11,11,11,11 crore as on 31.03.2023. Net profit for the 12 month ended 31.03.2024 stood at ₹1,65,40,00,00,00,00 crore as against ₹1,86,20,00,00,00,00 crore for the same period in the preceding year, on account of higher provisioning. Net Interest Income (NII) for the 12 months ended 31.03.2024 stood at ₹8,10,10,00,00,00,00 crore as against ₹8,56,20,00,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023, registering an

improvement of 13.88% on y-o-y basis. Retail Advances stood at ₹40,16,11,11,11,11 crore as on 31.03.2024 as against ₹35,03,90,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023 registering a growth of 14.62% on y-o-y basis, fuelled by home loan and vehicle loan portfolio which registered a growth of 21.23% and 31.24% respectively on y-o-y basis. Agriculture advances stood at Rs 24,64,11,11,11,11 crore as on 31.03.2024 as against Rs 21,77,50,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023, showing a growth of 13.16% on y-o-y basis. Advances to MSME sector stood at Rs 32,71,40,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2024 as against Rs 28,81,50,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023 and registered a growth of 13.53% on y-o-y basis. Business per employee improved to Rs 20,93,00,00,00,00,00 as against Rs 18,90,00,00,00,00,00 for the same period of the preceding year. The operating profit for the 12 month ended 31.03.2024 stood at ₹4,57,62,77,77,77,77 crore registering a growth of 5.43% on y-o-y basis as against ₹4,34,11,11,11,11,11 crore as on 31.03.2023. Net profit for the 12 month ended 31.03.2024 stood at ₹1,65,40,00,00,00,00 crore as against ₹1,86,20,00,00,00,00 crore for the same period in the preceding year, on account of higher provisioning. Net Interest Income (NII) for the 12 months ended 31.03.2024 stood at ₹8,10,10,00,00,00,00 crore as against ₹8,56,20,00,00,00,00 crore as on 31.03.2023, registering an

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 'Aatamirbharta', 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 Jai Ram 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 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 Huirem 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 PTL.

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 Jai Ram 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.



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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.

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PICTALK



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

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

Why is the BJP avoiding China in campaigning?

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



ASHOK K MEHTA

China has been generally missing from election manifestoes 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 Former NSA, Shiv Shankar Menon in his writings has observed: "we don't know what happened in South Bank (Kailash heights) as we know



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



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.

