



CITY 3 KASHI WILL PAVE WAY FOR MODI GOVT AGAIN: YOGI

OPINION 6 THIS ELECTION IS WIDE OPEN

WORLD 10 EX-INDIAN ARMY OFFICER WITH UN KILLED IN GAZA

LUCKNOW, WEDNESDAY MAY 15, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

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RAJASTHAN AIM TO CLINCH PLAY OFF BERTH 12 SPORTS

Smaller portion, lighter wallet



Wholesale inflation rose to 13 months high at 1.26 per cent in April

File Photo: The Pioneer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With India battling high inflation, which includes price rise as one of the dominant factors, the prices of food consumables could potentially skyrocket further amidst the Lok Sabha polls. India's wholesale prices rose to a 13-month high of 1.26 per cent in April from 0.53 per cent in March 2024.

prices of vegetables and food items typically increase. Unemployment and inflation are the primary issues dominating among the voters during the discourse in India's general election 2024. The data released by the Ministry of Commerce highlighted that in the food articles basket, vegetable inflation is 23.60 per cent in April, up from 19.52 per cent in the previous month.

current scenario. Inflation in potato jumped to 71.97 per cent in April from 52.96 per cent in March. In onion, it was 59.75 per cent in April, versus 56.99 per cent in the previous month. The Wholesale Price Index measures the change in prices of goods traded by wholesale businesses. Unlike the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which tracks prices of goods and services purchased by consumers, WPI tracks factory gate prices.

month that the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) has risen on a year-on-year basis, after seven months of deflation. On a month-on-month basis, the WPI was up 0.8 per cent with primary articles and food prices rising nearly 2 per cent in April, while manufactured products were up 0.5 per cent. As per the data, inflation in food articles rose to 7.74 per cent in April as against 6.88 per cent in March. In the fuel and power basket, inflation stood at 1.38 per cent in April, up from (-)0.77 per cent in the previous month. "Positive rate of inflation in April 2024 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, electricity, crude petroleum and natural gas, manufacture of food products, other manufacturing etc," Ministry of Commerce & Industry said in a statement on Tuesday.

Honouring the Labourers

- Will link truck, taxi, auto drivers and gig workers to beneficial schemes by registering them on the e-Shram portal
- Will develop modern facilities on national highways for truck drivers
- Will include hawkers in villages and towns and those selling goods on carts in PM SVANidhi Yojana

THIS IS MODI'S GUARANTEE

Right Intent Right Results

Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar

Press the lotus button Make BJP win

AAP admits to assault, Kejriwal promises to act

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The political landscape of Delhi is becoming murkier as senior AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh admitted on Tuesday to accusations of assault by his party colleague and Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's controversial PA, Bibhav Kumar, at the CM's official residence.



added further troubles for the party as it seeks to regain its footing since its chief's release from Tihar jail, Singh confirmed that the incident occurred in the drawing room of Kejriwal's official residence. Kejriwal is currently out of Delhi. According to sources in the AAP, senior leaders in the party are united to oust Kumar, who is widely referred to as 'Kejriwal's Man Friday', by pinning the blame on him.

Continued on Page 8

Modi files papers for new beginning

RAMESH K SINGH ■ VARANASI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi filed his nomination papers as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate for the Lok Sabha elections-2024 here on Tuesday, seeking a third term from the Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency. The event was attended by several NDA leaders, including Union Ministers and Chief Ministers in a show of strength.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi files his nomination papers for Lok Sabha polls, in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, on Tuesday

at the city's Kaal Bhairav temple. Immediately after filing his papers, the prime minister headed for the Rudraksha Convention Centre to address local party

leaders and workers. BJP president J P Nadda and Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Hardeep Singh Puri, Anupriya Patel and Ramdas

Athawale were among the leaders who flanked Modi as he emerged from the collectorate after filing his papers. Before he filed his nomination, Modi posted in Hindi on X, "My relationship with Kashi is amazing, inseparable and incomparable... All I can say is that it cannot be expressed in words!"

Uttar Pradesh Minister and NISHAD party chief Sanjay Nishad, Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party chief Omprakash Rajbhar, RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary, LJP (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan, PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss, Tamil Maanila Congress leader G K Vasan, BJP leader Devanathan Yadav, BJS president Thushar Vellappally and Asom Gana Parishad president Atul Bora were also there.

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EC the arbiter resolves 400 of 425 complaints

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a rare feat aimed at swiftly resolving issues, the Election Commission of India has claimed to have addressed and resolved 400 grievances and complaints in record time out of a total of 425 major complaints received since the Lok Sabha elections began almost a month ago.



Continued on Page 8

TRUTH BE TOLD It's mostly fake during polls

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the rising concern over the proliferation of fake news and the "menace" of social media, a survey conducted on the youths of the national Capital, particularly eligible voters, has found that fake news and social media narratives influence the voting decisions of Gen Z (the second youngest generation, born between 1997 and 2012).



making this data more relevant to study. Moreover, 80 per cent of the population change their perceptions and opinions based on the influence of fake news. This implies that the narrative-setting and idea-building that parties aim to accomplish during elections, by deploying various machinery to utilise social media platforms, have

an effect on the minds of even the youth. It only takes a click to share fake news with your followers and many influencers and media outlets use it to their benefit. More than 59 per cent of the Gen Z falls in trap to sensationalism leading them to share fake news. The report reveals that more than one-third of respondents shared fake news as an emotional reaction and desire to share something that is breaking. This stems from the paradox of this generation who want to share moments and memories which in turn is driving them to share news on the go.



