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Unholy Dip: Hindu numbers shrink by eight per cent

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

A study titled "Share of Religious Minorities - A Cross Country Analysis (1950-2015)" by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) has revealed that the population share of the majority religion in India (Hindus) declined sharply by 7.8 per cent between 1950 and 2015, while a number of neighbouring countries saw a jump in the population of their majority community.

While the Hindu population shrunk in India, the share of minorities, including Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and Sikhs, went up. However, the number of Jains and Parsis in the population saw mix decrease. Between 1950 and 2015, the Muslim population share in India surged by 43.15 per cent, Christians saw a 5.38 per cent increase, Sikhs a 6.58 per cent rise, and Buddhists a slight increase. The study, released in May 2024, assessed trends in 167 countries across the world. The authors of

the study say, "India's performance is consistent with the larger global trends." The study highlighted that the share of the majority Hindu population decreased by 7.82 per cent between 1950 and 2015 (from 84.68 per cent to 78.06 per cent) in India. The share of Hindus in India's population saw a decrease from 84 per cent in 1950 to 78 per cent in 2015, while that of Muslims witnessed an increase from 9.84 per cent to 14.09 per cent in the same period (of 65 years). "The share of Muslim population



in 1950 was 9.84 per cent and increased to 14.09 per cent in 2015 — a 43.15 per cent increase in their share. The share of Christian population rose from 2.24 per cent to 2.36 per cent — an increase of 5.38 per cent between 1950 and 2015. The share of Sikh population increased from 1.24 per cent in 1950 to 1.85 per cent in 2015 — a 6.58 per cent rise in their share. Even the share of the Buddhist population witnessed a noticeable increase from 0.05 per cent in 1950 to 0.81 per cent. On the other

hand, the share of Jains in the population of India decreased from 0.45 per cent in 1950 to 0.36 per cent in 2015. The share of the Parsi population in India witnessed a stark 85 per cent decline, reducing from 0.03 per cent share in 1950 to 0.004 per cent in 2015," it said. The shrinking of the majority population in India (by 7.8 per cent) is the second most significant decline in the immediate neighbourhood, just after Myanmar's 10 per cent.

Apart from India, Nepal's majority community (Hindu) saw a 3.6 per cent decline in its share of the country's population. Buddhists, who constituted 11 per cent of the population in 1950 also witnessed a 25 per cent decrease and their share was reduced to 8 per cent in 2015. On the other hand, the share of Muslim population increased from 2.6 per cent to 4.6 per cent — a jump of 75 per cent. In 1950, the share of Christian population in Nepal was approximately zero. **Continued on Page 8**

PM schools Sam on Indianness

PITRODA SAYS SOUTH INDIANS LOOK LIKE AFRICANS, QUILTS AFTER OUTRAGE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In the midst of a high-voltage Lok Sabha poll campaign, Congress leader Sam Pitroda once again handed enough ammunition to the BJP with his analogy depicting India's diversity. Slamming his comments as "racist", Prime Minister Narendra Modi pounced on Pitroda's comment to hit out at the grand old party and asserted that people will not tolerate attempts to insult them based on their skin colour. Later Pitroda was forced to resign as the chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress after his controversial



remarks as the INDIA Bloc leaders too disapproved of his 'racist' comments. Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said party chief Mallikarjun Kharge has accepted Pitroda's decision. At his rallies in Telangana,

Modi said he is livid with the racial profiling of Indians by the US-based "philosopher and uncle of shehzada (Rahul Gandhi)", and linked the Congress's opposition to Droupadi Murmu's presidential bid to its

mindset, which saw her as an "African" because of the colour of her skin. "I am very angry today. I do not get angry if someone abuses me. Today, the philosopher of 'shehzada' (prince) has inflicted such a big abuse that I am full of anger. Will people's abilities in our country be decided by the colour of their skin? Who has allowed the shehzada to play this game of skin?" Modi said.

As Pitroda's remarks went viral and triggered a political firestorm, the Congress once again in a weeks' time distanced itself from its overseas wing chairperson's remarks and even criticised those as "most unfortunate

and unacceptable". The BJP dismissed the Congress's stand as meaningless as it cited Pitroda's close association with the Gandhi family and launched a blistering attack. Pitroda's comments at a podcast landed his party in yet another soup, soon after his reference to inheritance tax in the United States as an "interesting law" while discussing the Congress's Lok Sabha poll manifesto gave the ruling BJP a potent handle to accuse the opposition party of eyeing citizens' assets as part of its "redistribution of wealth" policy. **Continued on Page 8**

Modi questions Rahul's silence on Ambani, Adani

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

Following the trend of low voter turnout continuing in the Lok Sabha elections, even in the third phase, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a frontal attack on the Opposition led by Congress, claiming their campaign was funded by black money.

This prompted a terse response from the Congress, which said the BJP has realised it is "shaking" after three phases and has now started attacking its own 'friends', showing the "real trend" of the result. In a public speech, the PM asked the INDIA Bloc leader Rahul Gandhi as to why he



has stopped criticising corporate giants like Adani and Ambani? Modi on Wednesday for the first time during the election campaign accused the Congress of having a nexus with 'Ambani and Adani', and asked if the party has received "tempo loads of black money" from the two businessmen as Rahul has now stopped "abusing" them. In what appeared to be changing the narrative on the issue that was until now

used by the Congress to attack Modi and his Government at the Centre, the PM also demanded that the party should explain to people why it has stopped raising the 'Ambani-Adani' issue as its 'shehzada' used to do for the past five years and asked if it has struck a 'sauda' (deal). The Congress has been accusing the Prime Minister of favouring the top five industrialists in the country, including Gautam Adani and Mukesh Ambani. Congress said the 'man' who collected ₹8,200 crore of electoral bonds for his party — a scam so egregious that even the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional — is today levelling allegations on others. **Continued on Page 8**

Staff woes ground Air India Express flights



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Hundreds of passengers, including political leaders and workers, were left stranded and staged protests at various airports across the nation after Air India Express cancelled over 86 flights due to the cabin crew going on a "mass sick leave" on Tuesday night. The major airports — Kochi, Calicut, Delhi and Bengaluru — witnessed chaotic scenes as most flight disruptions happened here. The international and domestic flights were cancelled after about 300 senior cabin crew members reported sick at the last minute and switched off their mobile phones. According to sources, southern regions have reported major cancellations. Air India Express CEO Alok Singh said there will be more curtailment of flights over the

next few days amid cabin crew woes. "Flight curtailment being done to cope with non-availability of crew, recover schedules," the CEO said in a statement. Many of them said the delayed flights could result in them losing their jobs as their work visas were about to expire while some political leaders and workers could not reach their destinations to attend the rally of their leaders in the upcoming fourth phase of the Lok Sabha elections. Passengers also complained that the airline provided no accommodation, leaving them stranded until their rescheduled flight takes off. Some passengers claimed they were forced to spend the night at the airport. Some of them claimed that they were informed about the cancellations after the completion of security

checks. Taking note of the incident, the Ministry of Civil Aviation on Wednesday sought a report from Air India Express on cancellation of flights after a section of cabin crew reported sick evidently to protest against changes in the human resources policy. Meanwhile, Air India Express has offered a full refund or flight rescheduling but some passengers are demanding instant refunds and same-day rescheduling. This is the second time in about a month that a Tata Group owned airline is facing flight disruptions (Vistara too had to cancel flights due to crew unavailability in the first week of April). Among thousands of flyers who were hit by the sudden cancellations of the Air India Express flights on Wednesday was Jammu & Kashmir former Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad who said Air India should be shut and nothing will come out of it because its culture is bad. The stinging comment came from a former civil aviation minister who said he never travelled by Air India. Videos of furious passengers gathered at Delhi, Kochi, Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram airports have gone viral on social media. **Continued on Page 8**

JJP favours toppling BJP Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI

The BJP's former ally Jannayak Janata Party (JJP) on Wednesday said it is ready to help the Congress bring down the BJP Government in Haryana, a day after three Independent MLAs withdrew support to the ruling party. Claiming that the BJP Government is reduced to a minority, the Congress, on its part, demanded the imposition of the President's rule and early Assembly elections in the State. However, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini asserted that his Government is not in any trouble. His predecessor and party colleague M L Khattar also claimed that many MLAs are in touch with the BJP and there is "nothing to worry". Independent MLAs Sombir Sangwan (Dadri), Randhir Singh Gollen (Pundri) and Dharampal Gonder (Nilokheri) withdrew support to the ruling BJP in Haryana on Tuesday and announced that they would back the Congress. The fast-paced political developments in the State come at a time when Lok Sabha polls are just a fortnight away and Assembly elections are scheduled to be held in October. Speaking to media in Hisar, JJP leader Dushyant Chautala



said if a no-confidence motion is brought in the Assembly, they will vote against the Saini Government. "I want to tell Leader of Opposition Bhopinder Singh Hooda that going by the present numbers in the Assembly, when this Government is in a minority, if a step is taken that this government is brought down during (Lok Sabha) elections, then we will fully consider to support them in this from outside". "Now, the Congress has to think whether they will take a step to bring down the BJP government," Chautala said. Reacting to this, Congress leader Hooda said, "They should write to the Governor (that Government is in a minority)". Dushyant Chautala also ruled out reviving his party's alliance with the BJP. The two parties had snapped ties in March. "I have made it quite clear that JJP will not go with BJP now," Chautala said and

demanding that Saini should either prove majority or submit his resignation. The 90-member Haryana Assembly at present has an effective strength of 88 with Karnal and Rania Assembly seats being vacant. The BJP has 40 MLAs, the Congress 30 and the JJP 10 in the House. INLD and Haryana Lokhit Party has one member. Independents are six. The Government has the support of two of the Independent legislators. Independent MLA Nayan Pal Rawat said he had given unconditional support to the BJP in 2019 and it is continuing even now. "The Government is not in any trouble, it is working strongly," Chief Minister Saini told reporters at Sirsa while replying to queries on the withdrawal of support. However, Hooda said the Saini Government is in a minority and it has no moral right to stay in power. **Continued on Page 8**

AstraZeneca recalls Covid vaccine amid side effects storm

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Months after admitting in a UK court that its COVID-19 vaccine, which is being sold as Covishield in India, may have a potential rare blood clot side effect known as Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS), pharma giant AstraZeneca has recalled the jab made in collaboration with Oxford University. The British-Swedish multinational pharmaceutical company faces lawsuits from more than 50 alleged victims and their families who claim fatalities or permanent brain injuries following vaccination during Covid pandemic. The company's COVID-19 vaccine is being sold as Vaxzevria in Europe. AstraZeneca had in February this year admitted in the court that its COVID-19 vaccines could in very rare cases have the potential to cause Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS), a condition that leads to blood clots and low platelet count. However, the company in a statement said that withdrawal has been initiated due to a surplus of available updated vaccines since the pandemic. It has voluntarily withdrawn the "marketing authorisation" for the vaccine within the European Union, and similar applications are expected to be made in other countries where the vaccine was approved. However, it remains unclear whether the vaccine will be withdrawn in India, where it is manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII). The SII has not yet commented on the developments. The vaccine has come under the lens of the Supreme Court in India which two days ago agreed to hear a petition on a rare side-effect associated with the jab. A date for the hearing has not been set but Chief Justice of the Apex Court



Chandrachud acknowledged the issue, which includes demands for an expert panel to investigate the side-effect and for the Government to provide compensation for families of those who may have died after taking the drug. An early hearing of the petition, though, has been ruled out. According to reports, the SII has a stock of 250 million doses of Covishield at its Pune facility, which could be used for any future eventuality. Sources at the SII had in 2022 indicated plans to halve the production of Covishield as it had a 500 million doses inventory at its facility. Half of these were finished doses, while the remaining were bulk doses that were not converted to formulation. Meanwhile, the European Medicines Agency, the medicines regulator for the European Union (EU), issued a notice on Tuesday to confirm that Vaxzevria — known as Covishield in India — is no longer authorised for use in the 27-member economic bloc after AstraZeneca (AZ) voluntarily withdrew its authorisation in March. "AstraZeneca has therefore taken the decision to initiate withdrawal of the marketing authorisations for Vaxzevria within Europe. We will now work with regulators and our partners to align on a clear path forward to conclude this chapter and significant contribution to the COVID-19 pandemic," it said. **Continued on Page 8**

India tops in dollar remittance with 111 billion paycheck

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

India received over USD 111 billion in remittances in 2022, the largest in the world, becoming the first country to reach and even surpass the USD 100 billion mark, the United Nations migration agency has said. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM), in its World Migration Report 2024 launched Tuesday, said in 2022, India, Mexico, China, the Philippines and France were the top five remittance recipient countries. "India was well above the rest, receiving more than USD 111 billion, the first country to reach and even surpass the

USD 100 billion mark. Mexico was the second-largest remittance recipient in 2022, a position it also held in 2021 after overtaking China, which historically had been the second-biggest recipient after India," the report said. According to the report's data, India was the top country receiving remittances in 2010 (USD 53.48 billion), 2015 (US\$ 68.91 billion), and 2020 (USD 83.15 billion), with the remittances crossing the USD 100 billion mark to reach USD 111.22 billion in 2022. It noted that with a very large number of migrant workers from the subregion, Southern Asia receives some of the largest inflows of remittances



globally. Three countries in Southern Asia-India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, rank among the top ten recipients of international remittances in the world, underscoring the significance of labour migration from the subregion. "With India estimated to have received more than USD 111 billion in 2022, it is by far the largest recipient of international remittances in the world and the first country to ever reach that figure," the report said.

Pakistan and Bangladesh were the sixth and eighth largest international remittance recipients in 2022, receiving nearly USD 30 billion and USD 21.5 billion respectively. The report however noted that while remittances remain a lifeline for many people in the subregion, migrant workers from these countries continue to face a myriad of risks, including financial exploitation, excessive financial debt due to migration costs, xenophobia and workplace abuses. The Gulf States remain significant destinations for migrant workers from around the world, and the 2022 football World Cup further underscored the importance

of migrant labour to the subregion as well as rights violations. Migrants continue to comprise high proportions of the total populations in many Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States. In the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar, migrants made up 88 per cent, nearly 73 and 77 per cent of the national populations, respectively. Most migrants — many of whom come from countries such as India, Egypt, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Kenya — work in sectors such as construction, hospitality, security, domestic work and retail. **Continued on Page 8**

Priyanka attacks govt over rising prices, unemployment

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, on Wednesday, made a frontal attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party over rising prices, unemployment in the country and the government's nexus with the billionaire friends. Addressing a series of road corner meetings in Harchandpur assembly segment of Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha constituency, from where her brother and former Congress president Rahul Gandhi has been nominated by the party to contest election, Congress star campaigner Priyanka Gandhi Vadra slammed the Prime Minister Modi government over "rising unemployment" in the country, saying "ration scheme hai, not jobs". Criticising the Modi-led government over inflation and unemployment, she said: "Today, inflation and unemployment are the two biggest problems in the country. Under Modi's rule, inflation is so high that even with hard work, the earnings are not sufficient to fulfill the needs. Instead of helping you, the government has only provided you with five kilograms of ration. Even in farming, profits are not possible because GST (goods and



services tax) has to be paid on everything." "Rashan pakda do ki scheme hai naukri pakda do ki nahi," she said. "There is a scheme to provide free ration to the people but no provision to provide jobs to the citizens seeking employment opportunities," Priyanka said. Congress national general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said, "The BJP candidates are going everywhere and saying that if you vote for them, they would change the Constitution.

They have bought the media with the help of their billionaire friends. They have weakened all institutions that were there to strengthen you. When Modiji realised that this will harm them in elections, he said that they won't change the Constitution. But what is the truth?" The Congress leader, while talking about the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra of the Congress that was headed by Rahul Gandhi, said: "To defeat Rahul Gandhi, the BJP exerted its full force, but he

did not step back. He stood firm to deliver justice to the people. To listen to you and understand your problems, he initiated the Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra. The purpose of this journey was to remind people that the direction of politics in the country today is wrong." Slamming the Modi-led government over the Agniveer scheme, Priyanka said: "Youth used to work out and train at 3 am or 4 am to get into the army... But Modi introduced the Agniveer

scheme which will allow the youth to work in the army for four years and then return to their homes as an unemployed person again... They bring schemes not to solve your problem but to break your hopes... All their schemes are for millionaires and billionaires. They have waived Rs 16 lakh crore of these people through banks." Training guns at the BJP for spreading lies under the garb of religious sentiments, Priyanka said: "Politicians nowadays know that they do not have to work for the people and provide jobs, end inflation... They have understood that they just have to get on stage at the time of elections and talk about religion to evoke religious sentiments and make people feel that their religion is in danger." Highlighting the "guarantees" promised by Congress, Priyanka said: "There are a few guarantees which we have promised to offer, including Rs 1 lakh annually that will be transferred to the account of the family's oldest woman. Apart from the reserved posts, half of them will be reserved for women to provide them equal opportunities." Priyanka, who has been campaigning in Amethi and Rae Bareilly for the last two days and is expected to stay in both con-

stituencies until polling day on May 20, also accused the Modi government of prioritising loan waivers amounting to Rs 16 lakh crore for billionaires, while farmers in Uttar Pradesh were in such dire circumstances that many were being driven to suicide. Priyanka also replied to the prime minister's speech mentioning on Wednesday that Rahul Gandhi is now not taking the name of Adani and Ambani. "Today, Narendra Modi said Rahul Gandhi is not taking Adani's name. The truth is this, Rahul Gandhi talks about Adani every day, he exposes the truth about Adani in front of you every day," Priyanka said. The Congress leader emphasised that Rahul informs the public about the alleged "nexus" between the prime minister and prominent industrialists on a daily basis. "Rahul Gandhi tells you daily that Narendra Modi has a nexus with big industrialists. Narendra Modi waived Rs 16 lakh crore of his friends but did not waive a single rupee of farmers. Narendra Modi should answer this," she said. "Narendra Modi has handed over the big companies which provided employment to the people to a few capitalists," she further charged.

Candidates asked to ensure accounting in expenditure list

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In view of the Lok Sabha elections and assembly bypoll, District Magistrate and District Election Officer Surya Pal Gangwar held a meeting in the Collectorate auditorium. In the meeting, the district election officer said that all information would be made available to the candidates from time to time through the WhatsApp group. Along with this, all the candidates should study the online candidate handbook by printing it. Also, they should ensure compliance with it by studying the handbook related to the Model Code of Conduct, he added. The district election officer said that the rate list related to election expenditure had also been uploaded on www.lucknow.nic.in. He said that the candidates should ensure accounting in the expenditure register as per the rate list. The district election officer said that applications for election related permissions could be made on the Suidha Portal 48 hours in advance. He further said that for any information related to permissions, one could contact the official concerned at Room No 58 on the second floor of the Collectorate. Along with this, the district election officer said that training would be given through Zoom on how to apply for permission on the Suidha Portal. The general observer for Lucknow Lok Sabha constituency informed that no meeting, rally or any election related publicity will be done without permission. "It is mandatory to take permission for election campaigning," he said. General observer for Mohanlalganj Lok Sabha constituency informed that only the number of vehicles for which permission has been taken will be used. The district election officer

informed that provision of drinking water will be permissible in election related events and permission will not be required for this but its expenditure will have to be accounted for in the expenditure register. The district election officer said that social media was also being strictly monitored to ensure compliance with the Model Code of Conduct. "No candidate will upload content on the social media platform without getting it approved," he added. The joint commissioner of police said that security was being provided to the recognised political parties. The JCP said if independent candidates also wanted security, they could apply for it and security would be provided to them as per their demand. Expense registers were made available to all the candidates in the meeting. The district election officer informed that according to Section 77 of the Representation of People's Act, 1951, the complete account of the expenses from the date of nomination to the day of results has to be made in the register. He said it was mandatory for all the candidates to have a separate bank account for the election.

IIIT-Lucknow launches MSc in data science programme

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government has initiated a new endeavour by launching the MSc in data science with specialisation in climate data analytics course at the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) in Lucknow. Developed in collaboration with the office of the relief commissioner, this initiative aims to prepare a strong workforce for data analysis of disaster management in the state. It was inaugurated by Chief Secretary Durga Shanker

Mishra on Tuesday. This course will be conducted by IIIT-Lucknow, wherein students will receive data for analysis from the Climate Resilience Observatory (CRO) constructed on the campus by the relief commissioner's office. Professor Deepak Kumar from IIIT-Lucknow explained that there are very few people in the country and the world who specifically analyse climate data. In this course, students will be taught how to work with climate data and how to make predictions using artificial intelligence (AI) and machine

learning to raise awareness among people. He mentioned that this is the first course of its kind where students will work on real-time data. The CRO will be helpful in this. It will provide us with climate-related data from across the state for students to work on. Additionally, the Relief commissioner's office will help students with scholarships and assist various agencies in internships. He further explained that after getting the data, it would be analysed using artificial intelligence and machine learning. "Our PhD students and MSc students are also working on CRO's data and building different AI models so that we can

make predictions," he said. Along with launching the course, Chief Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra also inspected the Climate Resilience Observatory (CRO). He said that through the CRO, the analysis and prediction of climate-related data obtained from the field in the state would be helpful in disaster management. He mentioned that this is the first such Climate Resilience Observatory in the country. Similarly, the course of MSc in data science with specialisation in climate data analytics has probably been started for the first time in the country. Students who have obtained a bachelor's degree in subjects like mathematics, statistics,

computer science, etc., will be considered for this course. The process is being done through a competitive examination conducted for the masters programme in IIIT. He further highlighted that climate change has brought a significant challenge, directly impacting people's lives. Whether it is agriculture, health, or other facilities, nothing remains untouched by it. Floods, droughts, heat waves, etc., directly affect our lives. By training children on such important topics and equipping them with expertise in this field, they will be prepared to tackle this major challenge. Relief Commissioner GS Naveen Kumar said that for the

first time, Climate Resilience Observatory (CRO) had been established in Lucknow to develop better disaster management and robust early warning systems in the state. Through this, all types of weather related alerts can be received and disseminated to the concerned stakeholders. This will provide a new direction to the state government's disaster management system, he added. He mentioned that the CRO is receiving various types of data in bulk from all blocks of UP, including temperature, humidity, rainfall, etc. By analysing this, many things can be predicted. Based on these predictions, advisories can also be issued.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

Manjul Kumari W/o Ravendra Pratap Singh, 296, Lakhanpur Housing Society, Vikas Nagar, Kanpur-208024 have changed my name to MANJUL SINGH for all future purpose.

NOTICE

It inform that my wife's name is in my service record Radhika Shahi and D.o.b. 15/09/1944 but her D.o.b. in my service 01/07/1945 is wrong. Her true D.o.b is 15/09/1944. Rama Nand Shahi S/o Raj Kishore Shahi V. & P. Katiari, Tehsil-Ghosi. Army no- PE/14273/77 Rank-Sipahi.

NOTICE

I, Mairaz Khan, spouse of Dilasad Ahmad Khan resident of Vill. Khushnupur, P.O. Chahla, Teh. Dehbi, Dist. Buland Shahr, State Uttar Pradesh, Pin-202392 have changed my name from Mairaz to Mairaz Khan vide Affidavit dated 04/04/2024 before Tehsil Koil Aligarh.

NOTICE

I ANITA SUBBA PRADHAN W/o DIPESH PRADHAN (Army No-9423632Y, Rank-Hav-Unit-3/11 GR) R/o Agam chowk, Bijanbari, Dargelling in my husband's army service records my name is mention as ANITA PRADHAN by mistake. While my correct name is ANITA SUBBA PRADHAN. Please correct it accordingly for future purposes.

NOTICE

In my aadhaar no.478526917695, my name was wrongly been mentioned as Bade Lal Singh whereas my correct name is Bare Lal Singh. Bare Lal Singh S/o Chhukau Singh R/o 44, Sadanand Nagar, Raja Market, Kanpur.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from MOHAMMAD AJMAL To MOHD AJMAL for all future purposes, MOHD AJMAL S/O MOHD SALEEM R/O 97/172 Readymade market, Becon Ganj, Kanpur Nagar

NOTICE

In my husband subhankar dey's service record, my name has been mentioned as supria dey whereas my correct name is supria dey ghosh, Supria dey Ghosh W/o Subhankar Dey Dhubulia, Godwon para - dhubulia Dis- Nadia (WB) Pin- 741139

Information

Please be Informed That My Office Records Name Kamlesh Kumar Mourya (Army no 14642645X Rank NK Unit - 631 EME BN (129 Armd WKSP But Education Records Name Kamlesh Kumar Maurya. Both are Name of the Same Person. Name Kamlesh Kumar Maurya S/o Ram Narayan Maurya R/o Purebani, Roopamau Tehsil-Sadar, Dist. Raebareilly -229001

NOTICE

INDERJIIT KAUR(HOME NAME) ALIS HARIJEET KAUR (DOCUMENT NAME) W/O LATE JOGENDER SINGH BHALLA RESIDING AT H/NO-17, SBI COLONY, SAHARANPUR (UP) PIN-247001 HAVE DECLARED THAT I GOT MARRIED TO LATE JOGENDER SINGH BHALLA ON 29/11/1976 AT KANPUR GURUDWARA AS PER SIKH RITES.