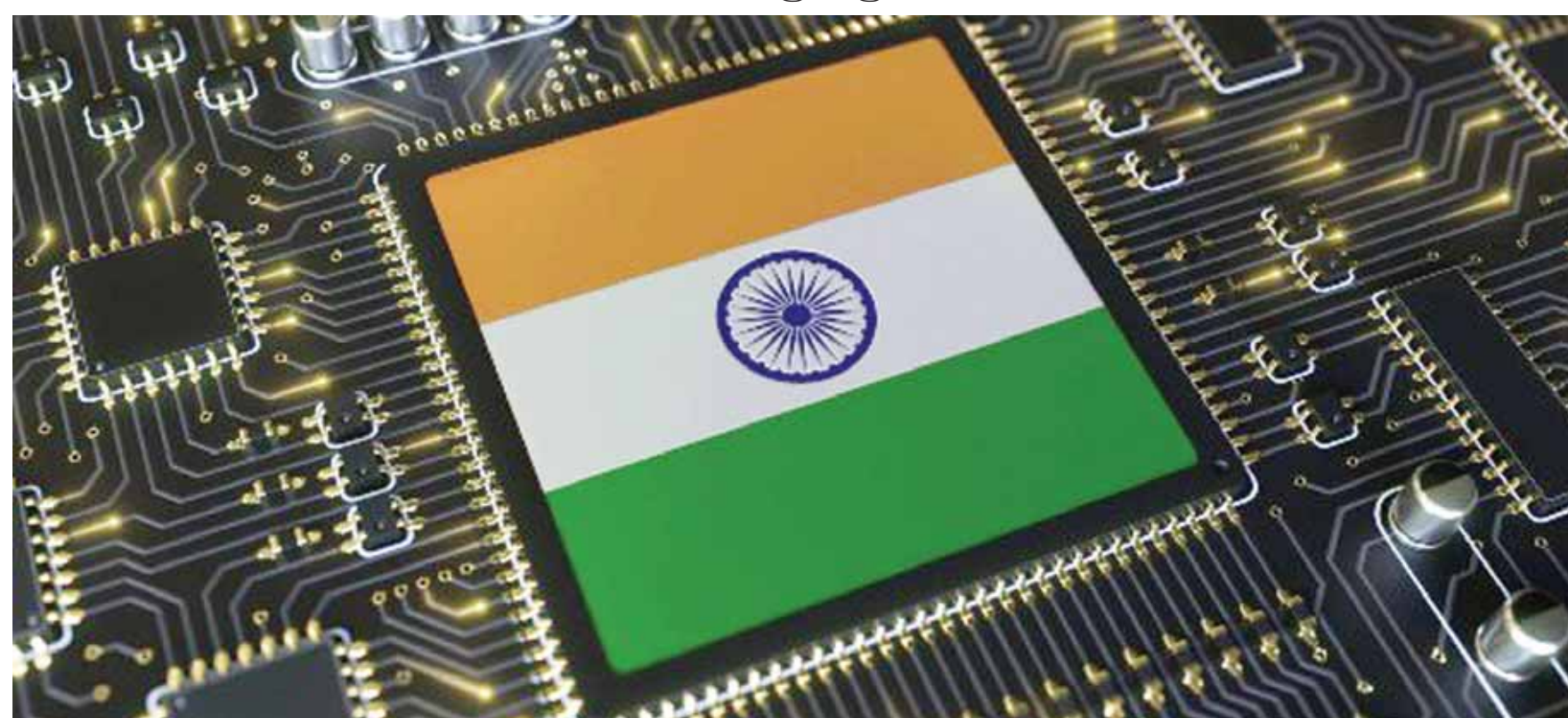
(The author is a journalist writing on development and gender. The views expressed are personal)

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 Investment 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)



Mamata, Shah trade barbs over CAA, Sandeshkhali

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Even as the election temper-atures 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 Harishchandrapur 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,

Bangladesh-India relationship is a valuable contributor to regional connectivity and regional integration," he said.

Rahman also lauded India's 'neighbourhood first policy'.

"India's 'neighbourhood first policy' is also committed to creating mutually beneficial relationships with all the countries in the region," he said.

"However, it is important to explore more sub-regional and regional connectivity initiatives to promote regional integration," he added.

The high commissioner said Bangladesh could be a significant partner for the India-Myanmar-Thailand highway project to further enhance connectivity in the region.

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 Bisham Sharma, Commander Coast Guard Region (West), Surgeon Commodore Diviya Gautam, VSM, Principal Director (Medical Services), CGHQ and Avnish 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 Nuhon 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 also 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 Bhushan 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-replicant 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, 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?"

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.

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.



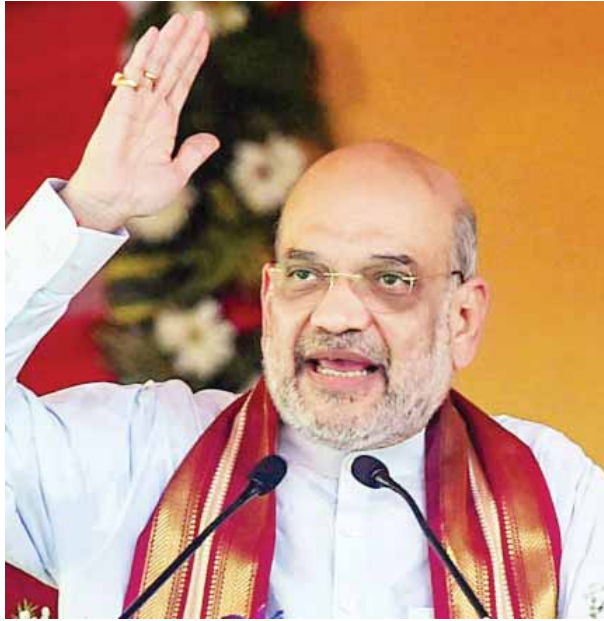
Congress spreading lies about BJP changing Constitution: Shah

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.