Continued on Page 8

To retain voters, CUET exam delayed in Delhi



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Testing Agency (NTA) on Tuesday postponed the Common University Entrance Test (CUET UG) 2024 for Delhi, due to 'manpower issues'.

schedule in all other cities across the country (including Gurugram, Ghaziabad, Faridabad, and Noida) and abroad. "It is being informed to all the concerned candidates and stakeholders that due to unavoidable reasons, the test papers (Chemistry -306, Biology - 304, English - 101, and General Test - 501) which were earlier scheduled on May 15, 2024 stand postponed for the candidates appearing in

centres across Delhi only. The examination will now be held on May 29, 2024. The revised admit cards will be issued for candidates appearing in centres across Delhi," the NTA said in an official notice. It is pertinent to note that The Pioneer, in its May 13 edition, exclusively reported on how the advance holiday and vacation plans for the Delhiites could impact the voting patterns on the seven Lok Sabha seats which go to polls on May 25. This postponement comes a few hours before the exam begins for exam centres across the country on May 15. The NTA claims that the reason behind this postponement is manpower issues caused due to the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. "CUET UG is held at a large-scale and we had selected several exam centres, including Delhi which however will be busy with the elections in Delhi on May 25," said a senior NTA official.

Continued on Page 8

FIR registered in bomb hoax at pvt schools

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day after the bomb threats at various private schools, the Gomti Nagar police registered a comprehensive case covering these incidents, including one reported at a school in Viram Khand 2 on Tuesday. The school in Viram Khand 2 and others located in Vrindavan Colony in PGI, Viraj Khand 2, Vibhuti Khand, Vastu Khand in Vibhuti Khand, and Anand Nagar in Alambagh received similar threat emails on Monday. According to the FIR filed by Sub-Inspector Dharmendra Kumar, he received a call from the manager of the Viram Khand 2 school around 10 am, reporting that the school administration had received a threatening email claiming a bomb had been planted in the school and would explode shortly. Kumar, along with a team including bomb disposal and detective squad members and a dog squad, quickly responded.

The school was evacuated and thoroughly searched, but no suspicious objects were found, confirming it was a hoax. The email was sent from ashushuashu90@gmail.com, where the sender claimed inspiration from Abdelhamid Abaaoud, mentioning "love jihad" and referencing incidents in Paris and Gujarat. The sender threatened revenge against alleged oppressive measures by PM Narendra Modi and also targeted media houses, urging damage to editorial offices. Police have registered a case under relevant IPC sections. A police spokesperson stated that similar complaints from other schools were merged into the FIR at Gomti Nagar police station. Meanwhile, an assistant accountant at the Jal Kal Department in Aishbagh has been accused of fraudulently using his deceased uncle's identity to secure employment under the quota for dependents of deceased employees. The case was registered at

Hazratganj police station following a complaint by Pramod Kumar Singh Chauhan, a retired employee of the same department. According to the complaint, the accused accountant, Raj Kumar, misrepresented his father's identity by using his deceased uncle's name Chunna Lal to obtain employment. Chauhan alleged that Raj Kumar submitted forged documents, including a High School marksheet and certificate, where the name was falsified as "Chunna Lal". Chauhan further claimed that despite raising concerns with department officials and even lodging complaints through the department's grievance portal, no action was taken. Instead, Raj Kumar was promoted to the position of assistant accountant. The complainant asserted that Raj Kumar's appointment was fraudulent, based on tampered credentials. Consequently, the police have registered a case under relevant sections of the IPC.

Leaving no stone unturned for father's re-election!

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

It's 8 am on Tuesday, and senior BJP leader Neeraj Singh, who is the son of Rajnath Singh, is gearing up for an intensive day of campaigning and a series of meetings. Neeraj, leading his father's door-to-door campaign, is leaving no stone unturned to reach out to voters and highlight the developmental work accomplished by Rajnath Singh. He mentioned that campaigning typically starts around 9 am, sometimes with a 'prabhat pheri' to interact with morning walkers, and continues until 11 pm. Regarding sustenance during the day-long campaign, Neeraj explained that party workers manage their meals throughout the day. "They make arrangements whenever we go to their houses. Lucknow is like a big family to us and everywhere we have someone who serves us lunch or dinner and so it goes like this only in the election time," he said. Responding to inquiries about the intense campaigning despite Rajnath Singh's strong electoral prospects, Neeraj

emphasised the party's approach of avoiding complacency. "This is in our training. We don't want any kind of complacency as we take each and every election very seriously. For each and every election we go out and speak about whatever work we have done in five years. We tell the public that not only Lucknow but the entire country has undergone a change. Earlier, the economy of India was Rs 1.8 billion before 2014 but now it has increased to Rs 3.6 trillion under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi," he said. Neeraj stressed the importance of presenting this "report card" to voters and urging them to vote for the lotus symbol (party symbol). "We then tell them to press the button on the lotus," he added. Neeraj elaborated on BJP's strategic organisational efforts, emphasising the ground-level work worth Rs 50,000 crore aimed at transforming Lucknow into a metropolitan city. "Our vision is to make it a metropolitan city and like any other metropolitan city, it has a 105-km ring road. Apart from that, we are getting con-



BJP leader Neeraj Singh campaigning for father Rajnath Singh

nected to each and every part of our country through not only the Charbagh station but also the state-of-the-art Gomtinagar Railway Station and Terminal 3 of the airport," he said. Addressing criticism from opponents like SP's Ravidas Mehrotra, who suggested Rajnath Singh was disconnected from voters due to absence from the constituency, Neeraj rebutted by pointing out the BJP's active involvement during

the Covid pandemic. "I would ask them where they were when Covid happened. We were the ones who arranged ration for the people, we were the ones who were on the ground. We were the ones who built the DRDO hospital. I would say that it would be Neeraj Singh who was disconnected from voters due to absence from the constituency, Neeraj rebutted by pointing out the BJP's active involvement during

exercise their democratic rights. "The party workers are in the field trying to see that the voting percentage in Lucknow was high. I would only appeal and request that the people come out to exercise their fundamental right. They should make this democracy more strong," he said. Commenting on opponents' claims that youth were disaffected and would vote against BJP due to issues like unemployment and paper leaks, Neeraj cited low unemployment rates (below four per cent) and job creation initiatives like the Kausal Mahotsav. "The unemployment rate is the lowest in the country which is below four per cent. And we were the ones who conducted the Kausal Mahotsav at the state capital and in two days we gave offer letters to 5,248 candidates this year. With the kind of infrastructure work which Lucknow has seen, there will be many opportunities which you will see in Lucknow. In Uttar Pradesh, Rs 35,000 crore worth MoUs have been signed. The youth know that their aspirations will be fulfilled by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi only," he added.