NOTICE

I, Krishna Kumar S/o Late Gaur Prasad R/o Sandila Road, Naunihalganj Bangarmau Rural Tal. Bangarmau Distt. Unnao, My property Land No. 305 area 0.2990 Hect. Original sale deed registered at S/R Office, Safipur Doc. No. 5419, dt. 23.12.1993, was lost, I have not misused the said sale deed in any financial institution. By Krishna Kumar Mob. 9415330245 FIR/LAR No. 2024000342896 Dr. 03.05.2024

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that Original Sale Deed executed by Smt. Kamlesh Bajpai W/o Girish Kumar Bajpai in favour of Smt. Rekha Mishra W/o Rajesh Kumar Mishra vide Book No. 1, Volume No. 5037, Page No. 33 to 52 at Serial No. 2937 dated 22.05.2009 and Original Sale Deed executed by Smt. Kamlesh Devi W/o Sooraj Prasad in favour of Smt. Kamlesh Bajpai W/o Girish Kumar Bajpai vide Book No. 1, Volume No. 1366, Page No. 199 to 230 at Serial No. 1311 dated 05.06.1999 are lost and not traceable. All persons having any claim in respect thereof by way of sale, exchange, mortgage, charge, lien or otherwise whatsoever are hereby requested to make the same known in writing to the undersigned within a period of 3 days from the date of publication hereof, failing which, the claim of such person's will be deemed to have been waived and/or abandoned. Shiva Kant Dixit Advocate Kanpur Mob.9336632446

NOTICE

In my son's (PATHAN SHAKIL JANMAHAMAD Army no 15445199Y, Rank-SEPOY, Unit-Administrative Battalion AMC Centre And College Lko-226002) service records my name is mention as SHAYNAJ and DOB is 30/07/1969 by mistake, Whereas my correct name and DOB is SHAHINAJ JANMOHAMAMAD PATHAN and 04/05/1963. Please correct it accordingly for future purposes.

UP to invest ₹45,000 crore on highways, tertiary roads

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

For strengthening the logistics infrastructure in the state, the Uttar Pradesh government has drawn ambitious plans to invest Rs 45,000 crore in highways and tertiary roads in the current financial year 2024-25. This move would expedite passenger and cargo movement in the state. The projects to be undertaken include bridges and overbridges across the 75 districts of the state. Of the proposed Rs 45,000 crore, the Public Works Department (PWD) will spend

nearly Rs 34,000 crore, or 75 per cent of the fund. The remaining Rs 11,000 crore will be spent on projects in villages, tehsils, block headquarters, international/interstate border roads, roads in sugar mill and industrial areas, as well as roads under 'Dharmarth' (religious tourist circuit) project. The UP government, in the 2024-25 budget, has made provisions for the road and highway projects. Moreover, Rs 800 crore was allocated for road projects in the industrial and logistics park corridors in UP. "Of the total budget for roads, about Rs 1,750 crore would be

spent on projects under the 'Dharmarth' circuit this year," a senior government official said. The state has employed a GPS-based monitoring system for such projects to pre-empt time and cost overruns. The roads are geo-tagged for financial propriety in the allocation of funds to developers. The UP Expressway Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) is the nodal agency for these expressway projects, and PWD is mandated for the extensive network of state highways, district and tertiary roads.

Three killings rock Aligarh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Aligarh was rocked with three sensational killings on Wednesday morning. First, a person attacked a farmer who had gone to the field and set him on fire. After a while, he attacked another person with a stick and killed him too. Later, he was also killed by agitated villagers. The villagers later claimed that the accused appeared to be mentally deranged. He fell victim to the anger of the mob after the two murders, while some say that while running away after the two murders, he fell at a place and was found dead yet. He has not been identified yet. The incident took place in Noorpur village under Tappal police station of Aligarh. A villager claimed that Lalaram (55 years) of the village had gone to irrigate the moong field at around six o'clock on Wednesday morning when an unknown person attacked him with a stick. When Lalaram became unconscious, the accused took out a matchstick and set removing his own clothes, after the victim's body on fire. Later, the villagers rescued Lalaram and took him to the hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. After killing Lalaram, the accused attacked another villager named Gayas (52) with a stick. He also beat him to

death. Reports said that when the women going to collect fodder in the morning saw this, the accused started running naked. When the villagers came to know about the incident, people rushed to the spot. The villagers tried to catch the accused but he also died. On receiving information, the police reached the spot and sent all the three bodies for post-mortem. The police are investigating the matter. Aligarh's Senior Superintendent of Police Sanjeev Suman, who reached the spot, claimed that a mentally deranged person attacked another person, then tried to burn him alive. After that he also attacked another person. Both the people died. The villagers also caught the accused and he also died under mysterious circumstances. Meanwhile, a couple in love allegedly committed suicide by consuming poison in Muzaffarnagar district's Bhaura Kalan area. Police Circle Officer Ravi Shankar informed reporters on Wednesday that Vipin Kumar (22) and Nisha (20) committed suicide by consuming poison in Bhaura Kalan area. He said that Nisha and Vipin were in love but as their castes were different, their families were against this relationship. Ravi Shankar said that the bodies were sent for post-mortem and the matter was being investigated.

Man opens account to raise funds for Ayodhya mosque; booked

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An unidentified man unauthorisedly opened a bank account for fundraising in the name of construction of the Mohammed bin Abdullah mosque on five acre land in Ayodhya. The land has been allotted to the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board (UPSCWB), Lucknow by the state government in compliance with the Supreme Court verdict on Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute. The miscreant has been booked for forgery and for violation of section 66 D of the IT Act. The case was registered at Gautampalli police station in Lucknow on the complaint of UPSCWB chairman and chief trustee of Indo Islamic Cultural Foundation Trust (IICFT) which is assigned the construction of the masjid, Zulfar Ahmad Farooqui. In his complaint, Farooqui said he was sent a WhatsApp message by the secretary of the IICFT, Athar, who also sent an image in which the proposed mosque's map/ portrait was shown. "I was told by Athar that some unidentified person had opened a bank account in the Central Bank of India for fundraising in the name of con-

struction of the mosque. The image was provided to Athar by a local journalist in Ayodhya and the image of the mosque and bank account details went viral on social media. The miscreant(s) aimed at collecting donations for the construction of the Ayodhya mosque. "The IICFT never opened a bank account for this purpose with the above said bank and has not authorised any person to collect donations for the construction of the mosque. This way the miscreants are making false propaganda about the proposed masjid and collecting donations fraudulently and illegally," he said. He appealed to the police to initiate action to stop the miscreant(s) from further collecting donations and denting the image of the trust. He also requested the police for a threadbare probe into the case and closure of the bank account.

knocked him down near Dharampur crossing. He died on the way to hospital. Police are looking for the errant motorcyclist. THEFT Thieves stole ornaments worth several lakh rupees and a laptop from three houses in Indira Nagar when the house owners were out of the city. The house owners identified as Rajgiri Pandit, Santosh Mishra and Akhilesh Chauhan, all of Vindhayavasi Puram, along with their family members had gone to attend marriages and they found their houses burgled when they returned to the city.

KILLED

A man was killed in a road mishap in Itaunja police station area. The incident took place around 7 pm on May 6 but a case was registered on Wednesday. The victim, Ganeshi of Usarna village in the area, was crossing the road when a speeding motorcycle

DUPED

A woman, Romi Singh of Gomti Nagar, was duped of over Rs 4.8 lakh for a job in an online fraud. The victim got a call from an unknown man who offered her a job and then asked her to download an app through which they chatted with her and took money from her by promising a job.

HONoured

Principal Chief Operating Officer of North Eastern Railway, Anoop Kumar Satpathy, honoured 11 employees of the security wing and gave them certificates for discharging their responsibilities effectively, working hard and making their invaluable contribution in the months of March and April 2024. A function to honour the employees was organised at the divisional railway manager's

11 NER staff honoured

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

office of the North Eastern Railway Lucknow Division on Wednesday and Chief Signal and Telecommunication Engineer RK Pandey and Divisional Railway Manager Aditya Kumar were present in the function. Those honoured included Sunil Kumar Verma, Balakrishna Maurya, Chandra Bhushan Kumar, Nitin Kumar Madhesia, Vishwajit, Dhruv Narayan Singh, Dashrath Prasad, Bhim Singh, Brijraj Yadav, Harigopal and Dhananjay Chand.

NOTICE-This is to inform that Original sale deed (chain deed) bearing doc. no. 8094, dated 19/08/2015 and doc. no. 1772, dated 26/04/2011 regarding property khata no. 518Ka, 514, Situated at Village Bahrauli, Pargana Kushi, Tehsil Fatehpur, Barabanki, duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar Fatehpur, Barabanki, were lost with my client namely Hilltop Traders Pvt. Ltd. on 05.05.2024 and it is also noted that the earlier an ATS was executed by Ram Autar S/O Ratan in favour of Mohd. Ishiyaa S/O Mohd. Sabir, regarding property Gata nos. 511, 512, 515/1 at Village Bahrauli through ATS bearing doc. no. 3252, dated 15/05/2013. If any person, financial institution or Mohd. Ishiyaa has any interest or objection over it, kindly inform to the undersigned. Res. K. S. Nela, Vitar, Kalyanpur, Lucknow Mob-9356127853

COURT NOTICE
CITATION (BY ADVERTISEMENT)
(Chapter XXX, Rule-21)

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT ALLAHABAD ORIGINAL JURISDICTION TESTAMENTARY AND INTESTATE JURISDICTION TESTAMENTARY CASE NO. 23 OF 2024

IN THE MATTER OF THE GOODS OF Late Saikram Mishra S/o late Durga Deen Mishra, resident of Village Hathigahan, P.O. Hathigahan Soraon, District-Prayagraj, at presently address 162/9b/1a, Azad Nagar South Malaka, Police Station- Kotwali, District-Prayagraj.....Deceased. Smt. Savitri.....Petitioner. WHEREAS an application has been made by Smt. Savitri W/o Saikram Mishra, resident of Village Hathigahan, P.O. Hathigahan, Soraon, District-Prayagraj, at presently address 162/9b/1a, Azad Nagar South Malaka, Police Station- Kotwali, District-Prayagraj, for the probate of the will (or Letters of Administration to the estate) of Late Saikram Mishra, deceased, who died at Hathigahan District-Prayagraj on 26.01.2022 AND WHEREAS, the 08th day of July, 2024 has been fixed for hearing of the said application. THIS CITATION is issued calling upon all persons claiming to have any interest to come and see the proceedings if they think fit before the grant of probate (or Letters of Administration). Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 1st day of May, 2024.

DEPUTY REGISTRAR
HIGH COURT, ALLAHABAD
Brijesh Yadav Advocate
Counsel for the Petitioner.

PUBLICATION
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
(Area of Jurisdiction-Part of Uttar Pradesh)
600/1, Laxmi Vihar Road, Near Hanuman Sth Mandir, Lucknow- 226 007
DRC No. 612/2022
(NOTICE UNDER RULE 2 OF SECOND SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961 READ WITH SECTION 29 OF THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS DUE TO BANKS AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTION ACT, 1993)
ICICI BANK LTD.
Versus
NEHA ENTERPRISES & Others
1. NEHA ENTERPRISES R/o. 1669, Sector I LDA Colony, Kanpur Road, Lucknow- 226 012
2. RAJESH KUMAR SINGH. R/o. 1669, Sector I, LDA Colony Kanpur Road, Lucknow- 226012
.....Defendants

This is to notify that a sum of 15,58,351.20/- (Rupees Fifteen Lacs Fifty Eight Thousand Three Hundred Fifty One and Twenty Paise Only) (in bifurcated Rs. 7, 8 0, 2 0 8 . 7 0 / - + Rs. 7,78,142.50) with penal-tilite and future interest @ 10.00% per annum from the date of filing 18-09-2014 original application till full realization is made has become due from you as per the Certificate bearing No. 612/2022 dated 17-01-2022 in Original Application No. 769/2014 passed against you by the D.R.T. Lucknow. 2. You are hereby directed to pay the sum within 15 days of the receipt of this Notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Bank and Financial Institution Act, 1993. 3. You are hereby ordered to declare on Affidavit the particulars of assets on or before 23/07/2024. 4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 23/07/2024 at 10.30 A.M. 5. In addition to the sum aforesaid you will also be liable to pay the following costs:-

Details of Costs:-
Application fee Rs. 18,000
Advocate fees Rs. NA
Publication charges Rs. NA
Miscellaneous Expenses Rs. NA
Given under my hand and seal at Lucknow this 16th day of April, 2024.
Recovery Officer- II
Debts Recovery Tribunal
Lucknow

Cong dividing nation, promoting terrorism and separatism in various regions: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath once again rallied in the election battleground on Wednesday, urging for the re-election of Devendra Singh Bhole from Akbarpur Lok Sabha constituency, Mukesh Rajput from Farrukhabad and Arun Sagar from Shahjahanpur. Simultaneously, he called for support for Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Arvind Singh in the by-election to Dadraul assembly seat in Shahjahanpur district.

While expressing gratitude to the crowds gathered at the public meetings, the chief minister criticised the Samajwadi Party-Congress tie-up in the state. He told the people that this election represents a choice between 'Rambhakt' and 'Ramdrohis', asserting that those who are 'Rambhakt' are also 'rashtabhakt'. He said the public should reject 'Ramdrohis' in these elections. Lashing out at the SP, Chief Minister Yogi declared that the Saifai family is destined to lose three seats in the elections held on May 7, with Kannauj following on May 13 and Azamgarh on May 25.

In the first public meeting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the name of Akbarpur was such that one felt hesitant to say it again and again. All this will change, he added. The chief minister stated that it is an eternal truth that 'Ramdrohis' have always met their downfall and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections will confirm this truth.

He emphasized, "This is not merely an election to form a government. On one hand, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country is being established as a new Aatmanirbhar Bharat, while on the other hand, 'Ramdrohis' are working to divide us on caste and regional identities. Terrorists are being



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections in Ghatampur town of Kanpur on Wednesday. State Legislative Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana is also seen.

glorified, and mafias are encouraged." The chief minister continued, "Congress has consistently engaged in divisive politics, fostering division within the nation and actively promoting terrorism and separatism in various regions. Congress has once again promised to give such reservations in its manifesto this time," he added. Chief Minister Yogi mentioned that the government is currently conducting a survey to assess the potential for cultivating sugarcane in the area. If viable, plans are underway to establish a sugar and ethanol complex in the region, he added. "During the SP regime, only guns were manufactured here, but under the Kanpur Defence Industrial Corridor, cannons for the nation will be produced. When the cannons will kill terrorists at the border, the names of Kanpur and UP will resonate in everyone's minds," he added.

Chief Minister Yogi further said that presently the ammunition being produced here was reaching the entire world. During the campaign for Farrukhabad Lok Sabha seat in Etah, Chief Minister Yogi raised a question among the public, "How will Ram Gopal Yadav like the Ram temple as these people release terrorists from jail?" He said, "During the SP government from 2004 to 2007, terrorists attacked the Ram Jambhoomi in Ayodhya, the Sankat Mochan Temple in Varanasi, courts in Lucknow, Ayodhya and Varanasi, and a CRPF camp in Rampur." Chief Minister Yogi further mentioned that when the SP government came to power in 2012, the then chief minister first ordered the withdrawal of cases against terrorists as he was not worried about the security of the state, the honour of the country, the youth, daughters,

businessmen, but about the terrorists. "It will be a sin to vote for those who oppose Lord Ram and the Ram temple in India. Those who vote for them are harming this world and will also harm the afterlife," Yogi remarked. The chief minister said, "We have invented bulldozer for Ramdrohis." "The alliance between Congress and SP is one that compromises security, engages in corruption, encourages Naxalism and terrorism, and opposes the construction of the Ram temple," Yogi added. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, addressing a gathering in Shahjahanpur, highlighted that half of the Lok Sabha seats have already undergone voting in the ongoing elections. "We have reached halfway towards achieving our goal of 'Abki baar, 400 paar...' The 2024 elections appear poised to create a new chapter in history. The setback faced by Congress and SP indi-

cates they have conceded defeat halfway through. Our history bears witness: no matter how mighty or influential, a 'Ramdrohi' is destined to fall. There is no point discussing the respect for heritage with those who disown their ancestors." Detailing the developmental and welfare accomplishments under BJP's governance, the chief minister mentioned the construction of a medical college in Shahjahanpur. "Here there was a demand to build a pontoon bridge on the Ganga which would connect Thakur Roshan Singh's village, but we provided a concrete bridge there. This government is actively ensuring and delivering developmental benefits. Additionally, plans are underway to install a ropeway at Hanumat Dham in Shahjahanpur. A grand museum has been made in honour of the great heroes of the Kakori train action," he said.

SP should worry about fate of Yadav kin: Maya

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati on Wednesday reacted strongly to Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav's comments on removing her nephew Akash Anand from the party's national coordinator post. She advised the SP chief to worry about his own family members contesting parliamentary elections instead of taking interest in others. "It would be better if the extremely anti-Dalit SP does not comment or worry about what is going on in the BSP organisation. Instead, the SP leadership should only worry about the condition of their own family and the candidates of the Yadav community fielded in the elections because all of them are in a bad state," Mayawati commented on social media platform 'X'. "The conduct, character and face of the SP, as always, is that of a party which is strongly opposed to the rights of Dalits, extremely backward classes and reservations given to them in the Constitution. Ending reservation in promotions and tearing the bill in this regard in Parliament are such acts of

theirs which are difficult to forgive," the former chief minister of UP stated. Along with this, changing the names of districts, parks, universities etc. named in UP in the name of great saints, gurus



and great men born in the Bahujan samaj by the BSP government in honour of them due to casteist thinking are such acts of the SP government which are recorded in history as black deeds, she added while reacting strongly to SP chief's comments. It may be mentioned that though the opposition targets Mayawati over removing her nephew Akash Anand from all posts and accuses her of taking this action at behest of Bharatiya Janata Party, sources

say that Mayawati has killed the proverbial two birds with one stone - she has refuted all charges of nepotism and also pacified Dalits, who did not appreciate her diatribe against the BJP. Now whatever criticism Mayawati faces from rivals for promoting nepotism in the BSP by bringing in Akash Anand, has been washed away by her decision to punish him for his 'immaturity'. "Parties like Congress, Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janata Dal that thrive on nepotism can no longer accuse the BSP of following in their footsteps. The BSP supremo is not dependent on her family and does not promote nepotism, unlike the Gandhis and Yadavs. Behenji (Mayawati) has proved it," said a BSP functionary. By removing her nephew from the key party post, Mayawati has ensured that she does not burn her bridges with the ruling BJP. Earlier, Mayawati had moved swiftly to control the damage done by her protegee and cancelled Akash Anand's rallies and asked him to avoid public appearances. When public anger did not subside, Mayawati finally removed her political heir from all posts of the party on Tuesday night.

Rival parties want to grab power, says BSP chief

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party national president Mayawati targeted the rival parties in a public meeting held in Madhoganj in Hardoi on Wednesday. The former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh said that the rival parties want to come to power by adopting the policy of 'saam, daam, dand, bhed'. "Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party have given false promises in their manifestos. Do not fall into their trap," she said, adding that the guarantee of good days has not been fulfilled even in 10 years. "The BSP does not make manifestos, but shows development work on the ground," Matawati said, adding that if BSP forms the government, then it will show concrete work like in UP. She also said that atrocities were being committed on the

Muslim community in the name of Hindutva. In a public meeting held in the playground of Narpati Singh Inter College in Madhoganj, Mayawati said that the BJP had captured power at the Centre and in most of the states, but due to its casteist and wrong policies, it was not going to come back to power at the Centre easily. "If there is a fair election and there is no manipulation in the electronic voting machines, then their guarantees or election promises are not going to work. The BJP has not fulfilled even one-fourth of the promises it made. The BJP has only done the work of making the capitalists and rich people richer," she said. "Like Congress, BJP has also not been able to develop Dalits, backward classes, Muslims and other minority community people in the whole country

due to casteist and communal thinking. The quota of Dalits, tribals and other backward classes has not been filled in the whole country yet. Reservation in promotion of Scheduled Castes people in government jobs has also been abolished. Most of the work has been given in the private sector and reservation is not applicable in the private sector," she said. Mayawati said that due to BJP governments, the condition of Muslims and minority community people was very bad. "They are also being oppressed in the name of Hindutva," she added. Former minister Abdul Mannan, BSP district president Rameshwar Kushwaha, district in-charge Randhir Bahadur, Neelu Satyarthi, Mukesh Verma, Ramnath Rawat and others were present in the public meeting.

ASSEMBLY BYPOLL: ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

'Will make Lucknow East a developed constituency'

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

It is 8:15 am on Wednesday. The Jarhara village on Kukrail road ahead of Munshi Pulia crossing is still sleeping as some cows graze in the surrounding area. Suddenly a cavalcade of cars arrives at the Jarhara Pullia with Congress and Samajwadi Party flags fluttering in the front. The INDIA bloc candidate of the Lucknow East assembly constituency, Mukesh Singh Chauhan, steps out on the uneven road. Dressed in white kurta-pyjama with the Congress scarf around his neck, Chauhan looks fresh and alert. He is accompanied by a few Congress and SP workers. Chauhan has just finished his campaigning in the morning at the parks in the Vikas Nagar area where he interacted with the morning walkers after which he drove

Chauhan thereafter moves into one of the narrow lanes of the village with his supporters who carry a tape recorder which highlights the candidate's achievements in an audio form. Chauhan swiftly moves into a shop, the first in the lane, where he is greeted with smiles by the shopkeeper and he does not hesitate in touching the feet of an elderly. He then moves into another house where a woman opens the door and gives him a welcome smile as he asks for votes. The noise of the campaigning and the hustle bustle created reaches the other houses and the small village wakes up to the noise of the elections. Chauhan says he is getting very good feedback from the people. "I am an INDIA bloc candidate and am getting a lot of support. The people want change in the Lucknow East assembly constituency. There

ple have to deposit Rs 35 per square feet for getting an electricity connection. This is something which the government should provide on its own but is charging extra from the people," he adds. Chauhan said that there were many areas where there were no sewers and chambers had not been constructed at other places. "The villages are in a bad state of affairs in the Lucknow East assembly constituency and at many places the sewer is overflowing onto the roads as no work has been done. The people are a very worried lot," he added. When asked that Lucknow East traditionally being a BJP seat, whether he would be able to break this record, he said that no constituency was the fort of any party. "It is the general public which makes you win and lose. This time the constituency will select a young candidate from Congress and the general public wants that the candidate who stays within them should win the election," he added. He further pointed out that if he won the election that he would carry out development works in the constituency at par with the development which he carried out in the Ismailganj ward



of good standards here," he said. He said that waterlogging was a big problem in the area and he would work to solve it. Commenting on the scenario in the state, he said that the tone of Prime Minister Narendra Modi had started changing after the first phase of Lok Sabha elections. "After the second phase the BJP party is more worried and after the third phase their minds have stopped working and they are seeing the ground shifting beneath their feet. I am going amongst the people and they want change and this will be seen on June 4. Those who are giving the slogan of 400 seats will not be able to win even 180 seats in the country," he added.

When asked why the voters were not showing any enthusiasm in stepping out to vote, he said the BJP voters were not happy with the party and were sitting back at home. "It is a dictatorship which is working and the way the BJP people are saying that they will change the Constitution, the people are very concerned about what is going to happen. They are realising that the Constitution of the Baba Saheb is in danger. The people have made up their mind that this government has

to go," he added. The area looks bad with no proper roads and unplanned houses. A resident of the area admits that there has been little development in the area but points out that there are BJP supporters who are living in the area. Mukesh carries on his campaign.