81.16 per cent voter turnout recorded in repolling in Outer Manipur LS seat



PTI ■ IMPHAL

A voter turnout of 81.16 per cent was recorded at six polling stations in Outer Manipur Lok Sabha seat, where repolling was held on Tuesday, election officials said.

No untoward incident was reported and voting, which commenced at 7 am, was held peacefully under tight security arrangements, they said.

A voter turnout of 81.16 per cent was recorded till the end of polling at 4 pm, the officials

declared null and void, a notification issued by the office of Manipur's chief electoral officer had earlier said.

Five of the polling stations are in Ukhrul district and have a total of 4,156 voters. Around 76.06 per cent of 4.84 lakh voters exercised their franchise during polling in 13 of 28 assembly segments of Outer Manipur Lok Sabha constituency on April 26. Voting was held in the remaining 15 segments, along with the entire Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat, in the first phase on April 19.

Repolling was necessitated as unidentified persons had damaged EVMs and VVPATs before the completion of voting at four of these six polling stations on April 26, while EVM malfunctioning was reported at one polling station, and voting could not be completed at another due to "threat and intimidation by unknown miscreants", they said.

Voting at four polling stations in Ukhrul assembly segment, and one each in Chingai assembly seat in Ukhrul and Karong in Senapati was

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.

Developments in Surat, Indore show people affection for BJP: Rajnath

PTI ■ INDORE

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday termed the Congress a "sinking ship" and said the developments in Surat and Indore showed the people's affection for the ruling BJP.

Several Congress candidates had been elected unopposed in the past, he said at a rally at Mandhata in Madhya Pradesh in support of BJP candidate from Khandwa and sitting MP Dnyaneshwar Patil.

"This time there was a miracle in Lok Sabha elections. The BJP candidate from Surat won unopposed, and the Congress



candidate in Indore withdrew his nomination and extended support to the BJP. This shows people's deep affection

towards the BJP which is increasing all the time," Singh said. Countering Congress' claim

that such developments were a threat to democracy, the Union minister said its candidates had been elected unopposed on 20 occasions. "I want to ask the Congress, was there no threat to democracy then?" he said. The Opposition party was a "sinking ship with a hole," and no power in the world can save it, the BJP leader further said. On Monday, Congress candidate from Indore, Akshay Kanti Bam, withdrew his nomination and joined the BJP. Earlier, the BJP scored its first victory in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections on April 22 after the nomination of

Congress' Surat candidate Nilesh Kumbhani was rejected for technical reasons and the other candidates dropped out of the race, leading to the BJP's Mukesh Dalal being elected unopposed.

"Mahatma Gandhi had said the Congress should be dissolved after independence. But Congress leaders did not listen to him. Now the people of India are bent on finishing Congress as per Gandhi's wishes," Singh further said. "If you were to ask a child ten years down the line if he knows Congress, he would say, 'what Congress.' This is the condition of the

party," he added. Singh also attacked Rahul Gandhi's statement about conducting a "wealth survey" and Indian Overseas Congress chief Sam Pitroda's remarks about inheritance tax.

Such proposals were not acceptable to the people of the country and global economists too have termed them a "very dangerous game", the BJP leader said. The BJP's was determined to hold simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in future and necessary amendments would be made to existing laws and rules, Singh said.

Congress having vicious, divisive design: BJP president Nadda

PTI ■ SHIVAMOGGA (KARNATAKA)

Accusing the Congress of supporting the idea of religion-based reservation, despite the fact that it cannot be done as per the Constitution, BJP President J P Nadda on Tuesday charged the grand old party with having "vicious and divisive designs".