6 killed as car, truck collide head-on

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a tragic incident on the Delhi-Lucknow highway in Garhmukteshwar police station area of Hapur district, a car lost control, crossed the divider, and collided head-on with a truck, resulting in the death of six individuals on the spot. One person sustained injuries and has been admitted to the hospital. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed condolences to the deceased and directed officials to extend all possible assistance to the victims' families. The incident involved Vipin Soni (35) of New Vikas Nagar in Ghaziabad's Loni area, who was travelling with six friends in an Ertiga car on Monday night to visit Baba Neem Karauli Ashram in Nainital. Near Garh area Allahabadsapur in Hapur district, the car veered out of control, leading to the collision with an oncoming truck. The impact was severe, resulting in the deaths of six occupants of the car. Passersby alerted the police upon witnessing the accident. Garhmukteshwar police station in-charge Vinod Pandey promptly reached the scene with a police team, assisting in the extrication of individuals trapped in the car wreckage. Senior officials also reached

there to oversee relief operations. The deceased were identified as Vipin Soni, Rohit Saini (driver, 33), Anoop Singh (38), Sandeep (35), Nikki Jain (33), and Raju Jain (36). The injured individual, Sachin, received initial treatment and was referred to Meerut for further medical care. Superintendent of Police Abhishek Verma confirmed that the accident occurred around 12:30 am near Brajghat toll on the Delhi-Lucknow highway, resulting in the tragic loss of life. The bodies have been sent for postmortem examination, and the families have been informed. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed sorrow over the road accident and directed officials to expedite relief efforts and ensure proper treatment for the injured. In another incident in Jalaun, five teenagers drowned while bathing at Betwa river during a picnic. The victims, identified as Aryan (16), Anubhav Bundela (17), Shiva (16), Mahendra Pratap (17), and Hemant (17), were residents of Bagaura locality of Orai Kotwali area. The incident occurred at Salaghat in the Kotra area when the boys slipped into deep water and drowned. The bodies were recovered by the National Disaster Response Force and sent for autopsy.

Rahul, Akhilesh hit out at PM Modi for 'ignoring' farmers, youngsters

Jhansi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav Tuesday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of working for "arabpatis" and ignoring farmers and unemployed youngsters. Addressing a joint rally near the Rani Jhansi fort here, the alliance partners said they would work for the youths and farmers if the INDIA bloc government comes to power. The Congress and the Samajwadi Party (SP), both part of the opposition INDIA bloc, are contesting the Lok Sabha election as allies in Uttar Pradesh. The joint rally was held to campaign for the Congress' Jhansi candidate Pradeep Jain and the SP nominee from neighbouring Hamirpur Ajendra Rajput. In a scathing attack on Modi, Gandhi said the prime minister had promised to make 100 'smart cities' in the country but "did nothing in this direction". He further said that the prime minister asked people to beat thalis to ward off COVID-19 when hundreds were dying due to the deadly disease. Yadav claimed that trends of the four phases of parliamentary polls were proof that the "BJP's graph is going down" and the party is certain to lose. Gandhi claimed that if the BJP came to power again, it would "tear" the



Constitution, which is the shield of the country's poor. Both Hamirpur and Jhansi would go to polls in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha election on May 20. The Congress leader further claimed that the Modi government waived loans amounting to Rs 16 lakh crore, which is equal to 24 years of money allotted under the MGNREGA, for 22 "arabpatis" (top industrialists). He also said that if the INDIA bloc comes to power, a list of poor families would be compiled and Rs 1 lakh annually — or Rs 8,500 per month — trans-

ferred in the bank account of one woman in each such family. Gandhi also promised one year of apprenticeship in government offices and public sectors for unemployed youngsters and their permanent recruitment after that based on merits. He said if the INDIA bloc came to power, it would do away with the existing five slabs of GST and make it just one slab. The Congress leader promised to scrap the "Agniveer scheme" and restore permanent employment in the armed forces with pension provisions. PTT

Rahul can't not be loyal to Rae Bareilly when he wasn't to Amethi, says Nadda

Amethi: BJP president JP Nadda on Tuesday questioned if Congress leader Rahul Gandhi could be loyal to Rae Bareilly when he wasn't to his old constituency. "There was also a candidate who ran away from here. He didn't run away just once. From here he went to Wayanad, from Wayanad to Rae Bareilly and even then did not return to Amethi," he said at a public meeting without taking any name. In 2019, Gandhi lost Amethi — a parliamentary seat once regarded as a family bastion — to BJP's Smriti Irani, but won the Wayanad seat in Kerala. This time, the former Congress chief contested again from Wayanad. And, amid speculation that he would also fight from Amethi, picked Rae Bareilly, which was recently vacated by his mother Sonia Gandhi, who has shifted to the Rajya Sabha. Addressing a gathering here in support of party candidate Irani, Nadda said, "This tells a lot about the character of the politician and his courage." "Your message should also go to Rae Bareilly. Those who could not be yours, will not be of Rae Bareilly also...those who stayed here for 15 years and left without saying goodbye to you, will they care of others?" he added. Rahul Gandhi had been MP from Amethi in 2004, 2009 and 2014. Attacking the Gandhi family and the opposition over appeasement politics, Nadda said, "They are anti-Ram, anti-Sanatana and anti-national forces. (Congress leader) Salman Khurshid had said that when terrorists were being killed in Batla House, Sonia Gandhi had tears in her eyes. They have very old relations with anti-nationals." Praising Irani, the BJP chief said it fills his heart with pride when he sees the changing face of Amethi. "Ten years ago, the roads in Amethi