BSP won't win even one seat in UP: AKY

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said Bahujan Samaj Party would not win even a single parliamentary seat in Uttar Pradesh which sends the largest contingent of 80 MPs to the Lok Sabha. Akhilesh said on Wednesday in a post on X that the traditional voters of the BSP had drifted away from the party and aligned with the INDIA bloc as it was fighting for the protection of the Constitution and caste-based reservation. The SP chief's comment on the BSP was prompted by the reshuffle in the BSP in which Akash Anand, nephew of party chief Mayawati, was divested of all organisational responsibilities following a provocative speech made by him recently at Sitapur. "The reshuffle in a party organisation is an internal affair of a political party. The actual reason behind the change is the imminent rout of the BSP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections," Akhilesh Yadav said and added, "The BSP is losing the Lok Sabha elections as its traditional vote bank has shifted its support to

opposition's INDIA bloc which is fighting for the protection of the Constitution and reservation." He claimed that sensing its defeat, the BSP was taking pre-emptive measures of change in organisation. "It is too little and too late for the BSP to indulge in organisational reshuffle as the party has lost the battle," Akhilesh Yadav said and added, "The BSP is not winning a single seat in the first three phases of the Lok Sabha elections in UP in which polling

for 26 seats has so far been completed." "There is no prospect for the BSP in the remaining four phases of Lok Sabha elections in UP as it is likely to draw a blank in the first three phases of elections," rw SP chief said. "Appeal to the supporters of the BSP not to waste their vote for the party of Dalits and vote for the INDIA bloc which is fighting for the protection and preservation of Constitution and reservation given by Dr BR Ambedkar."

Form No.5
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
600/1, University Road near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow
(Area of Jurisdiction: Part of Uttar Pradesh)
SUMMONS FOR FILING REPLY & APPEARANCE THROUGH PUBLICATION
O.A. No. 1089 of 2023 Dated : 16.02.2024
(Summons to defendant under Section 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institution Act 1993 read with rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal Procedure Rules 1993)
HDFC Bank LimitedApplicant
Versus
BHARAT TRADERS & ANOTHERDefendants
To, 1. BHARAT TRADERS Through Prop. Mr. Pappu Chunnui Village- Bachrawan, Tehsil- Maharajganj, District- Raibareilly Uttar Pradesh- 229301, India. 2. MR. PAPPU CHUNNUI, S/o Chunnui R/o 283/671 Harchandrapur Gadhariknora M, Manaknagar, District- Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh - 226011, India
In the above noted application, You are required to file reply/evidence in Paper Book form in two sets, along with the documents and the affidavits (if any) personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioners in this tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel/ duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the tribunal on 20.05.2024 at 10:30 AM failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.
REGISTRAR,
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL LUCKNOW



down to this rural part of the Lucknow district. Chauhan told this reporter that he campaigns for four hours in the morning from 6 to 10. "In the morning, I meet the morning walkers and after 7:30 am I embark on door-to-door meetings with the residents. This continues in the evening from 6 to 10. I hold several indoor meetings with groups and organisations in between," he said.

no development has been done by the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate elected from this constituency. The BJP MLA did not come to the public of the area. Look at the state of the roads that are in a very bad condition; there is no facility of proper drinking water and the electric wires are hanging. There are no electricity poles and the wires have been fixed atop baans ballis," he says. "The worst part is that the peo-

1. "I will carry the same role model. I will make Lucknow East a developed Vidhan Sabha constituency of the city and people will give examples of the same. I will make an inter college and degree college for girls. This will be done on priority as there are no good schools here and poor people cannot afford private school education, I would like to establish government schools

When asked why the voters were not showing any enthusiasm in stepping out to vote, he said the BJP voters were not happy with the party and were sitting back at home. "It is a dictatorship which is working and the way the BJP people are saying that they will change the Constitution, the people are very concerned about what is going to happen. They are realising that the Constitution of the Baba Saheb is in danger. The people have made up their mind that this government has

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Bank of India BOI Zonal Office: "Star House" Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow-226010, Ph.: 0522-2721512 POSSESSION NOTICE

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

S. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower & Guarantor	Description of Immovable property mortgaged / Owner of the property	Amount o/s as mentioned in the Notice u/s 13(2) Date of Demand & Possession Notice
Branch: Aminabad			
1	Borrower- Mortgagor : (1) Mr. Prem Prakash Tiwari, Address: (1) 817, Lakri Mohal Sadar Bazar, Lucknow-226002 (2) 273, Arjunganj, Lucknow-226002 (2) (Co-Applicant) : Mrs. Padma Tiwari, Address: (1) 817, Lakri Mohal Sadar Bazar, Lucknow- 226002 (2) 273, Arjunganj, Lucknow-226002	Land and Building situated at Lucknow; Flat No. MMIG SF-4, Second Floor, measuring about 508 sq. ft. (47.211 Sq. Mtrs situated at Hata Rasool Khan, Mohalla- Hata Rasool Khan, Ward Lalkuan, Lucknow in the name of Mr. Prem Prakash Tiwari and Mrs. Padma Tiwari. Mortgagor by: Mr. Prem Prakash Tiwari and Mrs. Padma Tiwari Area-47.211 Sq.Mtr Boundaries : East : Flat No. SF-3, West : - 20 ft. wide road, North : - Flat No. SF-1, South : -Open.	₹ 14,00,559.00 + interest & other charges Demand Notice dt. 08.02.2024 Possession Notice dt. 02.05.2024

Date : 09.05.2024, Place : Lucknow Authorised Officer, Bank of India

BJP intensifies preparations for Modi's roadshow on May 13

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has intensified its preparations to make the proposed roadshow of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP candidate for Varanasi Lok Sabha seat on May 13 a grand success. The route of the roadshow is almost the same as it was in the last election and the only difference is the culminating point as in 2019 it had turned right from Godowlia towards Dashaswamedh Ghat and the event ended by offering prayers to Maa Ganga but this time he will go straight to Shri Kashi Vishwanath Corridor for seeking the blessings of Lord Shiva.

Even in 2014 when Modi was not allowed to take out a roadshow, he in a closed car turned left from Godowlia crossing towards BJP office near Rathayatra and there was a huge presence of Banarasi on the entire route where not even an inch of space was left and the three-four kilometre long journey took several hours. The roadshow in 2019 and even the one not allowed had changed the entire political atmosphere in the city, leaving the rivals, including then Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal (in 2014) far behind. The BJP is confident



about repeating history again. Since the entire roadshow route is a densely populated area when crowds can be seen even during the day hours it is expected that there will be a huge crowd in the evening hours when the prime minister passes through there. Regional (Kashi) BJP president Dilip Patel said that Modi's roadshow will start by garlanding the Malaviya's statue near BHU main gate in Lanka and will reach Kashi Vishwanath Temple via Assi, Sonarpura, Jangambari, Godowlia and Bansphatak.

Addressing the meeting of Varanasi Lok Sabha Management Committee held on Tuesday, Patel said the

party organisation has already started preparations for making the PM's roadshow on May 13 a grand success. "To make the roadshow grand, preparations are in full swing from the organisation with the participation of lakhs of party workers, while the people of Kashi also seem eager to get a glimpse of their favourite MP and prime minister", he said, adding that excited to welcome the PM, various organisations, social institutions and different communities are contacting the BJP office and they are demanding one place each for themselves during the road show from where they can welcome the prime minister.

Youth stabs brother to death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth stabbed his younger brother to death when the latter intervened in the scuffle between the former and his mother over distribution of property in Jinai Gadhwaha village under Rura police station area of Kanpur Dehat late on Tuesday afternoon. The kin immediately took the profuse-bleeding younger brother to the CHC where he was declared dead by the doctor. After the incident, the assailant escaped from the spot. Reports said that of the three sons of Badami Devi of Jinai Gadhwaha, Rama Shanker (26) was the youngest. Middle son Girja Shanker told the police that around 3.15 pm on Tuesday elder brother Uma Shanker indulged in a scuffle with the mother. On seeing them fighting, younger brother Rama Shanker intervened to pacify the matter. Meanwhile, Uma Shanker stabbed Rama Shanker to death in anger and escaped. Station Officer (SO) SN Singh said on the complaint of Girja Shanker, an FIR for murder and scuffle had been lodged. Two teams were deputed to nail the assailant, he said. Girja Shanker said his mother had purchased two bighas of land in the name of Uma Shanker. Some time ago, on her purchasing 2.25 bighas of land jointly in the name of Girja Shanker and Rama Shanker, Uma Shanker had become upset and often clashed with his mother. On Tuesday when Rama Shanker was supplying water to the field, 200 metres away from the house, villagers informed him about a clash between Uma Shanker and the mother in the house. Rama Shanker immediately rushed to the spot who, in a bid to pacify the issue, was stabbed to death by Uma Shanker. Rama Shanker is survived by wife Kirti and 18-month-old daughter. He was engaged in stitching job in Noida and had arrived in village to assist Girja Shanker in harvesting the crop.

Two more file nomination papers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Two more candidates filed their papers on the second day of nomination for the 77-Varanasi Parliamentary Constituency under Lok Sabha General Election, 2024, here on Wednesday. Gagan Prakash filed his nomination from Apna Dal (Kamerawali) and Paras Nath Keshari from Rashtriya Samajwadi Jan Kranti Party. Apart from this, three nomination forms were taken whereas people have also received 22 treasury challans. Those who also took nomination papers are Gagan Prakash of Apna Dal Kamerawadi, Rajyazuddin (Independent) and Rajesh Kumar Surya (Rashtriya Ambekar Dal). With this, the total number of candidates who filed papers from Varanasi Lok Sabha seat has gone up to four as on the first day, two candidates had filed nomination papers. They were Koli Shetty Shivakumar (Independent) and Abhishek Prajapati (Bahadur Aadmi Party).



A candidate filing nomination papers in Varanasi on Wednesday.

Earlier, District Magistrate/District Election Officer (DEO) S Rajalingam conducted a surprise inspection of the control room set up for the smooth conduct of the Lok Sabha General Elections-2024 at Vikas Bhawan auditorium here on Tuesday. During the inspection, he instructed the officers concerned to ensure effective disposal of election related complaint applications on priority basis. He also inspected the register related to the complaint applications. The DM/

DEO reviewed the work done so far related to media certification, social media and violation of model code of conduct etc and gave necessary guidelines to the officers concerned. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal, Additional District Magistrate (Finance/ Revenue) Vandana Srivastava, Incharge (Social Media) Rajiv Rai, Member Secretary (MCMC) / District Information Officer (DIO) Surendra Nath Pal and others were also present.

World Thalassaemia Day observed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

An awareness activity was hosted on the occasion of World Thalassaemia Day at Adolescent Centre by Centre of Excellence for Adolescent Health & Development, Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH), Banarasi Hindu University (BHU) on Wednesday in joint collaboration with National Health Mission (UP Govt) and Mamta Health Institute for Mother and Child, New Delhi. The theme of this day was 'Empowering Lives, Embracing Progress: Equitable and Accessible Thalassaemia Treatment for All'. The guest speakers of this programme were Dr Suchi Jain and Dr Mamta from the Obstetrics and Gynecology department at Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS-BHU). Dr Shuchi Jain, in her comprehensive presentation, shed light on the intricate details of thalassaemia, empha-



mounting its nature as a haemoglobin chain disorder leading to recurrently low haemoglobin levels. She elucidated that if both partners in a marriage are carriers of thalassaemia minor, there exists a 25 per cent probability in each pregnancy that the child will inherit thalassaemia major. Furthermore, she delineated the various types of thalassaemia, symptoms such as dizziness, weakness and headaches, as well as its causes and preventive measures. Dr Mamta commenced her session by directing attention to this year's theme. Delving deeper, she underscored the para-

mount importance of genetic counselling prior to marriage, emphasising that genetic disorders lack permanent cures, thereby necessitating early detection. Failure to do so, she warned, heightens the risk of osteoporosis. Dr Mamta recommended a diet rich in folic acid and Vitamin C to mitigate the symptoms of thalassaemia. The event marked by insightful discussions and informative presentations served as a beacon of awareness, advocating for proactive measures and equitable access to treatment for thalassaemia patients worldwide.

Koli contesting poll for cow protection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Koli Shetty Shivkumar from Hyderabad (Telangana) has entered the election battlefield by filing nomination as an independent candidate from Varanasi parliamentary constituency with a pledge to declare cow as the 'Mother of the Nation' and stop cow slaughter, if he wins. He has also been the trustee of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Board for two years. Besides, he is also the mahant of the famous Trishakti

Hanuman Devasthanam Board based in Hyderabad. "If I come to power after winning the elections, then first of all I will declare cow as the 'Mother of the Nation' and stop cow slaughter", he said, promising to provide ₹2,100 per month to the wives of rickshaw pullers and tempo drivers. "I will also provide them with the means of employment through cow-based work", he said. Influenced by the devotion of Koli Shetty Shivkumar, Shankaracharya of Jyotish Peeth Swami

A vimuktেশ্বরানন্দ Saraswati gave him his blessings. Shivkumar said that he is the founder of Yug Tulsī Party and he runs four cow shelters in Hyderabad and the surrounding areas with a spirit of service for the welfare of cows. "The milk of about 800 cows present in the cow shed, which is not extracted, is left for the cow progeny. So far, 600 cows have been donated to the farmers to promote cow-based agriculture work", he said.

Vocalist enthralled

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Promising young vocalist Rohit Mishra enthralled the audience on the occasion of the birth anniversary of great vocalist Padma Vibhushan Girija Devi Appaji at Subeh-Banarasi stage. Assi Ghat here on Wednesday. Rohit is disciple of late Girija Devi and in his 'Swaranjali' presentation, he was supported by Dev Narayan Mishra on tabla and Suryansh Mishra on samvidini (harmonium). Dev Narayan Mishra is the grandson of Girija Devi's Guru Pt Srichandra Mishra.

Health checkup camp held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

In celebration of World Asthma Day, Medantrik, a healthcare startup incubated at Startup Incubation and Innovation Centre (SIIC), IIT Kanpur focused on improving health outcomes, successfully organised a free health checkup camp for residents of the IIT Kanpur campus on Tuesday. The event was held in collaboration with G SVM and Kcare Hospital, aiming to raise awareness about the importance of lung health in India. This initiative highlights Medantrik's ongoing commitment to making healthcare solutions accessible to all. The camp offered a variety of tests, including full lung function tests, chest consultations, physiotherapy consultations, and other essential health screenings.

Prof Sachchida Nand Tripathi, Department of Civil Engineering and the Department of Sustainable Energy Engineering, IIT-K, said, "Certain airborne particles may contribute to lung cancer.



Early detection of lung conditions can help people identify potential damage sooner. Utilising the Nodex device from Medantrik Medtech will be as simple as conducting routine checks for high blood pressure or diabetes at home, allowing individuals to prevent severe damage." Prof Ankush Sharma, Professor in-charge, SIIC, IIT-K, highlighted the significance of lung health screenings. "As per the Health department's statistics, nearly two lakh people in the country lose their lives to asthma every year. With the help of Nodex, such individuals will be able to easily identify their symptoms

and take their medication on time. Nodex will be launched in the market within the next six months." This health camp follows Medantrik's successful initiative in August last year, where they organised a checkup camp for the Kanpur traffic police. The results of that camp were particularly concerning, as a majority of the officers, despite using safety measures, exhibited symptoms significantly impacted by pollution exposure. The camp at IIT-K served as another impactful step by Medantrik in their mission to promote health awareness and empower communities with accessible healthcare solutions.

Routes of several trains changed till June 21

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The re-development of Prayagraj Junction is going on. The work is being completed by taking the block from North Central Railway Prayagraj Division. Railways has changed the routes of several trains till June 21. PR of Prayagraj Division of NCR Amit Singh said that train No 05193 Chhapra-Panvel special train running from Chhapra from May 9 to June 6, instead of its scheduled route - Aunrihar, Varanasi, Prayagraj Junction, Manikpur station, will be run via its changed route via Aunrihar, Jaunpur, Varanasi, Prayagraj Chheoki and Manikpur. It will temporarily reach Prayagraj Chheoki station at 22.22 hrs and depart at 22.24 hrs. Similarly, 05194 Panvel-Chhapra special train running from Panvel from May 10 to June 7 will be run via the changed route - Manikpur, Prayagraj Chheoki, Varanasi, Jaunpur and Aunrihar

instead of its scheduled route - Manikpur, Prayagraj Junction, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Aunrihar. It will temporarily reach Prayagraj Chheoki station at 01.45 hrs and depart at 02.05 hrs. The 08795 Gondia-Chhapra special train running from Gondia station on May 13 and 20 will be run via the changed route Manikpur, Prayagraj Chheoki, Varanasi, Jaunpur, Aunrihar instead of the scheduled route Manikpur, Prayagraj Junction, Prayagraj Rambagh, Varanasi and Aunrihar. It will temporarily reach Prayagraj Chheoki station at 11.50 am and leave at 12.05 pm. The 08796 Chhapra-Gondia special train running from Chhapra on May 14 and 21 will be run on the changed route Aunrihar-Jaunpur-Varanasi-Prayagraj Chheoki-Manikpur instead of its scheduled route i.e. Aunrihar-Varanasi-Prayagraj Rambagh-Prayagraj Junction, Manikpur. It will temporarily reach Prayagraj Chheoki station at 03.38 hrs and leave at 03.40 hrs.

GM honours employees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the leadership of General Manager (GM), North Eastern Railway (NER) Soumya Mather, many effective reach Prayagraj Chheoki station at 01.45 hrs and depart at 02.05 hrs. The 08795 Gondia-Chhapra special train running from Gondia station on May 13 and 20 will be run via the changed route Manikpur, Prayagraj Chheoki, Varanasi, Jaunpur, Aunrihar instead of the scheduled route Manikpur, Prayagraj Junction, Prayagraj Rambagh, Varanasi and Aunrihar. It will temporarily reach Prayagraj Chheoki station at 11.50 am and leave at 12.05 pm. The 08796 Chhapra-Gondia special train running from Chhapra on May 14 and 21 will be run on the changed route Aunrihar-Jaunpur-Varanasi-Prayagraj Chheoki-Manikpur instead of its scheduled route i.e. Aunrihar-Varanasi-Prayagraj Rambagh-Prayagraj Junction, Manikpur. It will temporarily reach Prayagraj Chheoki station at 03.38 hrs and leave at 03.40 hrs.



Two Varanasi division employees honoured by NER General Manager Soumya Mather in Gorakhpur HQs on Tuesday.

Among the award recipients, Pramod Kumar, working on the post of gateman at level crossing number 141 C of Bhatni-Gorakhpur section of Varanasi Division, on March 25 while working on the passing train number 12565 heard the sound of knocking from the engine and he immediately informed about it to the loco pilot. Later, the loco pilot stopped the train and checked the engine and then the faults

got repaired. Due to this, an accident was avoided due to the alertness and promptness of Pramod Kumar. On January 18 Sandeep Jaiswal, working as a gateman at the Aunrihar station of Varanasi division, saw smoke coming out from one of the wagons of a goods train while passing by and immediately informed the station master concerned who later on informed the control room and stopped the train. Then the said wagon was disconnected from the train and an accident was avoided due to the promptness of Sandeep Jaiswal. Similarly, Priya Pantiya working as a technician at Lucknow Jn was also honoured.

Labourer falls from tree, dies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 35-year-old labourer fell on the ground and died while cutting a tree near Ramnathpur station in Sarai Inayat police station area. On getting information the police reached the spot and sent the body for the post-mortem examination. The family members have filed a complaint demanding action. Reports said that Suraj,

who used to work as a labourer, lost control and fell from the tree due to which his spinal cord broke. He sustained serious injuries and was hurriedly rushed to the district hospital but died on the way. The police is investigating the matter. Sarai Inayat police station-incharge Shailendra Singh said the case seems to be suspicious. However, legal action will be taken after investigation.

RUCKUS: The family members and villagers created a ruckus after the death of a 28-year-old woman and her child soon after delivery in a hospital located in Ramnagar under Mejia police station area. Angry family members also blocked the road due to which traffic was disrupted. However, after persuasion by the officials they lifted the jam. The police are investigating the matter.

Four-day materials camp organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Material Advantage @ Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT-K), a student technical chapter in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering (MSE) at IIT-K and Advanced Centre for Materials Science (ACMS), IIT-K collaborated with various prestigious organisations to host a four-day 'materials camp' recently. The collaborating entities included the Materials Society, Indian Institute of Metals (IIM) Kanpur Chapter, Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE) Kanpur Chapter, BIS Student Chapter, SERB, and ASM International Kanpur Chapter. Prof. Kantesh Balani, the founding organiser and faculty coordinator of Material Advantage @ IIT Kanpur, hosted the event, with P Shiven, Pooja Rani and Dhananjay Umrao as the lead organisers.

Prof. Kantesh Balani, said, "We were happy to see the response to the camp. The event saw enthusiastic participation from 37 students and

nine teachers from nine prominent schools in Kanpur. This shows the growing interest in materials science and engineering among students and educators alike. The collaborative efforts and dedication of all involved made this event a resounding success, paving the way for future initiatives and advancements in the field." The participating school included Jugal Devi Saraswati Vidya Mandir, Chacha Nehru Smarak Inter College, Air Force School, Dr Virendra Swaroop Education Centre, Jai Narayan Vidya Mandir, Kendriya Vidyalaya IIT Kanpur, Methodist High School, Purnachandra Vidya Niketan,

and Allenhouse Public School. The camp was virtually inaugurated by Dr Navin Manjorran, Senior Vice-President of ASM International. Prof. Yogesh Joshi, Chair of INAE Kanpur, involved made this event a resounding success, paving the way for future initiatives and advancements in the field." The participating school included Jugal Devi Saraswati Vidya Mandir, Chacha Nehru Smarak Inter College, Air Force School, Dr Virendra Swaroop Education Centre, Jai Narayan Vidya Mandir, Kendriya Vidyalaya IIT Kanpur, Methodist High School, Purnachandra Vidya Niketan,

ful session, participants had the opportunity to visit advanced material testing and characterisation facilities in ACMS, such as instrumented indentation, X-ray diffraction, scanning electron microscopy, and mechanical testing laboratories, all of which were highly appreciated. The discussion session with Prof. Anish Upadhyaya and Prof. Kantesh Balani provided an engaging talk titled "Fascinating World of Materials", which was further complemented by real-life demonstrations on materials in a flat television, presented by Shruti Dubey and P Shiven. The participants actively engaged in lab sessions

focused on sample preparation and microscopy of various samples in the physical metallurgy laboratory. This segment was coordinated by Gyan P Bajpai and Ajay P Singh with assistance from Harshit Agarwal, Rajdipta Samadder, and Satya P Nath. On the third day of the event, the session commenced with a talk by Prof. Kallol Mondal on "Corrosion around us." In addition, parallel session of virtual lab on "Electron microscopy for beginners" and virtual reality were demonstrated by Dhananjay Umrao, Dr Ashutosh Tiwari, Pradeep Patel, Vinay Tripathi, Suman Tripathi and Harsh Dwivedi, receiving a warm response from the students. The day concluded with the distribution of certificates to all participants and an online address by Pradeep Goyal, President ASM International. Moving to the final day of the camp, the focus shifted towards mechanical testing and manufacturing processes, highlighting the significance of processing techniques in altering material shape and achieving desired performance.

Ordnance Parachute Factory exhibits products

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Ordnance Parachute Factory (OPF), Kanpur, exhibited its products very effectively in the India-Indonesia Defence Industry Exhibition-cum-Seminar organised in Jakarta, capital of Indonesia. OPF General Manager MC Balasubramanian gave a presentation of a series of different types of GIL products, including parachutes and inflatable products.

Indonesian Army officers and other foreign delegates present appreciated the GIL products and expressed their inter-



est towards them. The event was organised recently under the banner of Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) led by the Additional Secretary,

Defence Production department, government of India, T Natarajan in which OPF, the production unit of Gliders India Limited, also participated.

BJP slams Congress over Pitroda remark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

After heading the Indian Overseas Congress for about two decades, Sam Pitroda, who was forced to resign from his post on Wednesday, had twice brought embarrassment for his party which is leading the crucial Opposition parties INDIA Bloc. The BJP latched on to Pitroda's remarks and said the Opposition party is getting increasingly unmasked as the Lok Sabha polls progress.



Senior BJP leaders Rajeev Chandrasekhar and Sudhanshu Trivedi said Pitroda has highlighted the idea of India that Congress bigwigs, such as Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, believe in. They claimed that Pitroda's "racist" comments have betrayed the Congress's bid to divide the country on the lines of race, religion and caste. Union Minister and BJP candidate from Amethi, Smriti Irani, alleged that it (Congress) tries to divide the countrymen on the basis of who is of which colour and who belongs to

which region. She also accused the Congress of always dividing the country in the name of religion and caste. Even INDIA Bloc major stakeholder Aam Admi Party's AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said none of the members of the INDIA Bloc support Pitroda's remarks and accused the BJP of "hating" the Dalits. Pitroda has been a "mentor" to Rahul Gandhi, who has often run down the Indian democracy and the country's institutions during his foreign trips, Chandrasekhar said while Trivedi

mentioned the ongoing Lok Sabha polls have now become a battle between those under the influence of a foreign mindset in their definition of India and an India that is "aatmanirbhar" (self-reliant) and brimming with self-pride.