He said this while speaking at "professionals meet" organised here as part of the BJP's campaign for Shimoga Lok Sabha candidate B Y Raghavendra. "In the Constitution, it is very clearly written that there is no place for religious reservation, but what they (Congress) did -- 4 per cent reservation to Muslims, from OBC quota (in Karnataka). Who is against the OBC? They are neither friends of Muslim brethren nor sympathisers of OBC," Nadda said.

Addressing the gathering, he noted that in undivided Andhra Pradesh, Congress came out with a law four times, where they tried to take reservation of SC/ST and OBCs, to give it to the Muslim community. "We are not against the Muslim community, but we have to understand that the Constitution clearly says that there will be no reservation based on religion, and it is a very deep thought... But these people (Congress) the kind of vicious and divisive designs they have. Are we going to support them?" he asked. Veteran BJP leader B S Yediyurappa, Raghavendra and other party leaders were present.

Accusing opposition parties of indulging in 'divisive politics', Nadda said, "a few days ago there was a video and they were trying to create an impression and environment that BJP is



against SC/ST and OBC, and if we (BJP) come to power the reservations for these communities will go." "They came out with a fabricated video... People and media exposed the INDI Alliance's deep fake video. The sad part of it is that the fake video was uploaded on social media from Telangana CM Revanth Reddy's phone, and all partners of the INDI Alliance tried to make it viral... They are in deep depression about BJP and NDA crossing 400 seats under PM's leadership. This shows their mentality," he added.

Noting that on one hand there is BJP, which is being led by PM Modi, under whom India is becoming stronger day-by-day and things have changed, the BJP chief said, but it is very sad to note that on the other hand the INDI Alliance, which has got "no perspective, no objective and no direction." "They (INDIA bloc) are so frustrated that they are trying to build divisive forces and encourage divisive forces, they want to create a north and south divide. When PM speaks about 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas Sabka Vishwas Sabka Prayaas', they talk about division of north and south," he added.

Chandrababu Naidu confident of regaining Andhra Pradesh

PTI ■ KURNOOL

TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu has said the anti-incumbency wave coupled with failure of all institutional frameworks will ensure his party sweeps both assembly and Lok Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh as people have 'realised' the ruling YSR Congress has failed to live up to all its promises.

The former Chief Minister who is fighting to regain power in the state, expressed confidence that the TDP-BJP-Jana Sena Party (JSP) combine will win 24 out of 25 Lok Sabha seats and 160 of the 175 assembly seats comfortably in the simultaneous elections to be held on May 13.

Naidu (74) said the YSRCP came to power on the promise of getting a special status to AP but the issue has been relegated to the background as people are struggling to deal with alleged mismanagement of every government department. The state has gone into huge financial debt to an extent that



people have not received salaries and pensions, he added. "There is a tremendous anti-incumbency, YSR Congress has destroyed the ecosystem of development in Andhra Pradesh," Naidu told PTI in an interview. The YSR Congress has not only failed to get a special status for the state but also not been able to build a proper capital even after 10 years of the state bifurcation, he said. He alleged that the current government has 'destroyed' all government institutions. There

is total "chaos" in the state as every sector is in "doldrums". "Morale of all officers is very low. Nobody is willing to work. This is the scenario today in the state," he said. People were suffering due to lack of development. "There is no water in the villages. There is no power in the villages, no proper roads. In fact, the income of an ordinary man is far less compared to his expenditure. This is very bad. Total living standards for everybody has gone down," he said. Naidu further claimed the people have seen the false promises made by the YSR Congress without doing any iota of work on the ground. This has boosted the anti-incumbency wave and people have made up their mind to vote for TDP.