were in a pathetic condition. Today there are paved roads and the network is spreading to every village. This is Modi ji's gift and Smriti Irani's hard work," he said. "Earlier, the (Congress) candidate came here, remembered Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and used to take your votes and left to Delhi leaving people of Amethi on their own." He also accused leaders of the INDIA bloc of practising dynastic politics and indulging in corruption. "All these 'ghotalabaj' (scammers) say - 'you save me, I will save you. If two chairs were vacant in their programmes, it would have Arvind Kejriwal and Hemant Soren written on it. Nowadays, one is in jail and the other is on bail," he said. Nadda countered the opposition's allegation that the BJP will do away with reservations and said, "Till (PM) Modi is there, no one can take away reservations for Dalits, backwards and tribals." PTT

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have changed my son's name from AMRIT CHHABRA TO AMRIT SINGH CHHABRA S/o Trilochan Singh, R/o- 122/235, Sarojini Nagar, Kanpur. In future he would be known by this name only.

NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM DEEPAK KUMAR TO DEEPAK KUMAR GHANDWANI. DEEPAK KUMAR GHANDWANI S/O TIKAM DAS R/O A-585 GUJAINI KANPUR NAGAR

NOTICE

I Have Changed My Name from sajan khemka To Sajan kumar khemka R/O 26/63, Shankar ganj Karachi Khana Kanpur

सूचना

सूचित करते हैं कि मेरे पासपोर्ट नं० M7165222 में मेरा नाम ज़ुवियर अमित (AMIT) अंकित है जब की सही व पूरा नाम अमित कुमार (Amit Kumar) है। इसे अंकित किया जाये। अमित कुमार पुत्र श्री दिलीप निवासी -०० जोरावर गंज, आंशिक सरवर उन्नाव-209821

NOTICE

I have changed my daughter's name from AMBEYA PRAVEEN to AMBIYA PARVEEN. In future she Shall be known as AMBIYA PARVEEN- NASRA PARVEEN W/o Mahtab Alam 177/122A, Mehdauri Gaon, Teliyarganj, Prayagraj

NOTICE

I have changed my name from AJAY KUMAR to AJAY GAUTAM. In future I Shall be known as AJAY GAUTAM. AJAY GAUTAM S/o Raja Bhैया 12, Dikhitvara Atarra, Banda, UP

NOTICE

I have changed my name from RAMA KANT to RAMAKANT TRIPATHI. In future I Shall be known as RAMAKANT TRIPATHI. RAMAKANT TRIPATHI S/o Ram Lakhnan, Sanda Saneer, Banda, UP

सूचना

सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरा पासपोर्ट में मेरा नाम गलती से नेमतउल्लाह लिख गया है जबकि मेरा सही नाम नेमतउल्लाह खान है अतः मेरे पासपोर्ट में मेरे नाम से जाना वह पहचान जाए नेमतउल्लाह खान पुत्र हफीजुल्ला खान ग्राम मनवागढ़ परगना सादुल्लाह नगर उत्तरौला बलरामपुर उत्तर प्रदेश

NOTICE

I have changed my name from ABHISHEK TIWARI to ABHISHEKH TEWARI. In future I Shall be known as ABHISHEKH TEWARI. ABHISHEKH TEWARI S/O Deenanath Tiwari, 18A, Auckland Road, Harsh Vihar, Prayagraj

CITYBRIEFS

AWARENESS PROGRAMME
A two-day cleanliness and voter awareness programme was inaugurated under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and the National Service Scheme Unit at Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University on Tuesday. Director of Rashtra Dharma Prakashan Limited Manoj Kant presided over the programme. The programme commenced with floral tributes to a photograph of Babasaheb. Subsequently, the organising committee honoured the guests and teachers with bouquets and mementos. Kant emphasised the significant role of every vote in a democracy. "Even a single vote holds immense importance as it determines the course of the next five years. Voting also signifies the awakening of intellect and conscience. Therefore, every citizen must exercise their right to vote," he said.

TRAINING
District Election Officer Surya Pal Gangwar said that the second training of polling personnel to be held at Jai Narain (KKC) PG College was held in two shifts on the third day. In view of the said training, the District Election Officer reached Jai Narayan (KKC) PG College and reviewed the arrangements made. The district election officer inspected all the rooms and also interacted with the trainees. He imparted detailed training to all the presiding officers about using the MPS app.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME HELD
A staff development programme was organised by the College of Nursing, Command Hospital, Central Command, on Tuesday to

commemorate International Nurses' Day, observed annually on May 12, under the theme 'Our Nurses Our Future - The Economic Power of Care'. Major General AA Karmarkar, MG Med, HQ Central Command, was the chief guest. Dean of Nursing at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical University Dr Ashok Kumar Bishnoi was the guest of honour and delivered the keynote address. The programme was attended by senior army officers, dignitaries from civil institutes, faculty, and students from various nursing colleges in Lucknow.

REVIEW MEETING
General Manager of Northern Railway Shobhan Chaudhuri conducted a review meeting with department heads and divisional railway managers (DRMs), including the DRM of Lucknow, on Tuesday. The meeting covered various critical topics such as track safety, speed enhancement, train operations, Business development units, and freight loading. Chaudhuri also assessed the progress of mobility enhancement, developmental infrastructure projects, and freight loading. The general manager scrutinised the advancement of passenger amenity projects, doubling of lines, and new line projects, urging officials to expedite these initiatives. Chaudhuri emphasised the need to improve track maintenance standards, address level crossings, and construct boundary walls along high-speed track sections. He also reviewed tree cutting activities and vegetation removal alongside the tracks, urging departments to conduct regular training and refresher courses to keep staff motivated and informed,

minimising human error.