"Sam, Pitroda on you!" Union Minister Anurag Thakur said in a social media post. "While for us, all Indians look like Indians, the Congress insists on categorising them based on foreign ethnic lines such as Chinese, Arab, White and African. Only a party with a colonial mindset like Congress could indulge in such deplorable racism."

"Having failed to stir division between the north and the south, Congress now seems intent on sowing ethnic discord. It's only a matter of time before the Shelhzada, following in the footsteps of his mentor, champions this divisive strategy," Thakur said.

In the podcast interview to a media house, Pitroda said, "As a Gujarati, I love dosa, I love idli. That is my food,

that is no longer south Indian food. That is the India I believe in, where everybody has a place and everybody compromises a little bit.... That idea of India, which is rooted in democracy, freedom, liberty, fraternity, is being challenged by the Ram temple and Ram Navami and the prime minister going to temples all the time and talking not as a national leader, but as a leader of the BJP."

"That view centres around the Ram temple, god, history, heritage, Bhagwan Hanuman, Bajrang Dal and all kinds of issues. I respect their view. There is another group which says our founding fathers fought against the British Raj not for a Hindu Rashtra, but for a secular nation. Pakistan decided to create a nation based on religion and see what happened to them. We are a shining example of democracy in the world," Pitroda said.

Earlier, the Congress leader had stirred up a controversy by talking about the inheritance tax, which the BJP turned into a poll issue.

JP Nadda, Amit Malviya summoned by Bengaluru police over social media post

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

Bengaluru Police has summoned BJP President J P Nadda and the party's IT cell head Amit Malviya in connection with a social media post allegedly intimidating members of SC and ST community not to vote for a particular candidate, officials said on Wednesday. They have been asked to join the probe at the High grounds police station here.



"For the purpose of investigation of the said case, you are hereby directed to appear before the undersigned investigation officer at 11 am at High grounds police station within seven days of receipt of this notice," the summons read. The move comes after an FIR was registered against Nadda, Malviya and BJP's Karnataka unit chief B Y Vijayendra in connection with a social media following a complaint filed by the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) with the Election Commission and police on May 5 alleging violation of model code of conduct. They were booked under sections of Representation of

People Act and section 505 (2) (Statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes) of the Indian Penal Code, a senior police officer said. In the complaint, the KPCC cited the video uploaded on social media platform 'X' by the official account of Karnataka State BJP which, it alleged, is operated by Nadda and Vijayendra, BJP State President and Social Media incharge- Karnataka BJP, on May 4. "The said video posted on social media featured animated characters of (Congress leader) Rahul Gandhi and (Chief Minister) Siddaramaiah. In the clip, SC, ST and OBC community are portrayed as "eggs" in a nest and it also suggested Rahul Gandhi planting a big egg labelled as Muslim community. It is projected as though funds are being fed to the chick depicting the Muslim community, which then kicks out SC, ST and OBC community," it alleged. "The act of the accused person (s) is to wantonly provoke rioting and promote enmity between different religions and is prejudicial to maintenance of harmony apart from intimidating members of SC/ST community not to vote for particular candidate and causing enmity against members of SC/ST community," the complaint alleged.

CBI takes over probe in INLD Haryana unit president murder case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has taken over the investigation into the killing of the Indian National Lok Dal's Haryana unit president Nafe Singh Rathee and a party worker by

unidentified gunmen in February in Bahadurgarh near Delhi, officials said. During the attack, three private gunmen hired by Rathee for security had also sustained injuries when the assailants opened fire on the former MLAs SUV. The CBI has re-registered the

case on the recommendation of the Haryana government, the officials said, adding that it was routed to the agency by the Centre through a notification on April 26. The central probe agency has named seven accused, including former BJP MLA Naresh Kaushik, in its case,

the officials said. The other six accused are Karambir Rathee, Ramesh Rathee, Satish Rathee, Gaurav Rathee, Rahul and Kamal, they said. They added that an FIR filed under IPC sections of criminal conspiracy, murder, among others has been filed

against the accused in the case. The 67-year-old MLA from Bahadurgarh and INLD worker Jai Kishan were killed when unidentified assailants opened fire on Rathee's SUV on February 25. Rathee was elected from Bahadurgarh twice in 1996 and 2005.



MoU signed to enhance desi content in shipbuilding

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Jindal Steel and Power (JSP), on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) here for the supply of indigenous marine grade steel to enhance the indigenous content in shipbuilding, defence ministry said here on Wednesday. Giving details, officials said through this partnership, both entities have committed to foster indigenisation, enhance capabilities to produce and use these items in the Nation's interest. The MoU underscores the importance of public-private

partnerships in addressing complex security challenges, emphasising the need for collaboration between government agencies and the private sector. Several key benefits including quality, grades and dimensions along with the designated steel plants to manufacture the product are stipulated in the MoU as an assurance to the shipbuilding yards for a timely supply of marine-grade steel for the ICG. The MoU was signed by Deputy Director General (Materiel & Maintenance), ICG IG HK Sharma and Chief Marketing Officer, JSP S K Pradhan in the presence of senior officers of the ICG.



IIT Madras raises ₹513 crore from its alumni, donors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras raised a record funding of Rs 513 crore from its alumni, industry and individual donors during 2023-24, officials said on Wednesday. The institute also attracted total new pledges of Rs 717 crore from alumni and corporate partners during FY 2023-24. "The funds received would be used for technology research and development as well as for deploying technology already built by IIT Madras, in various parts of the country based on the societal needs. In addition, it is also used to support deserving students with scholarships as well as the Sports Excellence Admission programme which is also being supported from this year's philanthropic funds

raised. "Steep academic growth needs steep rise in funding. Thanks to all CSR partners and alumni of IIT Madras for trusting and support us in raising this all-time high quantum of funding," V Kamakoti, Director, IIT Madras said. For the second consecutive year, the institute set a new record for the highest funding raised in one financial year by an academic institute to undertake tech research, student projects as well as to develop cutting-edge infrastructure in the campus. "This historic high of Rs 513 crore is a 135 per cent increase from the amount raised in the previous financial year of 2022-23, when Rs 218 crore was raised. The number of donors giving over Rs one crore to the institute is 48 (16 alumni donors and 32 corporate

partners). "The funds were raised from IIT Madras alumni and individual philanthropists in addition to the CSR (corporate social responsibility) funds and grants from Indian as well as multinational corporate firms," Kamakoti said. The fund-raising was led by IIT Madras' Office of Institutional Advancement, overseen by the IIT Madras Alumni Charitable Trust. The total amount raised through alumni alone during 2023-24 was Rs 367 crore, which is an increase of 282 per cent as compared to the previous year. Their focus areas included cutting-edge research across various social impact themes, infrastructure, and scholarships for students, besides establishing Chair Professorships for research in specific areas.

ICG rescues critically ill fisherman off Kerala Coast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) rescued a critically-ill fisherman from Indian Fishing Boat (IFB) Jazeera, about 40 nautical miles, off Bepore, Kerala on Tuesday, defence ministry said here on Wednesday. Giving details, officials said the fisherman experienced a near-drowning incident after he fell into the sea. He was rescued by the IFB but his health condition deteriorated due to the excess water in the lungs. The boat, then, made a



medical distress call, which was responded to by the ICG. It mobilised its advanced light helicopter with a medical team from Kochi, along with Aryaman and C-404 ships. The ICG assets located the IFB and the patient was airlifted to Kochi. He was later shifted to a nearby hospital.

PM pays tribute to Rabindranath Tagore



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday paid tributes to Rabindranath Tagore, an iconic talent who excelled in varied fields, on his birth anniversary. He said on X, "I pay homage to Gurudev Tagore, on the occasion of his Jayanti. His enduring wisdom and genius continue to inspire and enlighten innumerable people across generations." Born in present-day West Bengal, Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature and his rich contributions as a playwright, poet, composer, educationist, philosopher and social reformer have made him one of the most respected Indians.

One lakh Thalassemia patients in India: Union Health Secretary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

While Thalassemia testing has been integrated into the reproductive and child health (RCH) programmes under the National Health Mission (NHM) in some States, it is yet to be universally adopted across all regions in addressing the prevalence of this genetic disorder. Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra on Wednesday advocated for inclusion of compulsory Thalassemia testing in the existing reproductive and child health (RCH) programmes under NHM as a means to curtail the prevalence of the disease even as he added that some States have included this in their public health programmes and activities; other States will be urged to include and expand screening and testing for Thalassemia. He said timely detection and prevention are the most effective strategies to tackle the genetic disorder. Chandra, who was speaking at an event here to mark the International Thalassemia Day, said there are almost 1 lakh Thalassemia patients in the country, with approximately 10,000 new cases reported each year. The



Secretary emphasized on the urgency for proactive intervention aided by timely detection through screening. Chandra also highlighted the critical need for wide awareness around the subject. He stated that "still many people are unaware of this disease and how this can be prevented. It is imperative that all stakeholders in this arena collaborate for a nationwide campaign to enhance awareness on Thalassemia". Dr Rahul Bhargava Director, Department of Clinical Hematology and Bone Marrow Transplant, Fortis Hospital Gurugram said, "Thalassemia is an inherited disorder which affects millions of kids. We wish to see a thalassaemia-free India by 2030. It is important that all future couples should be screened before pregnancy." He explained that in case one or both the parents have this condition, it is a good idea to consult the doctor to address the risk appropriately.

Prevention and early detection are perhaps the most feasible and cost-effective ways to control this disease. The need of the hour is an integrated plan of action including mass screening for carriers before marriage and before conception, said Dr Bhargava. Some symptoms of thalassemia include weakness, fatigue, slow growth, pale appearance, abnormal swelling, abnormal bone structure (especially on the face and skull), heart problems, and iron overload. Thalassemia usually requires lifelong treatment with blood transfusions and medication. The main treatment methods are: blood transfusions, removing excess iron or bone marrow transplants, and treating other problems. In addition, efforts must also be directed towards motivating gynaecologists and pathologists to ensure that every pregnant woman goes through the HbA2 test before 14 weeks of pregnancy as this can help in the timely diagnosis of thalassemia, said Dr Nita Radhakrishnan, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Pediatric Hematology Oncology, Post-Graduate Institute of Child Health, Noida.

Phase V LS polls: 695 candidates in fray

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 695 candidates are in the fray across 49 constituencies spread over eight states and Union territories in the upcoming fifth phase of the Lok Sabha polls on May 20, the Election Commission (EC) said on Wednesday. The figure emerged after the scrutiny of 1,586 nomination forms filed for the fifth phase of the ongoing polls. Of the nominations, 749 were found



to be valid after the deadline for filing papers closed on May 3, according to a statement issued by the EC. The statement said 695 candidates will contest the polls from eight states and

Pradesh followed closely with 466 nominations, leading to 147 valid candidates across 14 constituencies. The highest number of nominations in a single constituency was seen in Maharashtra's Chattrapatti, which received 69 candidatures, followed by Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh with 67 nominations. Each constituency in the fifth phase is expected to witness an average of 14 contesting candidates, reflecting a diverse range of political options for the voters.

The state-wise breakdown of the nominations and valid candidates after the scrutiny showcases the dynamic electoral landscape across the country. Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Ladakh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal together form the crux of the fifth phase, encompassing a significant portion of the country's electorate, the statement said. Three phases of polling have so far been held in the seven-phase election.

Dietary guidelines released to prevent nutrient deficiencies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN) have jointly released a comprehensive set of 17 dietary guidelines aimed at preventing nutrient deficiencies and addressing the rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases in India. These guidelines have undergone rigorous academic and scientific review to ensure their accuracy and

effectiveness, said the top research bodies. They "are designed as easily understandable and practicable approaches for ensuring diet diversity to meet the requirements of essential nutrients and prevent NCDs among people of all age groups across India". The guidelines focus on eating a balanced diet; vegetables and legumes; nutrition for pregnant and lactating mothers; food for infants, children, and adolescents; including nutrient-rich foods for the elderly; eating safe, clean food; and drinking adequate amounts of water.



It also calls for avoiding protein supplements for building body mass, restricting salt intake, moderating intake of oil and fats, adopting a healthy lifestyle to prevent obesity, maintaining proper exercise, minimising

ultra-processed foods, and reading information on food labels to make informed and healthy food choices. "The dietary habits of Indians have undergone significant changes over the past few decades, leading to an increase in the prevalence of non-communicable diseases while some of the problems of undernutrition continue to persist," said Rajiv Bahl, Secretary of the Department of Health Research, Director General, ICMR. Rajiv noted that the guidelines have been made "very relevant to the changing food scenario in India with the addition of

practicable messages and suggestions on handling food safety, choosing minimally processed foods, the importance of food labels and physical activity." "Through the dietary guidelines, we emphasise that the most logical, sustainable, and long-term solution to all forms of malnutrition is ensuring the availability, accessibility, and affordability of nutrient-rich foods while promoting consumption of diverse foods," Hemalatha R., Director, ICMR-NIN and Chairperson of the Expert Committee which brought out the guidelines, added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The name game

Celebrities and influencers are equally liable for misleading endorsements, says the SC

In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court has declared that celebrities and influencers are equally liable if they endorse misleading advertisements. Hearing a petition filed by the Indian Medical Association against Patanjali's advertisements, the Bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah has come down heavily on the influencers and celebrities who feature in such adverts. In the age of social media, celebrities and influencers wield considerable influence, with millions of followers taking their word as gospel truth. In many instances, the endorsements are misleading or false, leading to consumer detriment and eroding trust in advertising. The Supreme Court's ruling represents a crucial step towards ensuring transparency and accountability in advertising practices. With millions of impressionable individuals looking up to them, these personalities possess a moral obligation to exercise due diligence while endorsing products or services. The failure to do so jeopardises consumer trust. Furthermore, the court



emphasised the need for stricter regulations and enforcement mechanisms to deter deceptive advertising practices. While existing laws and guidelines provide some level of protection to consumers, they often fall short in holding celebrities and influencers accountable for their actions. The apex court's ruling sends out a clear message that no individual, regardless of their fame or influence, is allowed to mislead public for personal gains.

The ramifications of the Supreme Court's decision are far-reaching for celebrities and influencers alike. Moving forward, these individuals must exercise greater caution and diligence when entering into endorsement

agreements. They are obligated to ensure that the products or services they endorse are truthful, substantiated and in compliance with advertising regulations. This heightened accountability serves as a powerful deterrent against unethical marketing practices and underscores the importance of transparency and authenticity in influencer partnerships. Of late, many film stars promote chewing pan masala under the guise of a mouth freshener. Other celebrities have promoted online gaming sites which are actually gambling sites smartly packaged as gaming sites. However, it is just the beginning and there is a long way to go before such advertising endorsements can be curbed. There have to be clear and concise guidelines (the existing ones are not enough) to stop surrogate ads. Moreover, to be fair to celebrities, they often do not know what they are promoting. Hollywood star Pierce Brosnan once featured in a chewing tobacco ad which he later said he was told was a mouth freshener. He can be given a long rope for not understanding the difference but Indian celebrities are supposed to know such underhand tactics. As celebrities and influencers navigate this evolving guideline, they must prioritise integrity and ethical conduct to maintain the trust and loyalty of their audience. This would be good for their reputation as well as for the society.

PICTALK



A child bathes his dog in a waterbody on a hot summer day, in Jammu

Tasks for new regime in turbulent times



KS TOMAR

As the nation braces for a new Government, all eyes are on the horizon of challenges awaiting the new administration

Keeping in view the confidence of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister, Amit Shah and the BJP to cross a magic figure of "Chaar Sau Paar" nothing is certain in politics but a new regime will take shape in New Delhi after the results of general elections on June 4.

In this backdrop none can deny that the new regime is poised to confront hordes of new challenges which include giving top priority to advancements in emerging technologies, adapting to shifting geopolitical equations, the rapid rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and formulating a long-term strategy to counter China's expansionist policies and security threats in the region. These challenges are pivotal for India's aspirations to join the League of developed nations in the future.

Experts say that Indian PM, Narendra Modi's push for digital technologies which proved a boon during Covid-19 crisis for the delivery of services besides emphasising renewable energy, a mission mode to put India back on the map of semiconductors production, setting a new target in space arena and formulation of a strategy to accelerate India's capabilities in AI has helped India to position itself to give a fillip to innovate and catch up with the US and China which have been trying to master the technological revolution to be relevant in future.

Foreign policy experts highlight India's growing concerns over China's increasing influence in the region, particularly its impact on security along the Line of Control (LOC). Consequently, the new administration must focus on devising a strategic plan, possibly in collaboration with the United States, to address these concerns. China's recent tactics involve enticing India's neighbours with debt policies and offering substantial loans for projects like the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and defence-related ventures. For instance, China signed a "military assistance" deal with the Maldives, providing non-lethal weapons and free training to Maldivian security forces, a significant



departure from the earlier training provided by India and the United States.

Ahead lies the crucial task for New Delhi to formulate an ambitious and practical long-term plan to counter China's advancements in "new productive forces," a term coined by President Xi Jinping. This involves focusing on economic development through innovation in advanced sectors. China's aim to surpass the United States in the production of advanced science and technologies poses challenges for India as well. Therefore, India must intensify its efforts to support the United States in its global technology coalitions with allies like Japan, Australia and India, along with the CHIP Alliance, while fostering deep bilateral partnerships in emerging critical technologies.

China's expanding ties in the region are evident and India needs to tread cautiously to counter its influence, as seen in the case of Nepal. The recent political shift in Nepal towards a communist Government ideologically aligned with China is concerning, especially considering China's "Debt Trap" strategy. Pakistan serves as a stark example, with China extending a massive debt of \$23 billion, a substantial portion of which is tied to the Belt and Road Initiative. Pakistan's mounting debt to China, totalling \$67.2 billion from

2000 to 2021, underscores the risks associated with this debt dependency. Despite facing economic collapse, Pakistan remains indebted to China, highlighting the potential peril of falling into a debt trap.

Experts suggest that the incoming Government in Delhi may find solace in the recent normalisation of ties with Sri Lanka. A severe economic crisis in Sri Lanka had pushed it perilously close to the edge, but India stepped in with a \$4 billion economic assistance package and humanitarian aid, surpassing even the IMF's 48-month special package to stabilise the country. This move showcased India's commitment beyond traditional diplomacy and responded to the dire needs of its neighbour. It's noteworthy that China, previously involved, withdrew its support, while India's intervention has been perceived positively, reflecting a shift in Sri Lanka's outlook. Interestingly, former president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, had blamed India for interfering in the Sri Lanka elections which led to his ouster in 2015. The trend continued when Gotabaya Rajapaksa, president cancelled the East Container Terminal (ECT) agreement in the Colombo airport in violation of a 2019 project contract signed amongst three partners including Japan, India and Sri Lanka. Now Sri Lanka's speaker, Mehinda Yapa

Abeyardera thanked India for saving his country from the 'blood path' hence China stands exposed in the eyes of the people of this country.

India's relations with Bangladesh remain strong, exemplified by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts. During a joint event on November 23, 2023, Modi referred to India as Bangladesh's largest development partner, emphasising mutual benefits.

One of the notable features of election campaigning by all parties, unlike developed nations, is the lack of debates, discussions and narratives to enlighten the people about the relevance and significance of foreign policy. The manifestoes may dwell upon foreign relations and future strategy but no effort is made to emphasise its importance in achieving the goal of joining the elite club of developed nations. India's independent stand to import crude oil from Russia, despite economic sanctions by the United States and allies owing to the Ukraine war, has demonstrated to the world that such decisions are primarily governed by keeping national interest supreme. India's strategic approach towards Maldives and Nepal needs to be flexible and innovative to counter China's growing influence effectively.

(The writer is a journalist and political analyst, views are personal)



AHEAD LIES THE CRUCIAL TASK FOR NEW DELHI TO FORMULATE AN AMBITIOUS AND PRACTICAL LONG-TERM PLAN TO COUNTER CHINA'S ADVANCEMENTS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POLL BATTLE CONTINUES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Poll battle enters crucial Phase III," published on May 7, this is my response. The upcoming third phase of Lok Sabha elections is poised to be a crucial battleground, with political heavyweights from both ruling and opposition parties vying for victory. The BJP, having secured a significant number of seats in the 2019 elections, faces the challenge of maintaining its dominance, especially in key States like Gujarat, Karnataka, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. With over 1,300 candidates, including a notable presence of women, contesting across 12 States and Union Territories, the electoral landscape reflects a diverse array of voices. The extensive deployment of security forces underscores the significance of ensuring a free and fair electoral process.

Of particular interest are the contests in constituencies like Guna in Madhya Pradesh, where Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia seeks to reclaim lost ground and Baramati in Maharashtra, where dynastic politics adds an intriguing dimension to the electoral dynamics. As voter turnout fluctuates amidst challenging weather conditions, the outcome of this phase remains uncertain, with implications for the broader political landscape. It's a testament to the vibrancy of Indian democracy and the diverse aspirations of its citizens.

Anika Patel | Kolkata

CORAL CRISIS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Marine heatwave scorches pristine coral reefs of Lakshadweep," published on May 7, this is my response. As someone who reads the news daily, the plight of Lakshadweep's vibrant corals strikes a chord. It's disheartening to witness the gradual decline of such natural wonders due to prolonged marine heatwaves. Beyond the aesthetic loss, the ecosystem repercussions are immense. The warnings from scientists about coral bleaching and its cascading effects on marine life sound alarms for the delicate balance of nature.

More allegations against Kejriwal



Apropos the news article, "LG recommends NIA probe against Kejriwal," published on May 7, this is my response. The recent recommendation for an NIA probe against Arvind Kejriwal by Delhi's Lieutenant Governor raises serious concerns. The accusation of receiving funding from extremist groups is alarming and demands a thorough investigation. However, the

timing, just before the Supreme Court's bail consideration and the political backdrop surrounding it raise questions of motive and agenda. The intertwined narratives of terrorism, politics and justice in this case create a complex scenario. On one hand, there's the gravity of allegations involving a banned terrorist organisation; on the other, there are claims of political conspiracy and manipulation.

As a reader, navigating through these intricate details leaves one perplexed and sceptical. The need for transparency and impartiality in the investigation is paramount to uphold the integrity of the democratic process and ensure justice prevails. However, amidst the political fervour surrounding elections, separating truth from propaganda becomes increasingly challenging.

Vihaan Singh | Ahmedabad

Moreover, the socioeconomic impact on coastal communities underscores the urgent need for action.

The Government's attention to Lakshadweep's marine ecosystems is crucial, especially considering the region's ecological and economic significance. The initiatives by CMFRI to study and develop resilience-based strategies offer hope amidst the crisis. However, collective efforts are imperative to mitigate the escalating threats and safeguard these invaluable treasures for future generations. The news serves as a reminder of our responsibility to preserve and protect our natural heritage in the face of environmental challenges.

Aaradhya Sharma | Mumbai

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Madam — Apropos the news article, "CHHAYA: A contraceptive beyond family planning," published on May 6, this is my response. The recent approval of Centchroman, a non-hormonal contraceptive pill, signifies a significant stride in bolstering women's reproductive health rights. Branded as "Chhaya" in public health facilities and "SAHELI" in the mar-

ket, this pill offers a hormone-free alternative, expanding choices for family planning. Its versatility is commendable, catering to women regardless of age, marital status, or childbirth history. Notably, its compatibility with breastfeeding ensures maternal health without compromising lactation.

Centchroman's introduction aligns with India's commitment to reproductive rights and gender equality. By providing a safe and accessible contraceptive, the Government empowers women to make informed decisions, underscoring family planning as a human right crucial for social and economic development. However, dissemination of information remains pivotal. Comprehensive education on contraception can dispel misconceptions, enabling women to navigate their reproductive health confidently. In essence, Centchroman heralds a new era of inclusivity and empowerment, promising a future where women have agency over their bodies and futures.

Kabir Malhotra | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Insights into India's growing heart health crisis



NAVEEN BHAMRI

Aortic stenosis with a high mortality rate is a significant cardiovascular concern. Non-surgical aortic valve replacement emerges as a game-changer

Aortic stenosis stands as one of India's most prevalent valvular heart diseases, trailing only hypertension and coronary artery disease. Its prevalence surges with age, affecting roughly one in ten individuals aged 75 or older. The condition, characterised by a narrowing of the aortic valve opening, often manifests with symptoms such as chest pain, fatigue and shortness of breath, impacting the quality of life for affected individuals.