On tying up with BJP despite the saffron party not having enough presence in AP, he said it was done to end the sufferings of the people under the "misrule" of Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan

Reddy and bring normalcy in the state. "At that time, we were very keen on the special status issue. Now, the YSR Congress Party has made the special status a non-issue. Now, if I fight also, nothing will happen," he said. Due to bifurcation in 2014, Andhra people had to suffer. But they suffered more under the YSR Congress rule. "We don't want people to suffer any more. And we have to revive, rebuild Andhra Pradesh. That's why we joined together -- BJP, TDP and Jana Sena under the NDA umbrella," he said. "We will fight, we will restore total normalcy, and also we will create a better future for the people of Andhra." Asked if alliance with actor-turned politician Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena Party will benefit TDP, since film actors are generally good crowd pullers but do not turn fans into voters, Naidu said, "Pawan Kalyan is different as he is a party head. He has a vote bank. That's why we joined him."

Modi targets Sharad Pawar

PTI ■ MALSHIRAS (MAHARASHTRA)

A day after terming Sharad Pawar as a wandering soul, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday continued his attack on the NCP leader, saying he did not do much for farmers while being the Union agriculture minister.

"When a big Maharashtra leader was Union agriculture minister, farmers used to make rounds of sugarcane commission for their arrears," Modi said at a rally in Malshiras of Solapur district in Maharashtra. "There is a 'bhakti atma' (wandering soul) in Maharashtra. If it does not manage success it spoils others' good work. Maharashtra has been a victim of it," Modi had said at a rally on Monday, hitting out at Sharad Pawar without taking his name.

"This game was started by the same leader 45 years ago. It was just for his own ambition

that Maharashtra has always been an unstable state. As a result, several chief ministers could not complete their full term," Modi had said. At the Malshiras rally Tuesday, Modi asked voters not to waste their vote by giving it to Congress and other Opposition parties. "Why waste your vote by giving it to those who are not contesting even the minimum number of seats needed for a simple majority in Lok Sabha," he said. He asserted that when there is a strong government in the country, its focus is on the present as well as the future. Modi said people are seeing the difference between his government's 10 years and Congress rule of 60 years. Congress leaders kept talking about eradicating poverty in every poll but would not do anything after that, he said. Modi said that in the last 10 years, his Government was able to bring 2 crore people out of poverty and 80 crore are getting free ration.

Polling held in 191 LS seats so far indicate third term for Modi Government: Yogi

PTI ■ BAHARAMPUR/SURI/ASANSOL (WB)

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday asserted that polling held in the 191 Lok Sabha seats so far indicate another term for the Narendra Modi government, with 400 seats for the BJP-led NDA. He claimed that Uttar Pradesh would "gift" all 80 constituencies in the northern state to Modi.

"Polling held in 191 Lok Sabha seats so far indicate another term for the Modi government, with 400 seats for NDA," Adityanath said, while addressing an election rally in Baharampur Lok Sabha seat in West Bengal in support of BJP candidate Nirmal Kumar Saha. Elections are being held across the country in seven

phases for the 543-seat Lok Sabha. Polling has been conducted in two phases on April 19 and 26, with the next phase scheduled on May 7. Taking on the Trinamool Congress dispensation in West Bengal, Adityanath sought to assure people that the perpetrators of crimes in Sandeshkhali and clashes between groups of people on Ram Navami celebrations in the state will be brought to book by the BJP.

"Had such incidents taken place in Uttar Pradesh, I would have taught the perpetrators such a lesson that their next seven generations would not have dared to even think of doing any such thing," he asserted. He said that hundreds of rallies were held in Ayodhya on the occasion of Ram Navami sans any incident. "West Bengal also needs a model like UP," he said.