ORIENTATION SESSION
The APS Academy organised an informative orientation session on the National Cadet Corps (NCC) programme on Tuesday. Colonel Puneet Srivastava, Commanding Officer of the 67th NCC Battalion, and Sub Major Ranjeet Kumar addressed the participants students. Colonel Srivastava emphasised the NCC's motto, "Unity and Discipline", and shared anecdotes from his own career. The orientation also included a question-and-answer session.

MEETING
A meeting of Muslim women in Golaganj resolved to support the Bharatiya Janata Party and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The group, comprising 50 grassroots women from various professions, emphasised ensuring a high voter turnout. They also invited women from other communities to discuss the political landscape. Nikhat Fatima, a private nurse, highlighted the benefits the Muslim community has received from the union government's welfare schemes, stating they feel more secure under the BJP-led administrations. Nasreen Ahmad, a senior teacher, noted the encouragement of girls' education through incentives. Zeba Khan, a tailor, expressed confidence in India's trajectory towards becoming a superpower. The women also praised the removal of Article 370, seeing it as a unifying move. Preeti Kaur Gujral, a college teacher, commended the improved law and order, allowing women to move freely at night. Anandi Mishra urged attendees to ensure maximum voter participation for a record victory for Raj Nath Singh.

'Cleric' booked for raping woman multiple times

Lucknow: A man, who claimed to be a cleric at a 'dargah' in Budaun, has been booked after a woman alleged that he raped her multiple times on the pretext of 'curing' her mental ailment, police said on Tuesday. Deputy Superintendent of Police Alok Mishra said that the woman, a resident of Bijnor, who has been coming frequently to the famous Dargah of 'Bade Sarkar' on Budaun-Delhi road in Sadar Kotwali for "treatment", has given an application to Senior Superintendent of Police Alok Priyadarshi alleging that one Maulvi Rahat lured her in the name of treatment and took her to his room, where she was raped. The accused also made objectionable videos, she alleged. Rahat, she claimed, ran a shop selling offerings like 'chunni' and 'chadar' on the Dargah premises. The Dargah Management Committee did not respond to media queries on the issue. According to Mishra, the woman has alleged that Rahat used to "take her to his room every day in the name of treatment and raped her". A purported video of one such incident has appeared online, the police said. He said an FIR has been registered in this connection against Rahat and a probe is on. Meanwhile, three youths died on Tuesday after their motorcycle hit a tanker truck in Hathinala police station area in Sonbhadra, police said. The incident took place in the afternoon when Sulendra Kumar (24), Rakesh Kumar (23) and Indra Kumar (25) were returning home from Chopan to Myorpur after a marriage function, they said. Hathinala SHO PP Srivastava said their bike was hit by a tanker. All three died on the spot, he said. Bodies of victims have been sent for the postmortem examination.

NOTICE

This is to inform that Original sale deed (chain deed), duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar Nawabganj, Barabanki bearing doc. no. 798, dated 06/03/1992, regarding property Gata no. 203 at Village Ismailpur, Pargana Deva, Tehsil Nawabganj, District Barabanki was lost with my client namely Babli W/O Yogendra Nath Jaiswal R/O Vill. Kheoli, Pargana Deva, Tehsil Nawabganj, District Barabanki on 10.05.2024. If any person has any claim or objection over it, kindly inform to Mr. B.N. Tripathi Adv. Res. C-15, Nehru Vihar, Kalyanpur, Lucknow Mob-9336127853

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Requires **Principal (01 Post)**, Qualification, Experience & salary as per U.G.C./Lucknow University Norms. Application alongwith photocopies of Mark Sheets & Experience Certificates should reach at the given address through Post/email/Personal in 21 days.

331, Anaura, Near Indira Canal, Ayodhya Road, Lucknow-226028 Email: contact@tims.edu.in Contact: 8810724912

Declaration about criminal cases - Form- C-1

Name and address of candidate: Kapil Mohan Chowdhary
Name of political party: Mera Adhikaar Rashtriya Dal
Name of Election: LOKSABHA General Election 2024 ;
*Name of Constituency: 35-Lucknow (U.P.)

I Kapil Mohan Chowdhary, a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

(A) Pending criminal cases

Sl. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case (s)	Sections of Act concerned & Brief description of offence(s)
1.	Civil Judge (JD/FTC - CAW)	4101/2013 (FIR No. 25/99)	Pending	Sections 498A, 323, 504, 506 of IPC and 3/4 D.P. Act (Case based on False allegations)
2.	18-CJM Barabanki	110/2023 (FIR No. 1350/2022)	Pending	Sections 323, 504, 506, 307 of IPC (Final Report/case expunged and 182/211 IPC initiated against applicant)

(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences : NOT APPLICABLE

Kashi will pave way for Modi govt again: Yogi

PNS ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed confidence that Kashi would pave the way for "Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar" (Modi government once again).

Addressing the BJP workers' conference at Rudraksh Convention Centre on Tuesday, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he conveyed that every individual in Kashi was keen on extending a warm welcome to their MP. "Every global citizen who values democracy and cares for the welfare of humanity closely followed the roadshow and nomination proceedings. The enthusiasm and warmth shown by the people of Kashi during the PM's nomination and visit on Monday have deeply touched the nation and the world. As the leader of the world's largest democracy, PM Modi has dedicatedly and tirelessly served for a decade," Yogi said.

The CM urged the workers, stating, "Kashi must strive to set new benchmarks, as the PM's connection with the people of Kashi, both as their elected representative and as a guide to the party members, serves as an inspiration."

Yogi emphasised that as one of the world's most esteemed politicians, PM Modi has elevated India's standing globally, reinforced security measures, provided a lasting solution to issues of terrorism and Naxalism, introduced innovative development paradigms, and initiated a fresh array of welfare schemes aimed at the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Kal Bhairav Mandir in Varanasi before filing nomination on Tuesday

underprivileged. "PM Modi has made an unparalleled contribution to enhancing and respecting faith for the first time in independent India. Under PM Modi's leadership, New India is progressing towards self-reliance and emerging as a stronger nation. The world observed his nomination in Kashi with keen interest and astonishment," he

added. He noted that Kashi is forging a new identity, exemplifying the transformations of the past decade evident in the emergence of New Kashi. "The city has garnered global attention and successfully hosted numerous national and international summits. New Kashi offers everything," he stated.