The primary causes include degenerative valve disease, congenital bicuspid aortic valve disease and rheumatic heart disease, the latter being the leading global cause of aortic stenosis (AS), particularly among children and young adults. Despite an initially asymptomatic phase that may last for several decades, the prognosis dramatically changes once symptoms develop. Without timely intervention, such as aortic valve replacement, the average survival rate dwindles to a mere 2-3 years, elevating the risk of sudden death. The early symptoms of aortic stenosis are frequently over-



looked or misattributed to other causes. Nevertheless, recognising the significance of symptoms and promptly seeking medical attention is critical in mitigating the progression of the disease. For individuals diagnosed with aortic stenosis, heart valve replacement surgery often becomes a necessary course of action. This surgical intervention aims to repair or replace faulty heart valves, restoring proper blood flow and alleviating symptoms. According to a report by GlobalData, approximately 69,592 heart valve surgeries are conducted each year in India.

The heart's proper function relies on valves, ensuring blood flows in one direction. When valves malfunction, surgery becomes necessary to repair or replace them. This may involve fixing leaflets that don't open wide enough or don't close tightly, ensuring blood flows properly through

the heart chambers and arteries. Replacement valves can be sourced from animals, human tissue, or synthetic materials. TAVI & TAVR for AS Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation/Replacement (TAVI/TAVR) is a groundbreaking alternative procedure to open heart surgeries. TAVI/TAVR is a minimally invasive procedure that involves inserting a new valve inside the damaged aortic valve, often without removing the old valve entirely. The procedure itself involves inserting a catheter through an artery in the groin, which is then guided to the heart. The number of patients afflicted with blocked arteries and co-morbidities like hypertension, diabetes and chronic kidney disease is increasing day after day. The ideal solution for such patients is TAVI procedure, as it offers significant benefits over traditional treatments. However, only a small percentage end up opting for it. Addressing aortic stenosis early, especially in patients with multiple co-morbidities, is crucial for improving outcomes and enhancing quality of life.

TAVI Therapy Helps Mrs. Patel, a 78-year-old woman, was struggling with severe degenerative aortic stenosis. Mrs. Patel's condition, made it hard for blood to flow through her heart properly. This caused her heart to work harder, leading to symptoms like chest pain and feeling breathless. Her doctor suggested a treatment called TAVI (Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation), a less invasive procedure where a new valve is placed inside the damaged one. The deployment of the valve was successful, with Mrs. Patel responding positively to the procedure. Remarkably, within just three days, Mrs. Patel was discharged from the hospital. Subsequent assessments revealed no signs of valve issues or blockages in her heart. Her journey underscores the remarkable impact of interventions like TAVI in restoring health and well-being.

(The writer is Senior Director and Head of Interventional Cardiology at Max Super Speciality Hospital, Delhi; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

PROFOUND INFLUENCE OF HABITS

Habits sculpt our lives by fostering discipline and perseverance



SAKSHI SETHI

In the words of F.M Alexander, 'People don't decide their futures. They decide their habits and their habits decide their futures.' From the moment we wake up to the moment we retire to bed, habits silently guide individual behaviours, often without even realising it. They can either propel us towards success or lead us down a path of mediocrity or failure. Habits have a profound impact on an individual's personal development and well-being. They are the fabric of daily existence, weaving through routines and decisions and ultimately, shaping the course of an individual's life. By establishing a consistent routine, an individual creates a framework within which they can operate efficiently and effectively.

The individual becomes disciplined and learns self-control and perseverance... the qualities that are essential for achieving long-term goals and overcoming obstacles. Habits play a crucial role in the social sphere, shaping relationships and interactions with others. They are the invisible architects of every individual's life, decisions and ultimately, destiny. Shared habits, such as participating in team sports or volunteering in the community, foster a sense of camaraderie and belonging. Whether consciously or unconsciously, it is the habits that dictate what an individual eats, how the free time is to be spent and even which people to surround with. By understanding and intentionally cultivating positive habits, one can steer oneself towards choices that align with their goals and values. Undoubtedly, habits are the silent architects of one's actions, often operating beneath the conscious awareness yet exerting a profound influence on thoughts.



By establishing a consistent routine, one can create a framework within which they can operate efficiently and effectively. Habits indeed hold far more significance in everyone's life than one can often realise. From the moment an individual wakes up until they retire to bed, habits silently guide behaviours, often influencing outcomes far more than one can acknowledge. One of the most powerful aspects of habits is their ability to create momentum. Once a habit is established, it becomes easier to maintain and even expand upon. This momentum propels the individual to move forward, making it easier to achieve their goals and aspirations. By starting with small, achievable habits and gradually building upon them, one can harness this momentum to make positive changes in their life.

There is no denying the fact that good habits lie behind many of the positive changes while conversely, negative habits, such as procrastination, excessive screen time and unhealthy habits, hinder progress and undermine an individual's potential. Human connection is fundamental to happiness and fulfillment and this shows how habits play a crucial role in shaping one's daily experiences, behaviours and outcomes across various domains of life. It is the habits that contribute to a sense of belonging, support networks and emotional fulfillment. They encompass a wide range of actions, from simple everyday tasks to complex behaviours and thus play a significant role in shaping lives. They are not mere trivialities but powerful forces that permeate every aspect of our lives. By intentionally cultivating positive habits and breaking free from detrimental ones, one can create a life that is aligned with our values, goals and aspirations. Whether they are positive or negative, habits are and will always be an integral part of one's life. They form a crucial part of the everyday conceptual scheme used to explain normal human activity. Remember, an individual only becomes what they think they can. One cannot change the habits one does daily. The secret of an individual's success is found in their daily routine as rightly said there are no overnight transformations.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Rationalise regulations for e-commerce



UTTAM GUPTA

When the Government expects foreign companies to do almost everything that a retailer does, how can it deny these firms the right to sell?

Way back in 2019, Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh (DVM) an organisation of retail traders in the national capital had lodged a complaint with the Competition Commission of India (CCI) alleging anti-competitive behaviour by Amazon Seller Services (ASS) and Flipkart Internet Private Limited (FIPL).

The CCI is an authority established under the Competition Act, of 2002. The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements and abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates mergers, amalgamations acquisitions etc to ensure that there is no adverse effect on competition. Amazon and Flipkart are global giants operating e-commerce marketplaces in India through their subsidiaries, the ASS and the FIPL.

DVM argued that ASS and FIPL had entered into exclusive sales agreements with smartphone makers to sell certain phones through a small number of preferred sellers. It also alleged that they had given preferential treatment to certain sellers by giving them higher search rankings and offering to pay for part of the discount that such sellers would offer during key sales periods such as Flipkart's Big Billion Days and Amazon's Prime Day.

On January 13, 2020, the CCI initiated an investigation under Section 26(1) of the Competition Act, 2002. Prima facie, the CCI agreed with DVM's contention and ordered a probe by the Director General (DG) - Investigation. ASS and FIPL approached the Karnataka High Court (KHC) with a plea to quash the CCI order. The KHC refused to quash it. The duo challenged the order in the Supreme Court (SC). In August 2021, the SC too dismissed their applications and ordered that "the CCI - DG will complete the probe."

Now, the CCI-DG has come up with its findings.

The investigation has charged Amazon and Flipkart with violation of antitrust laws. Leveraging their substantial financial resources, they have indulged in 'predatory pricing' and forged exclusive partnerships with selective sellers. Predatory pricing is the illegal business practice of setting prices extremely low albeit by offering heavy discounts to consumers in an attempt to eliminate the competition and establish a monopoly. This has resulted in the shutdown of thousands of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

It has specifically targeted Amazon for certain practices, especially with Cloutail India Pvt Ltd (a firm set up by a JV namely Prione Business Services (PBS) established by Amazon, in collaboration with an Indian entity owned by Narayan Murthy of Infosys) a "preferred" seller on Amazon's marketplace and other in-house sellers. Similarly, Flipkart has been investigated for its links to platform sellers, which contravenes new e-commerce regulations.

What has led to the violations? This can't be attributed solely to the use of financial muscle by these companies as alluded to by the CCI - DG. This has a lot to do with the rules introduced in early 2016, through which the Government allowed 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) under the so-called e-commerce marketplace model.



THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO WORKING ON A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY ON FDI IN E-COMMERCE. IF IT GOES AHEAD WITH SUCH A POLICY, IT WILL BE TANTAMOUNT TO A RETROSPECTIVE CHANGE OF POLICY AND SEND A WRONG SIGNAL TO FOREIGN INVESTORS

The marketplace is a platform where vendors sell their products directly to consumers even as its owner (read: Amazon/Flipkart) merely acts as a facilitator by providing services such as booking orders, raising invoices, arranging delivery, accepting rejections etc. She can't hold inventory or undertake direct selling. The policy intent was abundantly clear. The foreign investor in the marketplace wasn't supposed to invest in the inventory model.

However, the intent wasn't reflected in the Press Note (PN) issued by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. While drafting the fine print, a clever bureaucrat blurred the demarcation between the marketplace where 100 per cent FDI was allowed and the inventory model where it wasn't. The PN (2016) prescribed two conditions. First, the foreign entity owning marketplace cannot permit more than 25 per cent of total sales on the marketplace from one vendor or its group companies. Two, it cannot directly or indirectly influence the sale price.

In the absence of specifying who that vendor should be, it made way for a company linked to the owner of the marketplace to get in. The latter could set up four companies (call them subsidiaries or JVs) and control 25 per cent of each of the total sales on the platform. Contrary to the policy intent, which prohibited foreign investors from direct selling, the fine print did just the opposite. Having allowed its entities to control almost all of the sales made on the marketplace, it

would be naïve to expect that an anti-competition situation won't emerge. With such rules in place, it was a foregone conclusion that Amazon et al would have exclusive partnerships with selective sellers who - acting in concert with the former - would indulge in predatory pricing and give heavy discounts leading to the annihilation of thousands of SMEs. Following a complaint from the SMEs, on December 26, 2018, the DPIIT clarified that "the owner of the marketplace or its subsidiary or its joint venture (JV) with an Indian company can't have ownership of the seller." Further, "a seller on the platform can't source more than 25 percent of its inventory from a firm connected with the latter."

Foreign investors can circumvent the first rider by having less than 50 per cent shareholding in the seller firm and arguing that they have no control (majority) over the latter. The marketplace owner can also sell his 'own' product - albeit through its wholesale arm - on the platform. All that the wholesale arm needs to ensure is to restrict supplies to the seller within the 25 per cent threshold.

The clarification/modification in the conditions through December 26, 2018, hasn't helped much in improving the situation.

A few sellers, some of them still maintaining connection with the marketplace owner continue to dominate the e-commerce platform. For instance, only three dozen firms out of the 400,000 sellers on the ASS platform account for 67 per cent of sales on it. Meanwhile, in 2020, the Department of Consumer Affairs

(DCA), in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, issued the Consumer Protection (e-commerce) Rules, under Section 101 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. The rules bar affiliated entities from selling on e-commerce platforms, restrict 'flash sales,' and disallow sellers from using the name or brand associated with the marketplace e-commerce entities for the promotion of goods. In 2021, DCA made amendments to restrict business-to-business, or B2B, sales in e-commerce and a provision to prevent an 'abuse of dominant position' by e-commerce firms. The Government is also working on a comprehensive policy on FDI in e-commerce that will give primacy to the above rules. If it goes ahead with such a policy, it will be tantamount to a retrospective change of policy and send a wrong signal to foreign investors. The present mess owes it to the very idea of the marketplace which is flawed. When the Government expects foreign companies to do almost everything that a retailer does viz. booking orders, raising the invoices, arranging the delivery, accepting rejections and so on, how can the former deny the latter right to sell? The way forward is to shun this idea; instead, allow 100 per cent FDI in retail. The bureaucrats had already done it but in a 'subtle' way. The Government should make it obvious and straightforward. Moreover, 100 per cent FDI should be permitted to all retailers, online or offline, big or small for a level playing field.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Empowering rural women through the 'Umeed' scheme

Despite its success in empowering many women, this scheme's benefits are still not fully accessible to all in the region

In remote villages of Jammu and Kashmir, a silent revolution is underway as these regions are witnessing women coming out of their houses to explore the avenues of self-employment through the 'Umeed Scheme' - Jammu and Kashmir State Rural Livelihood Mission (JKRLM). This transformative initiative aims to reach out to 66% of the rural population across the erstwhile 125 blocks, linking them to sustainable livelihood opportunities and nurturing them till they come out of poverty and enjoy a decent quality of life.

In December last year, Mission Director JKRLM, Indu Kanwal Chib, while sharing the JKRLM Vision



MANIMA AKHTAR

2024-30 informed that JKRLM has successfully federated 725,000 women and formed 87,000 self-help groups (SHGs) across the Union Territory of J&K. These SHGs are working in various areas such as livelihood, financial inclusion, gender and social inclusion and other related fields. However, certain rural pockets remain unaware of this significant scheme, lacking

comprehensive knowledge to capitalise on its benefits. One such area is Baila village in Mandi Tehsil of the border district Poonch, which is located approximately 230 kilometres from Jammu city. Although the scheme has been operational in the nearby Mandi tehsil since 2016, its reach in Baila village remains limited. When asked about the 'Umeed Scheme', the response from the women of this remote village was a unanimous lack of awareness. When they were informed about the benefits of the scheme, they expressed eagerness to understand its workings, underscoring its importance for including women in the workforce and towards their economic freedom.

In this context, Matina Akhtar, an 18-year-old resident of Baila, shared her perspective: "Despite living just two kilometres away from Mandi, we remain unaware of this scheme. There is this wide gap between secluded corners of our country and the development schemes. This gap leaves us, women from remote areas, bereft of its advantages. We only learn about it when the scheme is on the verge of closure. Our remoteness is the reason why we haven't received any information about this scheme. How are we supposed to engage with it if we're in the dark?" "When I needed funds for my grocery store, I was short on cash. So, I resorted to



selling some wood from my house to procure materials. Had I known about this scheme earlier, I wouldn't have sold those timbers," lamented 37-year-old Farida Akhtar from the same village. When asked "If they have awareness about any

scheme?" resident Zareena Akhtar, aged 23, responded that within their community, the only scheme recognised is the Anganwadi Scheme (ICDS), highlighting a significant gap in knowledge and accessibility to Governmental initiatives beyond this singular program.

There is also a lot of fear among the people of the village as well - both women and men. They have the fear of failure - what if they will not succeed in their endeavour? Salma Akhtar, 19, from Baila, confirms the notion. She expressed fears about potential repercussions and uncertainties associated with loan acquisition under the scheme. There is a need to dispel the

apprehensions lingering in the hearts of these women and endeavour to convey to them that this scheme is not a threat, but rather a boon. They need to be assured that this initiative can usher positive transformations into their lives. They must be made aware that this scheme is tailored specifically for women and designed to work towards their financial freedom.

According to Naima Akhtar, the Cluster Head of the Umeed Scheme in Mandi Tehsil, the Government has allocated decent funding under this scheme for women to benefit from it. "I urge other women who may be unaware of this scheme to join us. Numerous individuals, both men and women,

in the Mandi Loren area have secured rewarding opportunities through this Scheme. They are sustaining their households without needing to engage in manual labor. Regrettably, the women of Baila remain oblivious to this exceptional program. Meanwhile, women from other regions are harnessing its benefits, propelling themselves up the ladder of progress. They are not only achieving financial independence but also cultivating self-reliance. This brings hope for a transformative change in the lives of the women of Baila."

(The author is grassroots writer from Poonch, J&K; views are personal. Charkha Features)

BJP accuses TMC of digging up ground at Modi rally venue

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ BANDEL

The Bengal BJP has alleged that the Trinamool Congress administration has dug up a ground at Barrackpore in North 24 Parganas and strewn garbage all over it where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address an election rally on May 12. Barrackpore BJP candidate Arjun Singh on Wednesday complained that the district administration at the instance of the TMC had dug up the ground so as to hamper the electoral meeting. "The Prime Minister is scheduled to address a rally at a ground at Jagaddal in Barrackpore constituency but the TMC has made the administration to dig it up and dump garbage all over the place," Singh who returned from the TMC to BJP just before the elections were declared to once again get a saffron ticket said. "My question is this why this fear? Why is this petty mindset... is this a sign of capitulation before the defeat?" Singh said. Rejecting Singh's allegation local TMC MLA Somnath Shyam said that the land had



been dug up not to hinder any rally but "as a part of the district administration's exercise to level it up so that the local youth can train here ahead of the recruitment tests in the Army and other paramilitary forces." He said that the district administration was doing so after it was requested by some local organizations. Singh however questioned the timing of the act asking whether the administration could not wait for a couple of days more to do what it intended to do. Meanwhile, Bengal Chief Minister continued her tirade against the BJP Government saying her party was determined to throw the BJP out of

power in Delhi. Attacking the BJP for "playing with the honour of mothers and sisters at Sandeshkhali where they faked a movement to garner electoral points," the Chief Minister said "BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi only stands for lies and falsehoods." Asking the people to back the TMC so that it can play a role in Delhi to dislodge the Modi Government Banerjee told a rally at Balagarh in Hooghly parliamentary constituency, "I want your help and support to dislodge BJP from power... they are responsible for the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act, National Register for Citizens and

Uniform Civil Code." It was another matter that the crowd would not respond to her slogan: "Gali Gali Mein Shor hai BJP Chor hai (there is a word everywhere that BJP is a thief)" prompting the Chief Minister even to rebuke the crowd asking "what had happened to your voices" and "whether you really want to end the saffron misrule." She said, "BJP in Bengal is splurging their ill-gotten money to win votes... they are the same Harmads of the CPI(M) that had once tormented the people of Bengal and they require to be taught a lesson... so as you discarded the Leftists you discard the BJP"

Rival candidates make last ditch bid to woo voters in Srinagar

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

As the poll fervour is catching up in Srinagar, the three rival candidates belonging to the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, Peoples Democratic Party, and APNI Party are making last-minute efforts to reach out to the electorate. Compared to previous elections held in the region the summer Capital is witnessing a hectic political activity in the run-up to the polls. All the contesting candidates are roaming freely and organizing street corner meetings, road shows, and public rallies even in downtown areas of Srinagar. The social media platforms are also abuzz with intense debates for and against their favorite candidates in the fray. Elaborate security arrangements have been made with adequate deployment of central forces in the region to ensure peaceful conduct of the elections happening for the first time after the Abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. The Srinagar Lok Sabha seat comprises 18 Assembly segments and is spread over five districts — Srinagar, Budgam, Ganderbal in central Kashmir,



and Pulwama and Shopian in south Kashmir, will go to polls on May 13. The Lok Sabha seat remained a stronghold of the National Conference. The party won the seat 12 times out of 15 parliamentary elections since 1947. The party has faced a defeat only once in 2014 when Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Tariq Hameed Karra defeated his rival Dr Farooq Abdullah. This time PDP's youth leader Waheed ur Rehman Para is once again giving a tough fight to the JKNC candidate Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, an influential Shia cleric.

The entry of APNI party's Mohammad Ashraf Mir, supported by the Peoples' Conference, in the fray is set to make it a triangular contest. There are 21 other candidates in the seat, most of them Independents. According to poll pundits, the real contest is between the JKNC and PDP candidates. In almost all his election campaign meetings, Para focuses on sending a crisp message to the electorate, "We need representatives who will not be silent bystanders but the voice of the people inside the Parliament." He also reminds the electorate

that Assembly elections were held in 2014. "We are all sitting quietly inside our homes. Everyone is afraid to speak for fear of being picked up by the police... This election is an opportunity to voice your opinion without fear." The JKNC candidate is also harping on the same theme. In his election meetings, he repeatedly said the ongoing election has allowed the people of Jammu and Kashmir to vent their anger by casting a vote against the 2019 decision of the Government of India on J&K. To woo the migrant voters, JKNC candidate also apologized to Kashmiri Pandits for the party's failure to stop their migration in the wake of growing militancy in the 1990s. According to the Returning Officer, 17.41 lakh voters including 8.68 lakh women, 8.73 lakh men, and 58 third gender are eagerly waiting for their turn to exercise their right to vote. Out of these 2.0 lakh are the first-time voters, in the age group of 18-20. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, NC's Farooq Abdullah won the Srinagar seat by a margin of 69,976 votes, securing 1,06,596 votes. The runner-up was Aga Syed Mohsin of the PDP.

X takes down Karnataka BJP video on Muslim quota row video

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Social media platform 'X' has taken down an animated video shared by the Karnataka unit of the BJP related to the row over reservation for the Muslim community after an Election Commission direction. The poll panel on Tuesday directed the microblogging site to "immediately" take down the video. In a letter to the nodal officer of 'X', the Election Commission (EC) took exception to the non-compliance of the directive of the Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer to the social media platform for taking down the video. EC officials on Wednesday said after the fresh directive to 'X', it has taken down the controversial video from its site. The Karnataka Congress had filed a complaint with the Chief Electoral Officer of the state, accusing the BJP of pro-

moting enmity and hatred between the Muslim and the SC/ST communities. The complaint pertains to the animated video shared by the Karnataka BJP, which has caricatures of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. The cartoon shows the leaders putting an egg marked 'Muslim' on a bird's nest and after it hatches, Gandhi feeds 'funds' to the 'Muslim' hatchling while others strive for it. The 'Muslim' hatchling grows as a result and kicks the three others -- SC, ST and OBC -- out as Gandhi and Siddaramaiah laugh.

Unholy Dip: Hindu...

From Page 1 By 2015, it had grown to almost two percent of the total population. On the Indian subcontinent, all the Muslim majority countries witnessed an increase in the share of the majority religious denomination except Maldives where the share of the majority group (Shafi'i Sunnis) declined by 1.47 per cent. In Bangladesh, there was an 18 per cent increase in the share of the majority religious group which is the largest such increase in the Indian subcontinent. Pakistan witnessed an increase of 3.75 per cent in the share of the majority religious denomination (Hanafi Muslim) and a 10 per cent increase in the share of total Muslim population despite the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. The

demographic shocks inflicted upon the Hindu population in Pakistan is evidenced by a decline in their share - from constituting 13 per cent in 1950 to just 2 per cent in 2015. This is a monstrous 80 per cent decrease over a 65-year period where minorities on average increased by 22 per cent globally. Intriguingly, the share of Christians in Pakistan almost doubled from 1 to 2 per cent in the same period. The share of the Buddhist population in Myanmar declined by 10 per cent from 84 per cent in 1950 to 75 per cent in 2015. In the same period, the share of Christian population almost doubled (from 4 per cent to 8 per cent) and the share of indigenous religions (such as Animism and Shamanism) witnessed a 25 per cent increase (from 7 per cent to 9 per cent).

"Of the 45 major countries, the share of the majority population has decreased in 32 countries between 1950 and 2015 while the religious majority has increased its share in the population in 13 countries," the study said. "Contrary to the noise in several quarters, careful analysis of the data shows that minorities are not just protected, but indeed thriving in India," the authors said. For the 167 countries in our analysis, the average value for the share of the majority religious denomination in the baseline year of 1950 is 75 per cent. This means that globally the share of the majority religious denomination has gone down by approximately 22 per cent. In other words, the world has become more heterogeneous in the period under study.

India tops in dollar...