Claiming that West Bengal is no longer the 'Sonar Bangla' (prosperous state) as it was earlier, he said the state is "moving away from development and is looking for doles". Adityanath said he "feels sorry" that West Bengal, which had given birth to many nationalist leaders and

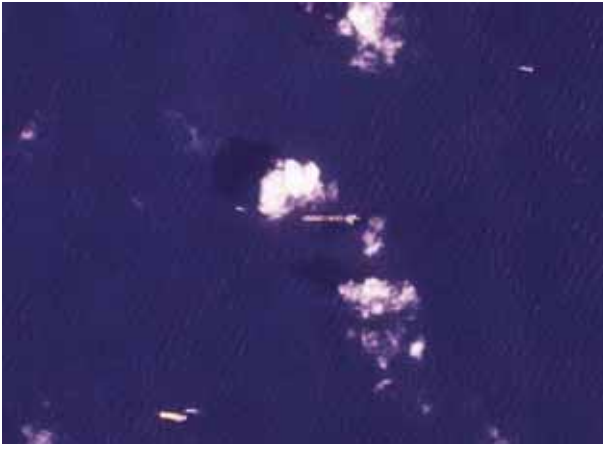
are looting Bengal and putting to crisis the state's identity." He asserted that only the BJP and Narendra Modi stand by the people in all situations. Stating that there has not been any communal tension or curfew in Uttar Pradesh in the last seven years during his tenure as the chief minister, he said that everyone, irrespective of caste or creed, gets the benefits of welfare projects in the northern state. "In Uttar Pradesh, both daughters and businessmen are safe," he said, asserting that no one can browbeat any other person in his state. Speaking at another election rally in Birbhum seat in support of BJP candidate Debanu Bhattacharya, he asserted that since he took over as the chief minister seven years ago, all gangsters in Uttar Pradesh have "either left the state or the world".

"We have not only constructed Ram temple in Ayodhya, we have also arranged for 'Ram Naam Satya Hai' (funeral of many big gangsters)," he said. He claimed that the large-scale influx of illegal immigrants into West Bengal, which shares a long border with Bangladesh, is changing the demography of the state. Adityanath alleged that the perpetrators of crimes in Sandeshkhali and during Ramnavami celebrations were being "protected" by the ruling party in West Bengal. Adityanath accused the Congress and other members of the opposition INDIA alliance of "trying to divide" the country and resorting to "religious appeasement" in a bid to win the elections. "I have come to give the guarantee of development without any discrimination," he added.

He claimed that terrorism and Naxalism have been contained under the Modi government. "Now if even a cracker is burst, Pakistan comes forward to clarify that it does not have any hand in it, because our neighbouring country knows that even if something happens by mistake, it will have to pay a heavy price," he said. "This is the new India under Modi ji. We do not tinker with anyone, but if anyone dares to do so with us, we do not leave them unscathed," Adityanath asserted. He said that infrastructural projects such as highways, railways and educational institutions are flourishing under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi but the TMC government is preventing the implementation of such initiatives in West Bengal. He said that along with an

'Atmanirbhar Bharat', West Bengal will also become self-reliant if the BJP comes to power. Speaking at another election rally in Asansol Lok Sabha seat, where the BJP has fielded S S Ahluwalia, Adityanath alleged that West Bengal has come under the grip of violence, lawlessness and corruption. Stating that this election is for creating a new India, he said that good and efficient people should be elected to the Lok Sabha. He claimed that what the Modi government has achieved for the development of the country in the last 10 years could not be done in 65 years by the Congress. Stating that 50,000 Durga Pujas are held in Uttar Pradesh, he said there has not been a single incident of violence during the festivities in his State.

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

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 Hinds 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 zipping 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.

AP ■ JERUSALEM

A 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 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 off the coast.

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 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, 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, 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 exit 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. When Zhang tried to go to the lab over the weekend, guards barred him from entering. In protest, he sat outside on flattened cardboard in drizzling rain, pictures from the scene posted online show. News of the protest spread 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 scientists

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. 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 decoded 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.



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 Shrusti Sathe (63kg) emerged victorious to enter the semi-finals in the youth category. On Wednesday, nine youth Indian boxers will compete in

their respective quarter-final bouts: Aryan (51kg), Jatin (57kg), Yashwardhan Singh (63.5kg), Priyanshu (71kg), Sahil (80kg) and Aryan (92kg) in the men's category, and Nisha (52kg), Akansha Phalasalwal (70kg) and Rudrika (75kg) in the women's section. Nearly 400 boxers from more than 24 countries are competing in the prestigious tournament across 25 weight categories. The finals of the youth and U-22 category will be played on May 6 and 7 respectively.