Yogi highlighted how, as a guiding force for both the government and the party, Prime Minister Narendra Modi championed the mantra of 'Seva hi Sangathan' during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the crisis, BJP organisations and workers actively served the public on the streets, he said. "The CM emphasised the significance of the PM filing his nomination from Kashi for the third time. "The ongoing campaign of cultural resurgence in the country over the last decade finds renewed inspiration in your nomination from Kashi. It's a matter of great honour, not just for Uttar Pradesh, but for all our countrymen and their faith," he stated. "With your nomination, Kashi, Uttar Pradesh, and indeed the

entire nation will rally strongly behind the call of 'Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar'. Every citizen and every segment of Kashi is deeply connected to this movement. With a determination to put an end to the negative politics of rumours, societal misguidance, and the divisive strategies of the opposition, the entire nation will, under the able leadership of Narendra Modi, secure a resounding majority for the government for the third time, with Kashi leading the way," he added.

BJP UP president Bhupendra Singh Choudhary, Union minister and BJP candidate from Chandauli Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey, sitting Machhilishahr MP and candidate BP Saroj, regional BJP president Dilip Patel, Varanasi Lok Sabha in-charge Satish Dwivedi, district president & MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma, city president Vidyasagar Rai, and others were present on the occasion. Meanwhile, Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said that the residents of Kashi were committed to ensuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi's victory with record margin of votes in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections 2024.

Taking to his official X handle, Yogi wrote, "Dedicated to the service, happiness and prosperity of 140 crore Indians, the honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi filed his nomination from Varanasi for the Lok Sabha elections today. The residents of Kashi are committed to ensuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi's victory with record margin of votes. Har Har Mahadev! Har Har Gange!"

Unease in Pak over assault rifle factory in Amethi, says CM



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addressing a public gathering in Barabanki

PNS ■ RAE BARELI/BARABANKI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addressed public gatherings in support of BJP candidates — Smriti Irani in Amethi and Lallu Singh in Barabanki. The chief minister critiqued the policies and leadership of the Congress and SP. The chief minister highlighted the significance of the world-renowned assault rifle, Kalashnikov AK 203, now being manufactured in Amethi through India's collaboration with Russia.

He emphasised how this development has strengthened India's defence capabilities, instilling a sense of unease in Pakistan. The transformation of Amethi into a hub for AK 203 production stands as a testament to its pride, contrasting with the past practices of arming youth by Congress and SP, he stated.

Reflecting on the overwhelming reception of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's roadshow in Varanasi, the chief minister underscored the essence of selfless leadership. He lamented the neglect of Amethi in the past, contrasting it with the proactive efforts led by Union Minister Smriti Irani to enhance connectivity, including the construction of expressways.

Criticising the SP for its stance on the Ram temple issue, he cited the example of Rae Bareilly MLA Manoj Pandey's departure from the party. In the culturally rich Awadh region,

where reverence for Lord Shri Ram runs deep, such actions hold significant sway, he remarked. The chief minister attributed the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya to the support and faith of the people, particularly those from Amethi.

Yogi, while canvassing support for Lallu Singh in the Faizabad Lok Sabha seat within Barabanki district, sounded a warning to the Congress. He accused them of sympathising with those who speak favourably of Pakistan, labelling them as "Ramdrohi" (anti-Ram). He said, "The stance of the opposition discouraging criticism of Pakistan by citing its possession of atomic weapons is highly condemnable. India also possesses nuclear capabilities, it's not meant for display but as a deterrent."

Yogi said that the opposition, while encouraging India's adversaries simultaneously disrespects Lord Ram by opposing the construction of the Ram temple," he remarked. He also criticised the policies and leadership of Congress and SP, emphasising the profound significance of seeking blessings from Lord Ram.

Drawing parallels with the ideals of Ram Rajya, he highlighted the initiatives taken in Ayodhya, such as naming the airport after Maharishi Valmiki, establishing a restaurant honouring Maa Shabari, and providing shelter facilities in homage to Nishadraj.

Vote for leaders accountable on issues: Priyanka

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday urged people to vote for leaders who are accountable on issues of development and welfare, rather than those who seek votes by raising religious issues and then cater to their industrialist friends.

Speaking at a meeting held at Mohiya Kesaria in support of Kishori Lal Sharma, the Congress candidate from the Amethi parliamentary constituency, Priyanka Gandhi emphasised her family's long-standing relationship with Amethi.

"You made my father the prime minister, you made my father and mother win because they served you," she said. "My father worked a lot for Amethi. He brought many big projects like HAL, BHEL, and irrigation facilities to boost agriculture in the area," she noted, claiming that the people of Amethi and Rae Bareilly established a politics where leaders are accountable to them. She lamented that the current double-engine government and the local MP have no time to understand or listen to their problems.

"In the last 5-10 years, politics here has changed. The MP came for only one purpose: to defeat Rahul Gandhi. Many lies were spread to achieve this, and after Rahul Gandhi's defeat, all development work here came to an end," Priyanka Gandhi said. She recalled a time when politics was healthier and leaders like Vajpayee understood the seriousness and dignity of their posts, contrasting this with today's BJP leaders. She criticised the prime minister for making baseless accusations, saying, "The prime minister talks useless things and says, be careful, the Congress people will steal the mangalsutra, take away the car, take away the land."