From Page 1

The report said nearly 18 million or 1.3 per cent of the total population, India is also the origin of the largest number of international migrants in the world, with large diasporas living in countries such as the United Arab Emirates, the United States and Saudi Arabia. India came in 13th as the destination country for immigrants, with 4.48 million. India - United Arab Emirates, India - US, India - Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh - India were among the top 10 international country-to-country migration corridors, the report said. Mexico is now the second largest recipient of international remittances in the world after India. China had long held the second spot but it was surpassed by Mexico in 2021, with the Central American country estimated to have received more than USD 61 billion in 2022, while China received about USD 51 billion. "The contraction of remittance flows to China has been attributed to multiple factors, including demographic shifts that have resulted in the shrinking of the working age population and the country's zero-COVID policy, which prevented people from travelling abroad for work," the report said. The report further said countries in Asia are the origins of the largest number of internationally mobile

students in the world. In 2021, more than one million internationally mobile students were from China, by far the highest number globally and more than double the number of students from India, which ranks second (around 508,000). The US is the largest destination country for international mobile students in the world (more than 833,000), followed by the UK (nearly 601,000), Australia (around 378,000), Germany (over 376,000) and Canada (nearly 318,000). China is also an important destination for international students, especially those from the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Pakistan and India. The report said there are more female than male international migrants in destination countries in Europe and Northern America, such as the US, Canada, France, Spain and Italy, but also in India. India has a slightly higher share of female immigrants than males. Countries with a significantly high proportion of male emigrants include India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Irregular migration to the US remains an ongoing challenge and major policy issue, with increasing numbers of arrivals from atypical origin countries. There were 2.4 million encounters at the United States-Mexico border in 2022, the highest on record. "Encounters" constitute both apprehensions and expulsions, and these statistics also include many migrants who tried to enter the US several times without authorisation. For years, most irregular migrants were overwhelmingly from

Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras but in 2022 and for the first time, there were more encounters with migrants from Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua. "There were also a large number of arrivals from Haiti, Brazil and from countries outside the region such as India and Ukraine," it said. "The shift in origin country geography has also been attributed to Title 42, which suspends the right to claim asylum under United States and international law on the basis of preventing the spread of COVID-19," it said. The report noted that the impact of the pandemic has been severe on both internal and international Indian emigrant workers, particularly low-skilled emigrants on short-term contracts, migrants working within the informal economy and undocumented workers. Loss of jobs along with wage theft and lack of social security during the pandemic has plunged many Indian migrants into deep debt and insecurity. "The pandemic has had an overwhelming effect on internal labour migration patterns and has reshaped work in both rural and urban areas. There has been a decline of almost 10 per cent in blue-collar workforce mobility towards cities, which has drastically cut the labour supply for major industries. The official estimate of reverse internal migration is 51.6 per cent for men and 11 per cent for women," the report said citing experts and official data. Since 2000, IOM has been producing its flagship world migration reports every two years.

PM Modi schools...

From Page 1 Pitroda, an advisor to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, said, "We have survived 75 years in a very happy environment where people could live together, leaving aside a few fights here and there. We could hold the country as diverse as India together. Where people in the east look like the Chinese, people in the west look like the Arabs, people in the north look like, maybe, white and people in the south look like Africans." "It does not matter. All of us are brothers and sisters. We respect different languages, different religions, different customs, different food," Pitroda said in the interview that was widely circulated on social media. As a row erupted, Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said the analogies drawn by Pitroda to illustrate India's diversity are most unfortunate and unacceptable. The Indian National Congress completely dissociates itself from these analogies.

AstraZeneca recalls Covid vaccine amid side effects row

From Page 1 "We will partner with regulatory authorities globally to initiate marketing authorisation withdrawals for Vaxzevria, where no future commercial demand for the vaccine is expected," it was quoted by The Daily Telegraph as saying. The company said, "We will now work with regulators and our partners to align on a clear path forward to conclude this chapter and significant contribution to the COVID-19 pandemic." AstraZeneca added that the company was "incredibly proud" of the role Vaxzevria played in ending the global pandemic. "According to independent estimates, over 6.5 million lives were saved in the first year of use alone and over three billion doses were supplied globally. Our efforts have been recognised by Governments around the world and are widely regarded as being a critical component of ending the global pandemic," the company said. In a statement issued last week AstraZeneca had expressed sympathy for those who have lost loved ones or reported health problems, but reiterated its commitment to patient safety and adherence to "stringent standards to ensure the safe use of all medicines..."

Staff woes...

From Page 1 The videos show flyers in heated arguments with airport staff as they claimed their flights were cancelled last minute. In Delhi, a video showed a group of passengers swarming the Air India Express counter and shouting at the ground official with their luggage in their hands. Several flyers took to social media platforms on May 8 to complain about the sudden cancellation of flights. In response to a passenger's post on X, Air India Express apologised and said the

flight was cancelled "due to operational reasons". A section of our cabin crew has reported sick at the last minute, starting last night, resulting in flight delays and cancellations. An Air India Express spokesperson said the airline is engaging with the cabin crew members to understand the reasons for reporting sickness and also apologised for the flight disruptions. In a letter to Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, Congress leader KC Venugopal said the flight cancellations are causing agony to fellow citizens,

especially those going to the Middle East. He said Air India Express is a low cost airline that is essential to connect our hard working middle class workers across the world to their homeland. Hundreds of passengers were left stranded in various airports in the country including Delhi, Kochi, Kannur, Varanasi, and Thiruvananthapuram, he said, adding that flights from major international airports such as Sharjah, Muscat, Abu Dhabi and Bahrain to various sectors in the country were also cancelled.

JJP favours...

From Page 1 INLD's lone MLA Abhay Singh Chautala said either the Government should prove it has a majority or else "Governor's rule should be imposed". Hitting out at the Congress, Saini said the Opposition party's actions are only aimed at fulfilling the personal aspirations of some people. But the people of Haryana will not let the Congress' designs succeed, the chief minister said, adding the entire country is witnessing the "misdeeds" of the Opposition party. Later in Karnal, Saini said Congress has been rejected by various sections and is sinking. About the three Independent MLAs, Saini said, "They are able legislators. How did they fall into the (Congress) trap... Four days ago I called them and spoke to them," said Saini. Former Chief Minister ML Khattar downplayed the developments. "During election season, who is going

where is not going to have much impact. Many MLAs are in touch with us also, so no one should worry about this," he told reporters in Karnal. In Chandigarh, while replying to a question, Haryana Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta said the Saini Government had won the trust vote on March 13. "How can we say that the Government is in a minority? It is intact and running as it was earlier," he told reporters. Asked if a no-confidence motion can be brought against the Government, the Speaker said, "Usually, when a no-confidence motion is brought, another one can only be brought six months after that. It is a technical matter." Haryana Congress chief Uday Bhan said the party will write to the Governor stating that the Saini Government is in a minority and that it should be dismissed, the President's Rule imposed in the state and fresh polls announced.

Modi questions Rahul's silence on Ambani, Adani

From Page 1 "Since his Rafale issue got grounded, he started chanting about 'five industrialists'. Then he started saying Ambani-Adani. But ever since elections have been announced, these people (Congress) have stopped abusing Ambani-Adani. I want to ask from Telangana soil, let the shehzada announce how much has been lifted from Ambani-Adani. Has tempo loads of money reached the Congress? What deal has been arrived at, that abusing Ambani-Adani has stopped overnight?" he said while addressing an election rally at Vemulawada in Telangana. "Certainly something is fishy. For five years, (they) abused Adani-Ambani and it stopped overnight. It means you have received some tempo loads of 'chori ka maal' (loot)...Kaale dhan ki kitni boriya bharkar ke



rupaye maare hai (how many sacks of black money you have taken) You have to answer the nation," the PM said. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the times are changing. "Dost dost na raha...! (Friends are no longer friends...!) After the completion of three phases of elections, today the Prime Minister has

started attacking his own friends. It is becoming clear that Modi's chair is shaking. This is the real trend of the results," Kharge said in a social media post. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also said the PM knows that people now understand the reality that he has handed over all wealth to big businessmen and he is clarifying after getting nervous. Another party leader Pawan Khera said Modi is disturbed after three phases of elections and realises that the ground is shaking. He claimed the PM had collected Rs 8,200 crore from his 'friends' and when he was losing the polls, he had turned against them. "When you cannot be theirs, how can you be ours or anyone else's in the country," he posed, adding that the Congress does not fear anyone or anything. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi responded through a

video message claimed that this was the first instance when the prime minister took the name of industrialists Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani publicly. He challenged the prime minister to launch a probe by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) or Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against the industrialists. "Normally, you (Modi) take the name of Ambani-Adani behind closed doors. You took their names in public for the first time. You also know that Adani-Ambani send money in tempo? Is this your personal experience? Do one thing: send CBI and ED to them. Get a thorough investigation done, don't panic," Rahul said. "The amount of money that PM Modi has given to them, we will give the same to the poor in India. We will make many 'lakhpati's with the 'Mahalakshmi Yojna' and 'Pehli Nauki Yojana', the former Congress president added.



Give grand welcome to PM during Patna roadshow, BJP urges people of Bihar

PTI ■ PATNA

The BJP on Wednesday exhorted supporters from across Bihar to converge in the state capital on Sunday to welcome Prime Minister Narendra Modi who will hold a roadshow in the city. An appeal to the effect came at a joint press conference here, addressed by former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who is also the local MP, and Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, among others.

"Sifting through the pages of history I realise that never before has a prime minister held a roadshow in our city. At the most, Modi's predecessors have gone to Gandhi Maidan to give speeches", said Prasad, who is seeking re-election from the Patna Sahib seat. He added, "I urge people from across the state to join us in welcoming the PM. Residents of the city are known for their love for Modi. I appeal to them to decorate their houses with flowers on May 12".

Speaking at the same press conference, Choudhary said the PM's roadshow will take place in the evening. Details of his programme will be available soon. The BJP leaders bristled at RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav's taunt that "desperation" had driven the PM to hold a roadshow in a constituency which has always been



considered "a safe seat" for the saffron party. "Does the prime minister need to get some special visa issued by Tejashwi Yadav to come here", Prasad asked even as he hit back at the former Bihar Deputy CM for raising a fresh demand for central status to Patna University. "Tejashwi Yadav should tell us whether his father Lalu Prasad, who ruled Bihar for long and, later, became a minister in the Manmohan Singh cabinet, cared to raise these demands", said the Patna Sahib MP. He added "The people of Bihar, though, should rest assured that whatever is needed for the state will be done by us. It was during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's time that the engineering college in Patna got upgraded to NIT. Modi's tenure saw the setting up of

an AIIMS here besides an IIM at Bodh Gaya". Choudhary, who was earlier in the RJD, took potshots at Lalu Prasad for claiming credit for the implementation of the Mandal Commission when the latter was the Chief Minister of Bihar. "Prasad is ailing and old age seems to have caused memory loss. He should take rest and recall that even the VP Singh government at the Centre at that time was way short of majority. BJP deserves its own share of credit for not just kamandal (Hindutva) but also Mandal", asserted Choudhary. The state BJP president added, "Lalu Prasad should also remember that but for the support of our party, the Janata Dal could not have formed a government with him as the chief minister". "The fact remains, Prasad has

always been intent on giving benefits of reservations and other facilities only to castes and communities he counts on as his supporters. The prime minister is right in flagging a conspiracy to steal benefits meant for SCs, STs and OBCs", alleged Choudhary.

"During the 15 years that Lalu Prasad and Rabri ruled Bihar by turns, only their family got all benefits. They keep peddling lies that the Constitution is under threat from BJP and Modi. Of course, we were opposed to bad laws like Article 370 which was scrapped", added Choudhary. To Tejashwi Yadav's taunt that the opposition has forced the PM to hit the streets, the Bihar BJP chief responded: "Modi is a 'fakir' (renunciate). Tejashwi and his father have deep pockets".

A question was posed to Ravi Shankar Prasad about the fresh controversy around "south Indians look like Africans" remark of Sam Pitroda, the technocrat who heads Indian Overseas Congress. Prasad replied "he is known to be an advisor to Rahul Gandhi. I can now understand why the Congress leader often ends up with his foot in the mouth. The remark betrays Sam Pitroda's ignorance about the country and desperation over the imminent defeat of his favourite party".

Congress manifesto representing Muslim League, claims Yogi

PTI ■ GORAKHPUR (UP)

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday said the Congress manifesto is like a "new version of the Muslim League". Addressing the media at the Gorakhnath temple premises, Adityanath said, "This is not a 'Nyay Patra', but 'Anyay Patra' towards the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Castes and Sanatana Dharma."

"A new version of the Muslim League has come. Nothing can be more shameful than the manifesto of the country's oldest political party, Congress, representing the Muslim League," he said, according to a statement issued in Lucknow.

When asked about Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's accusation that the BJP promotes hatred politics, the chief minister said that instead of telling white lies, she should at least develop a habit of speaking the truth. These people won't be able to deceive the public anymore during the elections because the entire nation has come together in the vision of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, he added.

Escalating his attack on the Congress, Adityanath said everyone knows that the grand old party has "inherited the policy of divide and rule". "In 1947, the Congress



allowed the cunning tactics of the British to succeed and divided the country. After independence, the Congress fuelled class struggles within the country based on caste, region and language due to political selfishness," Adityanath said.

"Terrorism, Naxalism and separatism, all of these are contributions of the Congress," he added. "Who doesn't know what Sonia Gandhi did as the chairperson of the UPA from 2004 to 2014?" Adityanath said and added that Justice Mishra Committee was formed to undermine OBC reservation. The chief minister said the committee even suggested allocating six per cent of the OBC reservation to the Muslims. The BJP and NDA opposed it at that time, and the Congress' plans could not materialize, he added.

Adityanath further said the Congress and its allies also attempted to encroach upon the rights of SC-ST communities. During the Congress

government, there were attempts, as mentioned in the Sachar Committee report, to include some Muslim communities in the Scheduled Caste category. However, due to opposition from the NDA and BJP, the Congress' plans couldn't be fulfilled, he added.

The chief minister accused the Congress of implementing Section 370 in Kashmir and undermining OBC reservation in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

"The people of India will never allow the intention of the Congress to be fulfilled because divisive politics is not in anyone's interest," he added.

Adityanath emphasized the Congress' manifesto is of divisive nature, warning that it could lead India towards class conflicts and encroach upon the rights of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes.

He, however, expressed confidence the people of the nation will resist these plans of the Congress.

LS polls: EC puts Gujarat voter turnout at 59.51 per cent

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Gujarat has recorded an estimated voter turnout of 59.51 per cent in the elections to 25 Lok Sabha seats in the state, as per the data shared by the Election Commission of India on Wednesday.

The final figure would be available by evening after the addition of postal ballot data, an official said.

This time, the voter turnout is 4.6 per cent less compared to the 2019 general polls in the state.

In 2019, the state registered a voter turnout of 64.11 per cent in polls to the 26 Lok Sabha seats.

Voting was held in 25 Lok Sabha seats of Gujarat on Tuesday as the BJP recently bagged the Surat Lok Sabha seat uncontested.

"Gujarat has recorded an estimated voter turnout of 59.51 per cent," said a statement by the EC.

According to Gujarat's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) P Bharathi, the final voter turnout figures would be available by evening after the addition of postal ballot data. "Polling station-wise data is now being fed into the system and postal ballots are yet to be counted.

"So there will be a slight increase in the final figure, not much. This 59.51 per cent turnout is almost final," said Bharathi.

Poverty to be fully eradicated from India in next 15 years: Rajnath

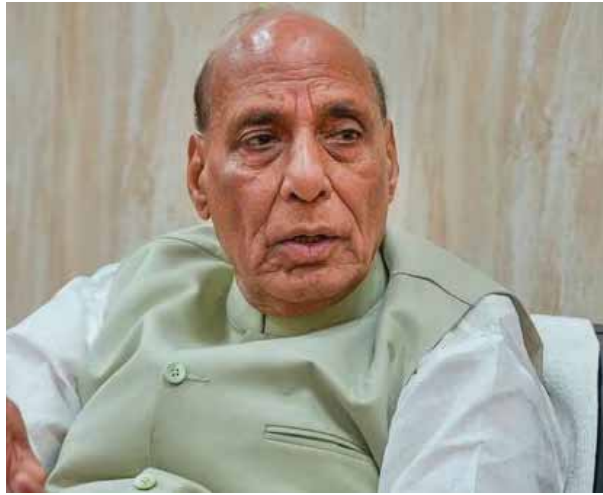
PTI ■ BHAWANIPATNA (ODISHA)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday claimed that poverty would be completely eradicated from India in the next 10-15 years and this is 'Modi Ki guarantee'.

Singh said this while addressing the BJP's 'Vijay Sankalp' rally here in the district headquarters town of Kalahandi. "Though Congress leaders beginning from Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru to Indira Gandhi and Manmohan Singh all have promised to

end poverty, all of them have failed. However, our Prime Minister Narendra Modi has started the process to end poverty," he said. Noting that about 25 crore people have been lifted from below the poverty line during the nine years rule of Modi, the Defence minister said that this was not the claim made by the BJP, but the report of Niti Aayog. No previous government had ever done so as Modi did in the last nine years, he claimed.

Singh said: "There will be no family in India which will not have a pucca house, pipe drinking water and LPG gas



connection in the next 5 years."

Recalling the Kalahandi situation, the BJP leader said that people from NGOs were coming to Kalahandi and writing articles on 'poverty tourism', as the place was known for hunger, starvation death and poverty. However, things have undergone a massive change during the nine-year rule of the Modi government at the Centre, he said.

While lauding the vocabulary skill of BJP's Kalahandi Lok Sabha candidate Malavika Devi, Singh appealed to the people of Kalahandi to vote for the

lotus symbol for proper highlighting of the local issues at the national level. Quoting former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on the expenditure of public money, Singh said: "Only 15 paise was reaching the beneficiary in the ground level if the Centre sent Rs 1 for the poor people. However, Modi's Jandhan account and direct bank transfer procedure ended the corruption and the people are getting the money sent by the Centre."

Appealing the people to install a BJP government in Odisha, Singh said that the BJP government will

implement the Ayushman Bharat health scheme as soon as a saffron government is formed in Odisha.

He said cutting across caste, creed and religion, all the people at the age of 70 years or above would be covered under the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

"Bring BJP government in Odisha, the state will implement Ayushman Bharat immediately," he said. The Defence minister also claimed that during the Modi regime, terrorism has almost come to an end due to timely and strong action against terrorists. He,

however, said that there is a few sporadic cases of terrorism and it will completely vanish from Indian soil under the leadership of Modi.

Claiming that the BJP does what it says, Singh said the Modi government has abolished Article 370, ended the triple talaq practice and installed Sri Ram Lala's statue at Ayodhya as promised earlier. He appealed to people to vote for BJP candidates contesting in Lok Sabha and Odisha Assembly polls. Lok Sabha and Assembly elections would be held simultaneously in Odisha.

Himachal: Only three women elected to Lok Sabha till date, just two in fray this time

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Only three women have made it to the Lok Sabha from Himachal Pradesh in the past 72 years and this time, just two are in the fray. Women constitute almost 49 per cent of the total voters in the state.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Chandresh Kumari and Pratibha Singh, the three successful candidates till now belonged to royal families. Only the BJP and the BSP have nominated women candidates for the June 1 elections for the four Lok Sabha seats in the state. While the BJP has fielded actor Kanganana Ranaut from Mandi, Rekha Rani is contesting on a BSP ticket from Kangra.

"Women from humble background rising high in politics and carving a niche for themselves is still a big challenge in the country and Himachal Pradesh is no exception. At present, women constitute about 49 per cent of the total voters in the state but representation is not even one fourth and this is a cause of serious concern," said Ramesh Chauhan, head of the department of political science at Himachal Pradesh University.

In politics, what matters is who has the decision-making power. This power is normally with men and until women are given prominent positions, they would not emerge as "empowered" and surpass their dominant male counterparts, Chauhan told PTI.

According to Kamal Manohar Sharma, who also teaches political science at Himachal Pradesh University, the status of women has been high in the state and even before



reservation for women was introduced, women pradhans were elected in Mandi, Kinnaur and Kangra districts. But women were not so keen to climb the ladder to the assembly, he claimed. Moreover, the political parties also did not promote or encourage the women with humble background, he added.

Political parties go all out to woo the women voters but when it comes to declaring candidates, women get few opportunities, the political experts felt. To add to it, participation of women voters surpass male voters especially in rural areas but still few women get elected, they added.

A total of 56,38,422 voters - 28,79,200 male, 27,59,187 female and 35 third gender persons - are eligible to exercise their franchise for the seats of Hamirpur, Kangra, Mandi, and Shimla (SC) in the seventh and last phase of polling on June 1.

Amrit Kaur, India's first health minister who hailed from the royal family of Kapurthala, was elected to Lok Sabha from Mandi constituency in 1952. Thereafter, no woman got a ticket till 1984.

However, in 1984, Chandresh Kumari from the royal family of Jodhpur who was married in Himachal Pradesh, was fielded by the Congress from Kangra and won as the party swept the election, riding on the sympathy wave following the assassination of the then prime minister Indira Gandhi.

Pratibha Singh, wife of former chief minister Virbhadra Singh unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha polls in 1998. However, she won the elections in 2004 when her husband was the chief minister.

In 2009, Virbhadra Singh was elected to Lok Sabha from Mandi but he quit after becoming chief minister in 2012 and his wife Pratibha Singh won the by-election in 2013. She again contested the Lok Sabha polls in 2014 but lost to Ram Swaroop of BJP, who was re-elected in 2019. But the seat fell vacant when Ram Swaroop died in March 2021 and Pratibha Singh won for the third time in the by-election held in November 2021 after the death of Virbhadra Singh.

In 2014, the AAP fielded Kargil war hero Capt Vikram Batra's mother Kamal Kanta Batra from Hamirpur but she polled only 15,329 votes and lost.

Even in the 68-member state assembly, the representation of women has been abysmally low and no woman was elected till 1967. Only one woman entered the assembly in 1977 and 2022. However, the highest number of seven women was elected to the state assembly in the 1998 elections. So far, eight women have been elected to Rajya Sabha from the state.

Man live streams from poll booth in Gujarat, detained for bogus voting

PTI ■ DAHOD

A man has been detained for alleged bogus voting after he live-streamed from inside a poll booth in the Dahod Lok Sabha constituency, officials said on Wednesday.

The Congress has claimed that the man, Vijay Bhabhor, is the son of a local BJP leader and accused him of "insulting democracy" by going live on Instagram from the booth. The police in the state's Mahisagar district detained Bhabhor and another man after the opposition complained to the Election Commission with a copy of the video. Though Bhabhor deleted the video after it drew criticism, the clip had gone viral on social media by then.

The incident of a man relaying a video live on Instagram after going to a poll booth to cast his vote is being probed, Dahod Returning Officer Nirgude Babanrao said. "We have received the video with a complaint and an investigation is underway," he said.

Of the 26 Lok Sabha seats in Gujarat, polling was held in 25 constituencies on Tuesday in the third phase of the general elections. The BJP candidate in Surat has won unopposed. The incident happened at a polling booth at Parthampur in Mahisagar district under Dahod parliamentary constituency, Mahisagar Superintendent of Police Jaydeepsinh Jadeja said.



"We have detained two persons and action is being taken based on the FIR registered by the presiding officer under the Representative of the People Act for bogus voting," Jadeja said. He said Bhabhor went to the poll booth to cast his vote at 5.49 pm and left by 5.54 pm. In those five minutes, he went live on Instagram and also allegedly cast votes on behalf of two other electors, resorting to bogus voting, he said. Prabha Taviad is the Congress

candidate in the constituency. She is pitted against incumbent MP Jasvantsinh Bhabhor.

Congress claimed that the person who relayed the "booth capturing" video on Instagram is the son of a local BJP leader.

Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi said they have repolling at booth number 220 in Parthampur over the incident.

"Son of a BJP leader at Mahisagar played with the EVM machine and abused the Election Commission by creating a live video of booth capturing and thereby insulting democracy," Doshi said. A Congress leader shared the purported video on his X handle. "BJP leader's son

Vijay Bhabhor captures the booth in Parthampur Village, Santrampur. He goes live on social media while doing the same and is seen threatening poll officials," he claimed.

The video shows Bhabhor purportedly focusing the camera on EVM (Electronic Voting Machine) and VVPAT (Voter verifiable paper audit Trail) machine and seeking five to ten minutes from a poll official even when he is asked to leave. Bhabhor purportedly also says that "only the BJP works here". His accomplice was also seen in the video. "The machine belongs to my father. Only one thing works - that is BJP," says Bhabhor before pressing a button on the EVM, as per the video. "Only Vijay Bhabhor works here," he purportedly says.

INDIA Bloc will vanish once LS poll results are announced: Goa CM

PTI ■ PANAJI

Goa Chief Minister and Senior BJP leader Pramod Sawant on Wednesday said the opposition's INDIA bloc will vanish once the results of the Lok Sabha elections are announced on June 4. He also said that some regional parties in Goa, who are constituents of the INDIA bloc, may even get merged with the Congress after the results.

Talking to reporters, CM Sawant predicted that the Bharatiya Janata Party's North Goa candidate Shripad Naik will win the election by a margin of more than one lakh votes, while its South Goa nominee Pallavi Dempo will bag the seat by a margin of 50,000 to 60,000 votes.

Naik and BJP's Goa unit president Sadanand Shet Tanavade were also present on the occasion. Sawant said the Congress has already conceded defeat and its leaders are admitting in private that they will be restricted to only four assembly constituencies (out of the total 40) in the State.