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 Sissie 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 woeful 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 13 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 Shrutu 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.

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 satiate ambitions at the Bavarian powerhouse. Bayern had won the previous four Bundesliga titles. 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.

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 Inter 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.



STOINIS, BOWLERS TAKE LSG CLOSER TO IPL PLAYOFFS

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Marcus Stoinis made a composed fifty to complement the splendid effort of the bowlers as Lucknow Super Giants strengthened their chances of a play-off berth with a nervy four-wicket win over Mumbai Indians in the IPL here on Tuesday. Mumbai Indians' top-order came a cropper as they stuttered to a below-par 144 for seven, riding on contributions from Nehal Wadhwa (46), Ishan Kishan (32) and Tim David (35 not out). In reply, Stoinis scored a 45-ball 62, studded with seven hits to the fence and two maximums but once he was gone LSG survived some anxious moments before getting home with four balls to spare. With their sixth win in 10 games, LSG climbed to the third spot in the IPL standings. MI, on the other hand, slumped to their seventh loss in 10 games. LSG made a watchful start to their chase after Nuwan Thushara struck with his fourth ball to remove impact sub Arshin Kulkarni for a duck on his IPL debut.

Stoinis cracked two back-to-back boundaries off Gerald Coetzee, who ended up conceding 15 in his first over. K L Rahul (28 off 22) too joined the party, slamming three fours and a six to take 20 runs off Thushara. Stoinis then whacked Bumrah over longoff as LSG reached 52 in the powerplay. Mohammed Nabi held on to a skier at the boundary line as Hardik Pandya produced a breakthrough, removing Rahul. Stoinis, however, kept going strong as he and Deepak Hooda (18) added another 40 runs off 35 balls to take LSG close to 100. Hooda was then removed by Hardik but Stoinis reached his fifty off 39 balls in the 14th over and then dispatched Mohammed Nabi for a four and a six. Coetzee bowled Ashton Turner, while Ayush Badoni was run out to give hopes to MI before Nicholas Pooran (14 not out) knocked off the remaining runs. Earlier, MI dug in a big hole for themselves by losing four wickets in the powerplay. The visitors just couldn't recover from the hiccup despite a 53-run fifth-wicket stand between Wadhwa and Kishan.



Tim David hit a few shots in the end, including a 17-run last over, to give the total some semblance

of respectability. MI's top-order misfired as the visitors managed just 28 for four in the first six

overs, the second-lowest powerplay score of this IPL. While Rohit Sharma (4) was sent

back by left arm pacer Mohin Khan, Stoinis induced a fine edge with a slow ball to get rid of

Suryakumar Yadav (10). MI slipped into further trouble when Ravi Bishnoi's direct throw found in-form Tilak Varma short of the crease. Skipper Hardik then was out for a golden duck after poking at an away going delivery from Naveen Ul Haq, as MI slumped to 27 for four in 5.2 overs. LSG used Stoinis well in the powerplay as his spell of three overs with the new ball yielded a wicket for 19. Returning from injury, pace sensation Mayank Yadav could have had a wicket but Turner dropped Ishan Kishan (32) at deep square leg. Kishan and Nehal Wadhwa tried to steady the ship with their fifth wicket stand but LSG bowlers didn't give much away as MI reached 68 for four in 12 overs. With seven overs remaining, Kishan tried to up the ante only to fall for a Bishnoi googly. Wadhwa, however, smashed Mayank for two sixes and a four as 16 runs came off the 15th over. Mohammed Nabi then dragged one on to the stumps off Mayank, who left the field immediately, raising concerns of injury.

CSK eye allround 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

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



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.

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 Prabhshirran Singh. But they will eye a more impact outing 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.

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 Shephard. "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 will commence on May 22 in



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

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.

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 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.

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