Priyanka Gandhi accused the BJP of undermining democracy by toppling governments through intimidation and bribery, rather than earning votes through good governance. "Modi ji is the MP of Varanasi. I challenge him to visit anyone's house in his constituency and meet anyone," she said. She claimed that the BJP has halted employment opportunities, noting that jobs in the army are now limited to four-year terms, and many posts remain vacant. She also criticised the BJP for disrespecting soldiers by denying them martyr status.

Responding to BJP's claims that no work was done in 70 years, she argued that the BJP has merely sold the achieve-



ments of the Congress to industrialist friends. Priyanka Gandhi accused the BJP of relying on religious rhetoric to garner votes without actually working for the people. "They will come during elections and tell you that Dharma is in trouble... Because they have not done any work... The PM cannot talk about the employment given or the roads constructed... Therefore, they talk about useless things to divert your attention," she asserted.

She highlighted the Congress's Nyay Patra, promising Rs 8,500 per month to women, debt waivers for farmers, increased honorariums for Anganwadi workers, jobs for the youth, 50% reservation for women in government jobs, and the formation of a cleanliness commission.

She appealed to the people to ensure the victory of Kishori Lal Sharma, calling him a member of the Congress family. "In democracy, you have equal rights, the same as the prime minister. This is the power of democracy," she reminded the crowd, urging them to reject a government that serves industrialists and instead choose one that works for their welfare.

Kishori Lal Sharma, addressing the crowd, promised to continue serving the people as he has for the last 40 years, reminding them of his long service to Amethi and Rae Bareilly. The event saw a grand welcome for Priyanka Gandhi amidst slogans honouring Rajiv Gandhi. Meanwhile, attacking PM Modi over the Varanasi roadshow, Priyanka Gandhi said, "These are not the kind of 'jan sam-park' we did. Despite being a prime minister, my father Rajiv Gandhi used to visit villages on foot to listen to people's problems and wipe their tears. Waving hands from a car, and citizens responding from meters away is not 'jan sam-park'."

BJP govt, PM Modi responsible for inflation, unemployment: Kharge

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Hitting out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP government, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday claimed that inflation and unemployment have worsened under Modi's leadership. "Petrol and LPG have become expensive. Pesticides for fields have become expensive. All this is possible when Modi is there," he said. He also accused Modi of running a "laundry" where tainted individuals are "purified" and suggested that the government is maintained by fear. While addressing a public meeting in favour of Congress candidate Virendra

Chaudhary at the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial PG College in Maharajganj, Kharge clarified that the Congress is not engaged in a personal battle with Modi and Yogi Adityanath. "This is a battle of ideology. We are working for Dalits, the poor, tribals, and backward people, but the work of the RSS is exactly the opposite. BJP stands with the capitalists," Kharge said. He criticised the BJP's claim of having a "double-engine government," arguing that "one engine has failed and the other engine has derailed." Kharge stated that the work done by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi has

"Petrol and LPG have become expensive. Pesticides for fields have become expensive. All this is possible if Modi is there"

not been matched by the current government. He accused the BJP of focusing solely on criticising Congress, saying, "They wake up in the morning and take Ram's name less and Congress's name more." Kharge emphasised Congress's contributions to nation-building, noting that "earlier, not

even a needle was made here. We used to bring food grains from outside."

He countered BJP's criticism of Congress's 70-year tenure by highlighting the preservation of the Constitution and democracy. "The prime minister wants to end this Constitution," he warned. He also mentioned Congress's implementation of MNREGA and the Food Security Bill, arguing that the latter saved people from starvation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senior SP leader Shivpal Yadav, Congress national general secretary Avinash Pandey, and national spokesperson Supriya Shrineta also addressed the gathering.

Ram Rajya will begin in country now, but no theocracy: Rajnath

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said he felt that Ram Rajya will begin in the country now that the temple in Ayodhya has come up, but stressed that this does not mean a theocratic state.

Addressing an intellectuals meet in his parliamentary constituency, he said Ram Rajya does not mean a theocratic state, but developing a sense of responsibility and duty among people.

"We had said that Ram is the centre of our faith. If we get a majority, grand Ram Mandir will be built in Ayodhya. You saw, that work was also done. Now I have started feeling that Lord Ram has now come out of his hut and entered his palace, hence I have a firm belief that Ram Rajya will begin in India," he said.

Explaining the concept of Ram Rajya, he said, "If I talk about Ram Rajya, it does not mean that I am talking about any theocratic state. Ram Rajya means that a sense of responsibility and sense of duty should

be developed among the common people. If a sense of duty is not developed, and there is only a sense of rights, then Ram Rajya cannot come. "You should read the whole story of the Ramayan and see that Kaikeyi did not have a sense of duty but only sense of rights due to which the whole crisis had arisen, and Lord Ram had to go to the forest," he added.

The defence minister said that politics means a system that takes the society towards the right path, but the irony is that in independent India the word 'politics' has lost its meaning. He said, "I believe that India needs such politicians who can re-establish the lost meaning and spirit of the word politics in the Indian political system." Without naming anyone, he said, "In the field of politics, I believe that the crisis of credibility should not arise under any circumstances. There should be no difference between the words and actions of leaders. Whatever the leader says, he should do it, only

then there will be no crisis of trust in Indian politics." Asserting that he never gives assurance to people, he said, "At the age of 26, when I was contesting the assembly elections, I had given some assurances once or twice. After that a thought arose in my mind that I have given assurances to the public so that we can get votes, but I have doubts whether I will be able to fulfil these assurances or not. "The truth is that despite becoming an MLA, I was not able to fulfil some assurances, that is why I vowed that if I contest an election, I will not give any direct assurance to the public." However, Singh also said that the party he belongs to had not only accepted the crisis of credibility that had arisen in Indian politics as a challenge, but also won over it. "I am saying this so that someone can pick up our election manifesto and look at it. Whatever promises we made in it, we have fulfilled them," he added. **PTI**

'BJP fulfilled all promises'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Tuesday that the BJP is the only credible party as it fulfilled all the promises made in its election manifesto. Addressing a huge gathering in Cantonment, Singh was joined by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and senior BJP leaders. "The development which has taken place in Lucknow was because of the support of PM Narendra Modi. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's support was also crucial for the development in the state capital. I don't remember a single work which the CM ever refused for the development of Lucknow," Rajnath said.