"The INDIA alliance will vanish once the Lok Sabha election results are announced. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will not be able to contest the next election as its leader and chief minister is in jail," he said, referring to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who has been in jail following his arrest in the Delhi liquor policy case. "Some of the INDIA Bloc

partners in Goa who were more aggressive than the Congress may merge their party with the latter," he added.

According to the Goa CM, the BJP has fought this election on the issue of development, while the Congress was trying to rake up the issues of religion and caste during its campaign in the state. "The Congress has nothing to project, hence they had to take support of the issues of caste and religion. They should have told people what they had done when they had a double-engine Government," he said, referring to the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) dispensation that was in power between 2004 and 2014.

Priyanka campaigns for Rahul in Rae Bareilly

PTI ■ RAEBARELI (UP)

Hitting back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his Adani-Ambani jibe, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday charged that the BJP has a nexus with industrialists and waived their loans worth Rs 16 lakh crore.

She also alleged that the entire BJP machinery is engaged in spreading "lies" about Rahul Gandhi. Referring to the prime minister's remarks at a rally in Telangana that the Congress should explain to people why it has stopped raising the 'Ambani-Adani' issue as its 'Shehzada' used to do for the past five years, Priyanka Gandhi said, "Today he (Modi) is saying Rahul does not take the name

of Adani, Ambani...He does so every day. He brings their truth in front of you every day".

"We say every day that they (BJP) have a nexus with industrialists. You must understand that Prime Minister Modi has waived off Rs 16 lakh crore of big billionaires. Whose money is this? This is not Modi ji's money. That is the country's money," she said at public meetings here while campaigning for her brother Rahul Gandhi from the family bastion.

BJP leaders are not even talking about inflation and unemployment. They will come here and in their speeches talk about religion, caste, temples and mosques but will not talk about your real problems," she said.

Israel reopens Gaza crossing post-rocket attack

UN says no aid allowed across

AP ■ JERUSALEM/ CHICAGO

The Israeli military said on Wednesday that it has reopened the Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza, a key terminal for the entry of humanitarian aid that was closed over the weekend after a Hamas rocket attack killed four Israeli soldiers nearby. But the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees said no aid has yet entered and there is no one to receive it on the Palestinian side. Workers fled during an incursion by an Israeli tank brigade on Tuesday that captured the nearby Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt, which remains closed. That limited incursion did not appear to be the start of the full-scale invasion of Rafah that Israel has repeatedly promised. But the prolonged closure of the two main crossings could exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where the UN says a “full-blown famine” is already underway in the north. The United States paused a shipment of bombs to Israel last week over concerns that Israel was approaching

a decision on launching a full-scale assault on Rafah, in a further widening of divisions between the two close allies. The US says it is concerned over the fate of around 1.3 million Palestinians crammed into Rafah, most of whom fled fighting elsewhere. Israel says Rafah is Hamas’ last stronghold and that a wider offensive there is needed to dismantle the group’s military and governing capabilities. The US, Egypt and Qatar are meanwhile ramping up efforts to close the gaps in a possible agreement for at least a temporary cease-fire and the release of some of the scores of Israeli hostages still held by Hamas. Israel has linked the threatened Rafah operation to the fate of those negotiations. The Rafah crossing has been a vital conduit for humanitarian aid since the start of the war and is the only place where people can enter and exit. Kerem Shalom is Gaza’s main cargo terminal. Israel now controls all of Gaza’s crossings for the first time since it withdrew troops and settlers from the territory nearly two decades ago, though it has maintained a blockade with Egypt’s cooperation for most of that time. Associated Press journalists heard sporadic explosions and gunfire in the area of the Rafah crossing overnight, including two large blasts early

Wednesday. The Israeli military reported six launches from Rafah toward the Kerem Shalom crossing on Tuesday. COGAT, the Israeli military body in charge of Palestinian civilian affairs, said the Kerem Shalom crossing reopened early Wednesday. But Juliette Touma, the director of communications for UNRWA, said no aid had entered as of midday on Wednesday and that the UN agency had been forced to ration fuel, which is imported through Rafah. Gaza’s Health Ministry meanwhile said at least 46 patients and wounded people who had been scheduled to leave Tuesday for medical treatment have been left stranded. UN agencies and aid groups have ramped up humanitarian assistance in recent weeks as Israel has lifted some restrictions and opened an additional crossing in the north under pressure from the United States, its closest ally. But aid workers say the closure of Rafah, which is the only gateway for the entry of fuel for trucks and generators, could have severe repercussions, and the UN says northern Gaza is already in a state of “full-blown famine.” COGAT said 60 aid trucks entered through the northern crossing on Tuesday. Some 500 trucks entered Gaza every day before the war.

The war began when Hamas militants breached Israel’s defences on October 7 and swept through nearby army bases and farming communities, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Hamas is still believed to be holding around 100 hostages and the remains of more than 30 others after most of the rest were released during a November cease-fire. The war has killed over 34,700 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials, and has driven some 80 per cent of Gaza’s population of 2.3 million Palestinians from their homes. Israel’s military campaign has been one of the deadliest and most destructive in recent history, reducing large parts of Gaza to rubble. Biden has repeatedly warned Netanyahu against launching an invasion of Rafah. But Netanyahu’s far-right coalition partners have threatened to bring down his government if he calls off an offensive or makes too many concessions in the cease-fire talks. The US has historically provided Israel enormous amounts of military aid, which has only accelerated since the start of the war. The paused shipment was supposed to consist of 1,800 2,000-pound (900-kilogram) bombs and 1,700 smaller ones, with the US

concern focused on how the larger bombs could be used in a dense urban setting, a US official said on Tuesday on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter. The official said no final decision had been made yet on proceeding with the shipment. Meanwhile Police began to clear a Pro-Palestinian tent encampment at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., early Wednesday, hours after dozens of protesters left the site and marched to President Ellen Granberg’s home. “Officers gave their third and final warning to demonstrators to move at about 3:30 a.m., saying all who remained in U-Yard and the stretch of H Street in front of the plaza would be arrested,” according to GW Hatchet, the university’s independent student-run newspaper. University officials had warned in statements of possible suspensions for students engaging in protest activities on University Yard. “While the university is committed to protecting students’ rights to free expression, the encampment had evolved into an unlawful activity, with participants in direct violation of multiple university policies and city regulations,” the university said in a statement.

US halts bomb shipment to Israel amid Rafah invasion concerns

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The US paused a shipment of bombs to Israel last week over concerns that Israel was approaching a decision on launching a full-scale assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah against the wishes of the US, a senior administration official said on Tuesday. The shipment was supposed to consist of 1,800 2,000-pound (900-kilogram) bombs and 1,700 500-pound (225-kilogram) bombs, according to the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter, with the focus of US concern being the larger explosives and how they could be used in a dense urban setting. More than 1 million civilians are sheltering in Rafah after evacuating other parts of Gaza amid Israel’s war on Hamas, which came after the militant group’s deadly attack on Israel on October 7. The US has historically provided enormous amounts of military aid for Israel. That has only accelerated in the aftermath of Hamas’ October 7 attack that killed some 1,200 in Israel and led to about 250 being taken captive by militants.

fers of military assistance as Netanyahu’s government appeared to move closer toward an invasion of Rafah, despite months of opposition from the White House. The official said the decision to pause the shipment was made last week and no final decision had been made yet on whether to proceed with the shipment at a later date. US officials had declined for days to comment on the halted transfer, word of which came as Biden on Tuesday described US support for Israel as “ironclad, even when we disagree.” Press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre declined to square the arms holdup with Biden’s rhetoric in support of Israel, saying only, “Two things could be true.” Israeli troops on Tuesday seized control of Gaza’s vital Rafah border crossing in what the White House described as a limited operation that stopped short of the full-on Israeli invasion of the city that Biden has repeatedly warned against on humanitarian grounds, most recently in a Monday call with Netanyahu. Israel has ordered the evacuation of 100,000 Palestinians from the city. Israeli forces have also carried out what it describes as “targeted strikes” on the eastern part of Rafah and captured the Rafah crossing, a critical conduit for the flow of humanitarian aid along the Gaza-Egypt border. Privately, concern has mounted inside the White House about what’s unfolding in Rafah, but publicly administration officials have stressed that they did not think the operations had defied Biden’s warnings against a widescale operation in the city. White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Israel described the operation along the Gaza-Egypt border in eastern Rafah as “an operation of limited scale and duration” aimed at cutting off Hamas arms smuggling, but also said the US would monitor the fighting.

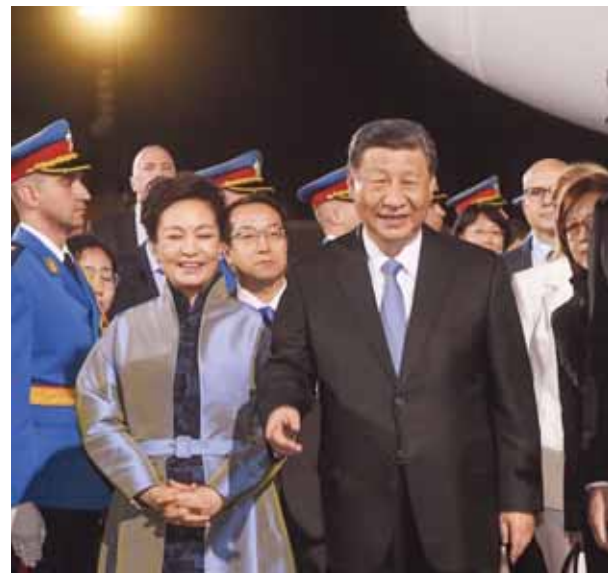
Another German politician attacked

Berlin (AP): A prominent Berlin politician was violently assaulted and suffered injuries to her head and neck, police said Wednesday, in the latest attack on elected officials that raises concern over rising political violence in Germany. Franziska Giffey, the city’s top economic official, a former mayor and an ex-federal minister, was attacked at an event in a Berlin library on Tuesday by a man who approached her from behind and hit her with a bag containing a hard device, police said. Giffey was taken to a hospital and treated for head and neck pain, police said. A 74-year-old man was detained and police searched his home, police said. They said the suspect was known to police, but did not give any indication for a motive.

China, Serbia sign pact to build ‘shared future’

AP ■ BELGRADE

China and European Union candidate Serbia signed an agreement on Wednesday to build a “shared future,” making the Balkan country the first in Europe to agree on such a document with Beijing. After meeting in Belgrade, Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Serbian President Vucic announced they would “deepen and elevate the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Serbia,” and “build a new era of a community with a shared future between China and Serbia.” Xi launched the term “community for shared future” over 10 years ago. While it may not denote a specific initiative, experts believe it has an underlying significance as another term for an alliance. “Eight years ago, Serbia became China’s first comprehensive strategic partner in the Central and Eastern European region, and today Serbia is the first European country to build a community of destiny with China, fully reflecting the



In this photo provided by the Serbian Presidential Press Service, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, right, welcomes Chinese President Xi Jinping, center, and his wife Peng Liyuan during a welcome ceremony upon his arrival at the Nikola Tesla airport in Belgrade, Serbia, Tuesday. AP/PTI

strategic, special and high level of China-Serbia relations,” Xi said during a press conference after signing the agreement. It was not immediately clear

including Serbia, into the EU at the top of the 27-nation bloc’s agenda. China has claimed neutrality in the Ukraine conflict, but has refused to call the Russian assault an invasion and has been accused of bolstering Russia’s military capacity. Serbia has condemned the Russian invasion but has refused to join international sanctions against Moscow. Xi arrived in Serbia to a warm welcome on Tuesday evening from France, where he had a high-stakes state visit dominated by trade disputes and Russia’s war in Ukraine. Thousands of people chanting “China-Serbia” and waving flags were bused in from across Serbia to attend a welcoming ceremony for Xi on Wednesday in front of the Serbia Palace, in the new part of Belgrade where the talks were held. Serbia’s populist president addressed the crowd from a balcony, calling Xi an “ironclad” friend. He said his visit to Serbia was “historic” because it opened the path for even closer ties. “We are writing history today although it doesn’t seem so to many,” Vucic said. “We thank President Xi. He hasn’t come to Europe in five years and he has again chosen our little Serbia.” At the start of the official meeting on Wednesday, Xi said “we are first-hand witnesses that the Serbian people view Chinese people as ironclad best friends.” “This is truly a two-sided and truthful friendship ... I truly hail this and it really made an extremely deep impression on me,” Xi said, according to the state RTS television. Xi is travelling to Hungary later on Wednesday. Like Serbia, Hungary is seen as one of China’s more friendly partners in Europe. Signs of pro-China sentiments were visible throughout the Serbian capital. A huge Chinese flag was placed on a skyscraper along a roadway leading into the city from the airport. Smaller Chinese and Serbian flags could be seen downtown and along a highway.

UK PM loses MP amid charge of ‘incompetence’

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Wednesday suffered a humiliating defection from his party benches as a Conservative member of Parliament walked across the floor of the House of Commons to join the Opposition Labour ranks. Natalie Elphicke, MP for Dover, said the Tories under Sunak “have become a byword for incompetence and division” in a resignation statement just moments before the weekly Prime Minister’s Questions (PMQs). The 43-year-old British Indian leader went on to face off with Labour Leader Keir Starmer, who made the most of the shock move which marks the second defection from the Tories to Labour in two weeks

and comes on the back of bruising local election results for the governing party. “When I was elected in 2019, the Conservative Party occupied the centre ground of British politics. The party was about building the future and making the most of the opportunities that lay ahead for our country,” Elphicke, a staunch critic of the Labour Party until only a few days ago, said in her resignation letter. “Since then, many things have changed. The elected prime minister was ousted in a coup led by the unelected Rishi Sunak. Under Rishi Sunak, the Conservatives have become a byword for incompetence and division. The centre ground has been abandoned and key pledges of the 2019 manifesto have been ditched,” she said. She added that the Labour

Party under Starmer has “changed out of all recognition” and its policies “can be trusted.” “We need to move on from the broken promises of Rishi Sunak’s tired and chaotic government,” she declared. The dramatic moment of her crossing the floor of the House was followed by Starmer asking Sunak: “What is the point of this failed government staggering on” when the Tory MP on the front line of the small boats migration crisis on the coastline of Dover has openly attacked Sunak’s handling of a priority issue like illegal migration. “If he thinks his own MPs joining the Labour Party are wrong if he thinks anyone believes any of the nonsense that he spouts, why doesn’t he put it to the test and call a general election,” questioned Starmer, in a series of stinging attacks during PMQs.

how the EU would respond to Serbia getting even closer to China. Russia’s war on Ukraine has pushed the integration of six Western Balkan countries,

Glory to HK protest song banned after court overrules ruling

AP ■ HONG KONG

An appeals court on Wednesday granted the Hong Kong government’s request to ban a popular protest song, overturning an earlier ruling and deepening concerns over the erosion of freedoms in the once-freewheeling global financial hub. “Glory to Hong Kong” was often sung by demonstrators during huge anti-government protests in 2019. The song was later mistakenly played as the city’s anthem at international sporting events, instead of China’s “March of the Volunteers,” in mix-ups that upset city officials. It was the first time a song has been banned in the city since Britain handed the territory back to Chinese rule in 1997. Critics have said prohibiting broadcast or distribution of the song further reduces freedom of expression since Beijing launched a crackdown in Hong

Kong following the 2019 protests. They have also warned the ban might disrupt the operation of tech giants and hurt the city’s appeal as a business center. Judge Jeremy Poon wrote that the composer intended for the song to be a “weapon,” pointing to its power in arousing emotions among some residents of the city. “We accept the assessment of the executive that prosecutions alone are clearly not adequate to tackle the acute criminal problems and that there is a compelling need for an injunction,” he said. He said the injunction was necessary to persuade internet platform operators to remove “problematic videos in connection with the song” from their platforms. The operators have indicated they are ready to accede to the government’s request if there is a court order, he added. The ban would target anyone who broadcast or distributed the song to advocate for the separation of Hong

Kong from China. It would also prohibit any actions that misrepresent the song as the national anthem with the intent to insult the anthem. The song can still be played if it is for lawful journalistic and academic activities. Failure to comply with the court order may be considered as contempt of court and could be liable for a fine or imprisonment. Authorities have previously arrested some residents who played the song in public under other offenses, such as playing a musical instrument in public without a permit, local media reported. As of mid-afternoon on Wednesday, “Glory to Hong Kong,” whose artist is credited as “Thomas and the Hong Kong people,” was still available on Spotify and Apple Music in both English and Cantonese. A search on YouTube for the song also displayed multiple videos and renditions. Google said in an email to the AP that it was “reviewing the

court’s judgment.” Spotify and Apple did not immediately comment. George Chen, co-chair of digital practice at The Asia Group, a Washington-headquartered business and policy consultancy, said it would be most practical for tech companies to restrict access to the content in question in a certain region to comply with the order. Chen called on the government to consider how to ease public concerns over the order’s chilling effect on free speech. He said he hoped such bans will not become “the new normal” and establish a precedent. “This will get people really worried about how free Hong Kong’s internet will be like tomorrow,” he said. Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law in 2020 to quell the months-long unrest. That law was used to arrest many of the city’s leading pro-democracy activists. In March, the city enacted a home-grown securi-

ty law, deepening fears that the city’s Western-style civil liberties would be further curtailed. The two laws typically target more serious criminal acts. After the judgement was handed down, Lin Jian, a spokesperson for China’s Foreign Ministry, said stopping anyone from using the song to incite division and insult the national anthem is a necessary measure for the city to maintain national security. Hong Kong’s Secretary for Justice Paul Lam insisted the injunction was not aimed at restricting the normal operation of internet service providers. He said the government would do its best to preserve the city’s free flow of information. Lam argued that the acts covered by the ban could be constituted as criminal offenses even before the court order, and that the scope of the injunction was “extremely narrow.”

Biden visits Wisconsin to tout Microsoft facility, meet voters & subtly troll Trump

AP ■ WASHINGTON



President Joe Biden is racing into yet another battle-ground state Wednesday, continuing to push a contrast with Donald Trump on economic policy as his own reelection campaign readies a new USD 14 million advertising blitz aimed in part at Black, Latino and Asian American voters. Biden is traveling to Racine, Wisconsin, where he’ll highlight a decision by Microsoft to build a USD 3.3 billion data center that is expected to create roughly 2,000 jobs. It’s also the same spot where Trump, to much fanfare, lauded a plan by Taiwan-based electronics giant Foxconn plan to build a USD 10 billion manufacturing facility that was supposed to eventually employ 10,000 people. Except it was never completed. Conscious of that history, Microsoft’s president Brad Smith said in an interview

office, and it will be again should he win. Meanwhile, Biden’s reelection team is sharpening their outreach to minority voters on the airwaves, with the fresh, seven-figure digital and television ad campaign launching Wednesday that follows the USD 30 million effort that began after his State of the Union address in early March. One of the ads that is a part of the fresh campaign will also be released Wednesday and focuses on Trump’s failed yet determined push to repeal the Affordable Care Act. After his speech, Biden is making a campaign stop to speak with Black voters about the stakes of the November election. The Biden campaign wants to capitalize on the fundraising advantage it’s enjoyed over Trump, hoping to bury them on the airwaves while amassing significant resources on the ground in key battleground

states to force Republicans to play catch-up much later in the year. “Equally important as our own historic investments is the complete lack of investment on the other side,” Michael Tyler, the Biden campaign’s communications director, told reporters. “Trump’s paid media strategy can only be described as anemic and inefficient.” A significant portion of the USD 14 million campaign starting Wednesday will go into Black and Hispanic media, as well as Asian American print and radio, according to the campaign. Campaign officials also said Biden will continue to do targeted interviews with media that serve primarily minority audiences, while the campaign plans to launch more coalition groups in May that focus on specific blocs of voters. So far, the Biden campaign has started groups to engage women, Latinos and educators.

channel by the end of May. The Dali’s 21-member crew will shelter in place aboard the ship while the explosives are detonated, said Petty Officer Ronald Hodges of the Coast Guard. Engineers have been working for weeks to determine the best way to remove this last major piece of the fallen bridge. The explosives will send it tumbling into the water. Then a massive hydraulic grabber will lift the resulting sections of steel onto barges. Video footage released by Coast Guard officials last week showed entire sections of roadway sitting on the ship’s deck. Hodges said the crew’s safety was a top concern as officials considered whether they should remain on the ship during the demolition. He said engineers are using precision cuts to control how the trusses break down. “The last thing anybody wants is for something to happen to the crew members,” Hodges said. They haven’t been allowed to leave the Dali since the disaster. Officials said they’ve been busy maintaining the ship and assisting investigators.

AP ■ BALTIMORE

The crew of the Dali will remain on board the grounded container ship while demolition crews use explosives to break down the largest remaining span of the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge, officials said Tuesday. Of the crew members, 20 are from India and one is Sri Lankan. The steel span landed on the ship’s bow after the Dali lost power and crashed into one of the bridge’s support columns on March 26. Since then, the ship has been stuck amid the wreckage, and Baltimore’s busy port has been closed to most maritime traffic. The controlled demolition, which is expected to take place in the coming days, will allow the Dali to be refloated and guided back into the Port of Baltimore, officials said. Once the ship is removed, maritime traffic can begin returning to normal, which will provide relief for thousands of longshoremen, truckers and small business owners who have seen their jobs impacted by the closure. Officials previously said they hoped to remove the Dali by May 10 and reopen the port’s 50-foot (15.2-meter) main

A spokesperson for the crew didn’t immediately respond to an email seeking comment Tuesday afternoon. The National Transportation Safety Board and the FBI are conducting investigations into the bridge collapse. Danish shipping giant Maersk had chartered the Dali for a planned trip from Baltimore to Sri Lanka, but the ship didn’t get far. Its crew sent a mayday call saying they had lost power and had no control of the steering system. Minutes later, the ship rammed into the bridge. Officials have said the safety board investigation will focus on the ship’s electrical system, including whether it experienced power issues before leaving Baltimore. Six construction workers were killed in the collapse. Five bodies have been recovered from the water, but one remains missing. All the victims were Latino immigrants who were working an overnight shift filling potholes on the bridge. Police officers were able to stop traffic moments before the collapse, but they didn’t have enough time to alert the workers. Maryland leaders said last week that they plan to rebuild the bridge by fall 2028.

Dortmund beats PSG 1-0 to reach Champions League final

Mbappe cannot pull off comeback

AP ■ PARIS

When Borussia Dortmund's players rushed over to their fans wearing yellow "London 24" T-shirts and joined in the celebrations after knocking out Paris Saint-Germain to reach the Champions League final on Tuesday, Mbappé had long left the field. Wembley Stadium on June 1 is the final stop on Dortmund's quest for the Champions League trophy, by which time Mbappé will have played his last game for PSG having failed to win the trophy the club's cash-rich Qatari owners so crave. Central defender Mats Hummels headed Dortmund into the final as the German team won 1-0 at PSG. Moments after Warren Zaire-Emery missed an open goal for PSG, Hummels rose unchallenged to head in Julian Brandt's corner from the left in the 50th minute. Dortmund advanced 2-0 on aggregate and largely contained Mbappé, who is leaving at the end of the season. PSG exerted late pressure. Goalkeeper Gregor Kobel palmed away Mbappé's low shot, then pushed Mbappé's deflected close-range effort onto the crossbar with a superb one-handed save. The Parc des Princes crowd groaned when midfielder



Vitinha's thumping 25-meter strike rattled the woodwork. Coach Edin Terzic's team will play either record 14-time champion Real Madrid or six-time winner Bayern Munich on June 1 at Wembley Stadium. Madrid and Bayern drew 2-2 in the first leg and play on Wednesday. "Extremely proud. I'm very happy," Terzic said. "We beat a team like PSG two times and we again kept a clean sheet. We started really well and kept them away from the goal."

Dortmund is on course for its second Champions League trophy after winning in 1997 and a third European trophy, having won the now defunct UEFA Cup Winners' Cup in 1966. Dortmund also reached the Champions League final in 2013, losing to Bayern. "Indescribable. After more than 10 years, I am in the final with Borussia again," said Marco Reus, Dortmund's veteran midfielder who is leaving the team after this season. "How

we won the game, no one will ask tomorrow. Shots against the post won't matter tomorrow." For PSG, it's another season ending without raising the trophy its cash-rich Qatari owners have chased after by spending huge amounts on star players like Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Neymar, Lionel Messi and Mbappé. PSG lost its only Champions League final in 2020 to Bayern. "Efficiency, that's what we were missing," PSG captain

Marquinhos said. "We should have defended better. They scored from a corner and a counter-attack (in the first leg). We created more chances but they won both games." As Dortmund's players celebrated, Mbappé looked dejected as he trudged for the last time in a Champions League game wearing a PSG jersey. He is widely expected to join Madrid. Moments before Dortmund's goal, Zaire-Emery somehow hit the post from two meters

after Gonçalo Ramos flicked on Mbappé's cross from the left. On Hummels' goal, PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma again did not move off his line to claim the ball, having not done so when Barcelona scored on a corner from the left in the first leg of the quarterfinals. Coach Luis Enrique's players seemed nervous, playing cautiously and defending too deeply in the first half, allowing Dortmund to settle into a comfortable rhythm. Mbappé was ineffective in attack when PSG lost the first leg and, despite their speed, Mbappé and Ousmane Dembélé struggled to find space behind a well-organized Dortmund defense with midfielder Emre Can offering good protection. It took 30 minutes before Mbappé and Zaire-Emery freed Dembélé on the right of the penalty area, but he failed to hit the target. Speedy left winger Karim Adeyemi did so for Dortmund five minutes later when a rapid counter-attack exposed PSG's defense, but Donnarumma rescued PSG with a fine low save. Hummel's goal at least woke up PSG's attack, but Ramos missed the target when well-placed either side of a stinging shot from left back Nuno Mendes hitting the left post.



Neeraj to compete in India for first time in three years at Federation Cup

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic and world champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will compete at home for the first time in three years after confirming participation in the National Federation Cup to be held in Bhubaneswar from May 12 to 15. The 26-year-old superstar is expected to travel to India from Doha after opening his season in the first leg of the prestigious Diamond League series on May 10. "As per entries @Neeraj_chopra and Kishore Kumar Jena will compete in domestic competition starting May 12 in Bhubaneswar," the Athletics Federation of India tweeted. Chopra's coach Klaus Bartonietz also confirmed to PTI that his ward is taking part

in the Bhubaneswar event. The 28-year-old Kishore Jena, who won a silver in the Hangzhou Asian Games where Chopra won gold, will also be competing in the Doha Diamond League on May 10. Chopra last took part in a domestic competition at the same event on March 17, 2021, when he won a gold with a throw of 87.80m. Since then, Chopra has won a historic gold in the Tokyo Olympics, became Diamond League champion in 2022, world champion in 2023 and defended Asian Games gold in China. He also won three individual legs of Diamond League and claimed a silver in the 2022 World Championships. He is, however, yet to touch the 90m mark. His personal best and national record is 89.94m.



PGA Championship invites seven LIV players to get top 100 in world

PTI ■ LOUISVILLE (US)

The PGA Championship officially has Tiger Woods in a field released that includes invitations to seven players from Saudi-funded LIV Golf, giving the major 99 of the 100 in the world ranking at Valhalla next week. The PGA of America strives to have the top 100 in the world to maintain its reputation for having the strongest field of the four majors, although it is not part of the criteria. Those hopes ended late Tuesday when Rikuya Hoshino (No. 94) withdrew. The PGA leans on a catch-all category of "special invitations." The group of LIV players includes Patrick Reed, whose tie for 12th in the Masters moved him inside the top 100. He is at No. 92, and the invitation keeps alive his streak of playing every major since the 2014 Masters. The PGA Championship returns to Valhalla in Louisville, Kentucky, for the fourth time on May 16-19. Rory McIlroy won at Valhalla the last time it was there in 2014. The course is best known for Woods winning a playoff over Bob May in 2000 for his third straight major. Joaquin Niemann, who won the Australian Open in December and has two LIV Golf wins this year, already received an invitation. The surprise was Talor Gooch announcing in an X post on Monday that he had been invited. It was a sign the PGA of America's selection committee was looking at LIV results on their own, as Gooch doesn't play much outside the Saudi

league. He won three times on LIV in 2023 and won the season points list. Other invitations went to Dean Burmester, Lucas Herbert and Adrian Meronk, all of them inside the top 100 in the world. The seventh invitation went to David Puig, the 22-year-old from Spain who is No. 106 in the ranking. Puig has finished in the top 10 in six of his last seven tournaments on the Asian Tour, including two wins. LIV will be represented by 16 players, down from 18 a year ago. There might have been one more, except British Open champion Louis Oosthuizen turned down his invitation. Oosthuizen, who is No. 125 in the world, won twice late last year in South Africa in tournaments co-sanctioned by the European tour. His manager, Carlos Rodriguez, said in a text message that Oosthuizen already had some personal commitments. The LIV group includes defending champion Brooks Koepka, who goes for a fourth PGA Championship title. He is the only active LIV player to win a major. Kerry Haigh, the championship director for the PGA of America, has said he would consider deserving players from tours around the world. Invitations were given to Tim Widing of Sweden, who has won consecutive tournaments on the Korn Ferry Tour. Another invitation went to Kazuma Kobori, a 22-year-old born in Japan who now plays under the New Zealand flag. He has won three times this year in the Webex Players Series on the PGA Tour of Australasia.

Maradona World Cup Golden Ball trophy had mysteriously disappeared

AP ■ PARIS

It will be auctioned in Paris

Diego Maradona's Golden Ball trophy from the 1986 World Cup has resurfaced. The award, which had been missing for decades, will be auctioned in Paris next month, the Aguttes house said. Maradona, who died in 2020 at age 60, was awarded the trophy for his scintillating play at the tournament, where he captained Argentina in its 3-2 win over West Germany in the final in Mexico City. Before that, he scored the controversial "Hand of God" goal and the "Goal of the Century" in a 2-1 win over England in the quarterfinals.

The auction house said it expects the trophy "to fetch millions due to its uniqueness. Maradona received the award - given to the tournament's best player - at a ceremony at the Lido cabaret on the Champs-Élysées in 1986. It subsequently disappeared, giving rise to rumors. Some say it was lost during a wild poker game, or sold to pay off debts, Aguttes said. Others said Maradona had stored it in a safe in a Naples bank that was robbed by local gangsters in 1989, when he played in the Italian league. According to the story told by



a reformed member of the mafia, the trophy was then melted down into gold pieces. "A far-fetched theory, given that it was made of a gold-copper alloy," Aguttes said in its auction catalogue. Aguttes said the trophy reappeared in 2016 among other lots that were acquired from a private collection at auction in Paris. "It was thoroughly investigated and authenticated as Diego Maradona's Adidas Golden Ball trophy," Aguttes said. The "Hand of God" goal came when Maradona punched the ball into England's net for his team's opener. Maradona was also a magician with the ball at

his feet and four minutes later, he weaved through England's midfield and defense and then past goalkeeper Peter Shilton for what FIFA later declared the greatest goal in World Cup history. "To say that this World Cup had it all would be an understatement ... It was also, and above all, the tournament where Diego Maradona really showed the world what he could do with his feet, and even with his hands," said François Thierry, a sports expert at Aguttes. Bidders will be asked to make a deposit of 150,000 euros (\$161,000) to participate in the June 6 auction.

Asia needs its best players to compete in own tournaments: ATF president Yuriy Polskiy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Determined to change the face of Asian tennis in his tenure, Yuriy Polskiy, the youngest ATF President, has exhorted the best players from the region to compete in Asian events before travelling abroad and has set his sights on developing the game in smaller tennis-playing nations such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Syria. The 36-year-old Polskiy had won the Asian Tennis Federation (ATF) presidential elections in December last year on the back of reforms in his home country Kazakhstan and wants to use his troubleshooting experience to help nations struggling to popularise the game. Polskiy is clear that Asia's strong players need to compete in their own events which should help upcoming players with exposure and learning, and a robust Asian tour and programme for U14 players with considerable financial support is the need of the hour. He is also clear that ATF would work in tandem with ATP rather than competing with them and create a viable Asian tour with lots of tournaments in close vicinity that will reduce the travel expenses of players from the region. Asia has only six players in the world's top-100 and it worries Polskiy. "Asian tennis needs the participation of the best Asian players in Asian



tournaments, because, quite often, they go to Europe, they go to North America, South America and it means that the local Asian players don't have a chance to compete with the best," Polskiy told PTI in an interview. "And to go to Europe, it's very costly. So the ones who are good, they spend a lot of money, which can be redistributed, you know, in order to increase the base, like you will send not only the best ones to the tournaments, but the number two, three, four, because with the kids, you never know who will eventually be the best player. "So, you need the competition inside the country, you need the competition inside of your region, and you need the high competition in Asia." Polskiy understands that Asia is very strong in the eastern countries such as Japan,

Korea, China, Taiwan, India, Thailand and Kazakhstan but the continent needs more tennis-playing nations. "In recent years, Uzbekistan (grew), also Iran has a big history, and I feel that smaller nations like Iraq, Syria, Nepal, Myanmar, Timor-Leste and others, also deserve a chance, and they have big population." Polskiy said they are now working with the Grand Slams, with ITF, in order to improve the quality of tournaments in Asia. The ATF President said the players will get incentives for playing in Asia. "We (should) give extra incentives to good Asian players to play on Asian circuit. So they don't spend their time competing for nothing, there is something meaningful they get, they get the ranking, they get the grants, there is an Asian team of the best players in each age

category, so they can get in there and get extra support from ITF." Asia's highest-ranked player is world No. 17 Alexander Bublik from Kazakhstan. The next best is China's Zhizhen Zhang (56) and is followed by Kazakhstan's Alexander Shevchenko (60), Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka (80) and Tarō Daniel (82) and India's Sumit Nagal (93). "We should do better in ATP and WTA rankings. And I see several challenges which we need to overcome in that regard. First of all, Asia is quite divided and many big nations like Japan, China, India, many players do not participate in international tournaments. "They play a lot inside their countries, they compete with local players. But to some extent, it can work. But for 16 year old (players), it's very difficult to stand the competition of countries located in Europe, where they compete with each other from a very young age. "And in that regard, we do a lot of talking to nations, bringing new initiatives and hosting different tournaments. So everybody will come on board." In the past, ATF had launched a closed-door circuit only for Asian players but it did not work. While it offered a lot of money to Asian players, absence of ATP ranking never allowed it to grow. Polskiy said he won't restart any such programme because he does not want to compete with ATP.

High hopes from Aman Sehrawat at last Olympic Qualifying

PTI ■ ISTANBUL

The immensely-talented Aman Sehrawat and the experienced Deepak Punia will be followed keenly when they take to the mat to lock the men's freestyle quotas for Paris Olympics at the World Qualifiers beginning here on Thursday. It is the last event to secure spot for the Paris Games. There were high hopes that U23 world champion Aman would qualify for the Games either at the World Championships or the Asian Qualifiers in Bishkek but both the chances were lost. While Aman (57kg) bumped into a strong opponent in Gulomjon Abdullaev in the quota-deciding bout in Bishkek, both World Championships silver medalist Deepak (86kg) and Sujet Kalkal (65kg) could not reach Bishkek on time after being stuck in Dubai due to storm. Now it's a do-or-die situation for all Indian wrestlers as Istanbul where the two finalists in each category will be awarded the quotas. A third quota will be given to the wrestlers who emerges winner in the bout between the two bronze medalists. The tournament will begin with Greco Roman style and followed by women's and freestyle on the last two days of the four-day qualifying competition. None of the Indian men's wrestlers has so far got a quota and drawing a blank



will be a huge embarrassment for the country that took some major strides in international wrestling before the protest against former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh halted the progress. Endurance has always been the strong point of Indian wrestlers but their preparations have suffered in the absence of national camps and competitions due to protest. Usually, the Indian wrestlers tire their opponents out for that to happen, it is important to stretch the bout to full six minutes. It's a strategy that Bajrang Punia and Ravi Dahiya have employed although the latter has always been aggressive and finishes the bout in a jiffy. "If the bouts lasts full distance, Aman can beat any wrestler, so managing the first three minutes are crucial. He was obviously very disappointed for what happened in Bishkek," said coach Praveen Dahiya who trained him for four years before being shifted out of Chattrasal Stadium.



SRH hammer LSG into submission

Head, Sharma chase down 166-run target in 9.4 overs

PTI | Hyderabad

The remorseless domination of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma, who carved lightning fast fifties, helped Sunrisers Hyderabad mount the fastest chase of a 160-plus target en route their convincing 10-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL match here on Wednesday. Chasing a modest target of 166, Head (89 not out, 30 balls, 8x4, 8x6) and Sharma (75 not out, 28 balls, 8x4, 6x6) toyed with LSG bowlers, finding boundaries and sixes at will to canter home in just 9.4 overs. The win propelled SRH to the third position in the standings with 14 points from 12 games, while LSG are struggling at the sixth spot with 12 points from the same number of matches.

The result also meant that five-time champions Mumbai Indians, currently ninth with eight points from 12 matches, are out of the play-off race. The dance of destruction by Head and Sharma even left the legendary Sachin Tendulkar gushing. "A destructive opening partnership would be an understatement tonight. Had these boys batted first, they would've scored 300," Tendulkar wrote in his X account. The Head and Sharma show came after SRH bowlers started brilliantly before losing the plot a bit. Ayush Badoni (55 not out off 30 balls) and Nicholas Pooran (48 not out off 25 balls) stitched crucial 95-run off 55 balls for the unbeaten fifth-wicket stand to guide LSG to a competitive 165 for four on a sluggish pitch.

But Head and Sharma took any hint of competition out of the match once they bludgeoned 107 runs in the Power Play. It was an awesome hitting display from the Indo-Australian pair as they didn't spare a single LSG bowler, clobbering them to all parts of the ground. LSG's decision to start with Krishnappa Gowtham also backfired badly as both Head and Sharma, who are really good against spin, dismantled the off-spinner. Such was the brutality of their assault that the likes of Yash Thakur, Ravi Bishnoi and Naveen-ul-Haq were taken to the cleaners, as sixes and fours rained at the Uppal stadium. Earlier, LSG were struggling at 27 for 2 at the end of the powerplay after opting to bat. The visitors lost Quinton de



Kock, who replaced an injured Mohsin Khan, early, caught brilliantly by Nitish Kumar Reddy at deep backward square-leg off Bhuvneshwar Kumar (2/12) in the third over. Bhuvneshwar struck again in the fifth over, dismissing the dangerous Marcus Stoinis but the credit for the dismissal should go to young Sanvir Singh, who took a stunning diving catch just inches from the ground at mid-on. The pitch also didn't help LSG's cause as the ball was coming on to the bat a bit slow, as their batters found it difficult to find the timing. While skipper KL Rahul (29) held one end up, Krunal Pandya (24) took it on himself to up the ante. Krunal pummeled Jaydev Unadkat for a six over long-on and then hit the bowler straight over his head for another maximum to accumulate 15 runs in the eighth over. Rahul hit the first boundary of LSG innings in the 10th over, slamming SRH skipper Pat Cummins over mid-off. But Rahul never looked at his usual best as he struggled to

get his timing and finally departed in search of quick runs, caught by T Natarajan at deep backward square leg in the final delivery of the same over. SRH were brilliant on the field as Cummins' direct throw from mid-on sent Krunal packing soon when the batter went for a quick single. Badoni pressed the feet on the accelerator soon with three boundaries of left-arm pacer Natarajan's 14th over which yielded 17 runs. The Lucknow side finally got going as Pooran and Badoni struck a six and a four to accumulate 12 runs off the 15th over bowled by leg-spinner Vijaykanth Vijaykanth. They showed intent from the word go and didn't hesitate to play their strokes when the opportunity was presented to them. It was brilliant batting from Badoni as he swept and cut Natarajan for two consecutive boundaries in the 17th over. Badoni displayed some cheeky shots as the right-hander notched up his fifty in 28 balls.

We should have seen game home: Rajasthan Royals head coach Sangakkara

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Skipper Sanju Samson's departure left Rajasthan Royals in a tight spot but the team still should have won the IPL match against Delhi Capitals here, says their head coach Kumar Sangakkara. In a chase of 222, Samson got out after making 86 off 46 balls. His dismissal left the Royals with a task of getting 60 runs from 27 balls and eventually they fell short by 20 runs Tuesday night. A win would have ensured a play-offs spot for the Royals and exit for the Capitals but the result meant that the hosts stayed alive in the tournament. "Irrespective of that dismissal, we still should have probably seen that game home," Sangakkara said at the post-match press conference. "Losses happen. We had a great run at the start of the season. We bowled brilliantly in this game, especially Ashwin but once you make too many



casual mistakes, it becomes very hard. At the end of the day it's about execution." Samson was not a happy man when he left the field because there were doubts if Shai Hope, who caught him at the boundary ropes, had touched

the fence. The decision was referred to the TV umpire who ruled Samson out but the Royals skipper chose to argue with on-field umpire before walking back. Sangakkara said it is difficult sometimes even for the third umpire

to make a call. "It depends on replays and angles, and sometimes you think the foot's touched. But it is a difficult one for the third umpire to judge. The game was at a crucial stage, so that happens in cricket. "We have different perspectives on it. At the end of the day, you have to stand by that decision in terms of what the umpires did. If we have any other kind of opinion on it, we will share it with the umpire and sort it out." The coach was happy with Samson's batting approach. "Sanju Samson has a lot of clarity about the way he should bat. There are certain stages where he seems to lose his concentration a little bit and we worked on that in the off season. It is really important for him, not just as a captain but as a batter. He is exceptionally talented," he said, adding that he takes very good care of the group.

The catch by Hope, who stumbled before regaining his balance, was hailed by Capitals' assistant coach Pravin Amre. "In IPL some moments are very crucial, and it was a deciding moment in the game," Amre said. "Sanju was batting so well. We have to give credit to the way Hope judged that catch. Umpires are there, and there is so much technology. "We also thought from the dugout that he has touched the boundary but it (happens) in the game, and the umpire's decision is the final decision. It wasn't an easy catch, it was really travelling. After the game also I spoke to him and he said the ball came very, very fast." Delhi Capitals moved up a place to fifth in the points table after Tuesday's win. They now have 12 points and can get a maximum of 16 while there are teams that have a chance of getting to 18 points and qualify for the play-offs.

RESURGENT RCB TAKE ON PBKS IN BATTLE OF SURVIVAL

PTI ■ DHARAMSALA

A resurgent Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look for their fourth consecutive victory when they face an unpredictable Punjab Kings as the two sides fight for survival in the Indian Premier League, here on Thursday. After a horrendous start to the season, RCB have managed to claw their way back into the tournament. They have the winning momentum on their side, having won their last three games comprehensively. The wins have not only boosted their sagging morale but also taken them to the seventh spot in the points table. With eight points from 11 games, RCB can still make the playoffs if they win all their remaining three fixtures

Green showcased his all-round skills with crucial contributions in runs and wickets against Sunrisers Hyderabad. His bowling department has started clicking with Mohammed Siraj, who is in India's T20 World Cup squad, finally finding his rhythm. Yash Dayal and Vijaykumar Vyshak also did well against GT and RCB will expect them to continue in the same vein. PBKS, on the other hand, will be low on confidence having suffered an inexplicable batting collapse against Chennai Super Kings. The Kings showcased their very best and worst against CSK. Their bowlers were all over the CSK batters but the batting unit choked. It was a example of how Punjab's season has been this year -- unpredictable.

OTHER SPORTS

I have hit energy saving mode: Nikhat Zareen on preparations for Olympic debut

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Along-cherished Olympic debut just about three months away, two-time world champion boxer Nikhat Zareen has hit "energy-saving mode" ahead of her date with destiny. So, she is off social media, embracing solitude, devouring sweets on her cheat days, and binge-watching Netflix magnum opus 'Heeramandi'. Zareen, who is a medal favourite in the 50kg category, believes activities that might sound like leisure to many, are actually legitimate ways to ensure that she has a calm frame of mind ahead of the Games beginning in Paris on July 26. "Honestly, the feeling that I am going to be an Olympian soon hasn't sunk in yet. As days are passing, the nervousness is increasing. But I always train my brain to focus on a good performance," she told PTI in an interview from Patiala. The 27-year-old from Hyderabad is a former junior world champion. She won consecutive senior world titles in 2022 and 2023. Her 2022 season was nothing short of sensational as she remained undefeated and she would be hoping to hit similar peak in Paris. "Every competition brings with it a degree of nervousness. You have expectations from yourself and the people around you also have expectations. It all adds up to the overall weight you feel on your mind. "You cope with it by working hard, keeping your focus and



having a calm mind, basically not allow yourself to be distracted. So, I am off social media, and I also try to keep my distance from people in general," she revealed. "Basically, I have hit energy saving mode, indulge my sweet tooth on cheat days, do grocery shopping, listen to music, it helps me stay calm. Also, I watch movies or Netflix shows. I am watching 'Heeramandi' right now, it's quite interesting," she said. A believer in destiny, Zareen said she could have been an Olympian in Tokyo itself. She had lost a bitter selection trial to six-time world champion M C Mary Kom, who went on to qualify for the Games. "Everyone knows how badly I wanted to go to Tokyo. But it wasn't destined. The setback made me resolute. The day I qualified for Paris, I was so happy that it is difficult for me to describe. It was like one major dream coming true," she said. "But then it hit me that it's just half the job done." Olympic preparations are not

always about merely training, as nutrition, and psychological readiness play a role too. "The mental part of it becomes all the more significant in her sport, which is often described as lonely. "But you have to fight your battles, you can sometime share your thoughts with your support staff or team but end of the day, it's you who has to fight inside the ring, you are alone there," she said. "You have to condition your mind to believe that 'acche din aayenge' (good days will come). That this is my journey and I have to endure," she explained. What helps is the fact that women's boxing is fetching material incentives now, something which wasn't the case when she started. "Once Mary didi won that Olympic medal in 2012 (a bronze), people took women's boxing seriously. I was among those who felt inspired. Boxing is not a sport that you can play for too long. Injury can happen anytime.

Andy Murray to return from ankle injury at Geneva Open this month

AP ■ GENEVA

Three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray is set to return from his ankle injury at the Geneva Open this month. Tournament organizers announced Wednesday they had given the 36-year-old Murray a wild-card entry for the clay-court event that starts May 18. Murray damaged ligaments in his left ankle during a match at the Miami Open last month.



He opted against surgery. The former No. 1 has only played sparingly since having hip surgery in 2018 and has said he will probably retire after this summer. He is a two-time Wimbledon and Olympic champion and is hoping to compete for Britain again at the Paris Games. The Geneva Open is a key warmup event for the French Open, where Murray is a former finalist but has only played once since reaching the 2017 semifinals.

Brazil bid highest for hosting 2027 Women WC

AP ■ LAUSANNE

Brazil's bid for the 2027 Women's World Cup was ranked higher than the bid submitted by Germany, Netherlands and Belgium in an evaluation report released by FIFA on Tuesday. The FIFA Congress is set to vote for the 2027 host on May 17 at its meeting in Bangkok. It will be the first time the member federations of soccer's 211-nation governing body will hold an open vote to pick the tournament's hosts. Brazil has been favored to win the 2027 contest since FIFA brokered a deal with several of soccer's continental governing bodies in October to get preferred hosts of the men's World Cup in 2030 and 2034. South American soccer body CONMEBOL agreed to take just three games for 2030 - one each in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay for a 104-game tournament mostly to be hosted in



Spain, Portugal and Morocco - and skipped its turn to bid for 2034, which is going to Saudi Arabia. Sending a first Women's World Cup to South America then became a likely consequence. Based on the technical evaluation by a FIFA in-house panel, Brazil's bid was given an average score of 4.0 out of 5, while the joint European bid received a 3.7. The three-person evaluation team, led by FIFA's chief women's officer Sarai Bareman, determined both bids qualify for consideration "due to both having exceeded the minimum hosting requirements" in the technical evaluation. The United States and Mexico withdrew a joint bid last week. U.S. Soccer said the federations will instead focus on hosting the 2031 tournament. South Africa dropped its bid last year, saying it would also turn to 2031. That hosting decision is due next year.



although the chances are slim. Punjab Kings too stare at a similar situation. They occupy the eighth spot, having collected eight points from 11 games. However, between the two -- only one team can reach the all-important 14 points mark. Having beaten PBKS earlier in the season and heading to this clash with three wins on the trot, RCB will feel more confident than the hosts. Virat Kohli remains consistent at the top, while skipper Faf du Plessis broke his string of poor scores with a belligerent knock in the last game. Will Jacks also impressed with a match-winning century against GT, and Cameron

They have showcased their potential with away wins over Kolkata Knight Riders, when they recorded the highest successful run chase in T20 cricket, and CSK. However, they have faced difficulties getting the job done at home. They won just one out of five games in Mullanpur, their main home ground. A change in venue to the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium also didn't go their way in the previous game here. The team would hope to end its home run on a high but for that to happen, the PBKS unit has to fire in unison.

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