Regarding India's progress under PM Modi's leadership, Rajnath stated, "The country's prestige in the international arena has increased. When India used to speak on an international platform earlier, it was not taken seriously. But today, India is heard by the whole world, and the credit for this should go to PM Narendra Modi whose mission and vision has helped the country reach such great



heights." He highlighted the BJP's credibility, saying, "As far as the BJP is concerned, it is the most credible party which has fulfilled all the promises mentioned in the manifesto." He specifically mentioned significant achievements such as the removal of Article 370 and the completion of the Ram temple, stating, "There has been no difference between our words and deeds." On the aspirations for Lucknow, Rajnath expressed, "Lucknow, which is standing at the tenth place in the world, will secure the fifth place in the world in the next five years."

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath echoed Singh's sentiments, emphasising PM Modi's transformative impact on India's economy and the overwhelming public support evidenced by PM Modi's nomination roadshow. Yogi remarked, "Uttar Pradesh gives the maximum MPs in the parliament, and when PM Modi filed his nominations earlier today, the huge roadshow indicated that when a person dedicatedly works towards the welfare of all sections of the society, the general public puts him on a pedestal." Yogi praised Singh's dedication to Lucknow and India's defense interests, saying, "The country is secure because of the PM Narendra Modi, and Lucknow has become the centre for the manufacture of BrahMos missile." Reaffirming the BJP's commitment to its manifesto, Yogi stated, "The BJP released a 'Sankalp Patra' to underscore that what they say they will complete." He highlighted successful initiatives in combating terrorism, completing the Ram temple, and confronting opposition to progress, notably the Ram Mandir project.

Akhilesh Yadav accuses BJP of caste discrimination

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday accused the BJP of caste discrimination, claiming that after his visit to a temple in Kannauj, it was washed with Gangajal by the ruling party leaders. Akhilesh Yadav is seeking election to Lok Sabha from Kannauj where polling was held on Monday.

Addressing an election meeting in Jalaun in the Bundelkhand region, the SP chief urged the people to vote for the opposition block INDIA/Samajwadi

Party candidates for protecting the constitution. He termed the Constitution as a "life-giver" and said as long as the Constitution remains safe, "our honour, self-respect and rights will remain safe." He said the ongoing Lok Sabha election is between people who want to "change the constitution and those protecting it." "On one side are the people who want to change the Constitution and on the other side are the people of INDIA bloc, SP and Congress who want to protect it," Yadav said while addressing the rally.

"The electorate have taken matters into their own hands and are not going to spare those who talk about running the double-engine government," Yadav said. "The way the people of Bahujan Samaj are continuously coming forward to support us after our direct appeal has given new strength to our fight against the BJP in saving the Constitution and reservation," Yadav said, adding: "People are contacting Samajwadi Party workers and our Babasaheb Vahini across the state and extending their support." While attacking the

BJP-led Central government for inflation and bringing "black farm laws", the SP chief said: "These people brought farm laws to snatch the lands of the poor farmers and give to the big industrialists." Akhilesh Yadav said that after coming to power, the INDIA bloc government would ensure guaranteed minimum support price for the farmers' crops. He dubbed the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party government at the Centre as "a government of lies and loot", saying, "The BJP that claimed to be the world's largest party had told the

world's biggest lie that it would double the income of farmers." Attacking the BJP, Yadav said: "Those who claimed to double farmers' income brought three anti-farmer laws due to which farmers of Uttar Pradesh-Haryana-Punjab had to struggle till the same were repealed." "When the INDIA bloc forms the government, it will provide justice and relief to these farmers," he added.

Akhilesh accused the BJP government of disappointing farmers by waiving loans worth Rs 16 lakh crore of big industrialists and not of farmers.

"The country can become prosperous and happy when farmers are prosperous and happy," he added.

Akhilesh criticised UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over the recent paper leaks leading to cancellation of the competitive examinations for recruitment to government jobs, saying: "Despite its tall claims, the Yogi government failed to identify the source of paper leaks." He also raised the issue of electoral bonds and accused the BJP of receiving funds through bonds by misusing investigation agencies.

Janwadi Party gives big blow to INDIA Bloc

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Janwadi Party has given a big blow to the INDIA Bloc. The party founder and national president Sanjay Chauhan has supported Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This decision has been taken by Sanjay Chauhan after his talks with national BJP president JP Nadda here on Tuesday. The announcement of support was made by state BJP president Bhupendra Singh Choudhary and Sanjay Chauhan in a press conference held at the BJP's Central Election Office located in Tulsī Udyan, Mahmoorganj.

On this occasion, Bhupendra Choudhary said that Janwadi Party has a special place in Indian politics as Sanjay Chauhan has taken forward the democratic ideology and has put forward many important issues for the uplift of extremely back-



State BJP chief Bhupendra Choudhary and Janwadi Party chief Sanjay Chauhan addressing a press conference in Varanasi on Tuesday.

ward people which the BJP government will do on priority. He said that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)

has become stronger with the support of Janwadi Party. On behalf of BJP, he congratulated Sanjay Chauhan for his

support. At the same time, Sanjay Chauhan said that Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav 'discriminat-

ed' against the extremely backward people and betrayed allies. "Akhilesh Yadav's intentions for the betterment of backward people are not good. Janwadi Party was a strong supporter for him but he did not shy away from cheating. He also cheated Chandrashekhar and Pallavi", he said and added that as the BJP works for social justice, Janwadi Party has decided to support it. He said that he has talked to Bharatiya Janata Party president JP Nadda for the uplift of extremely backward people. Janwadi Party has put many issues before the Bharatiya Janata Party in this regard and the party has given assurance to fulfil the same.

Sanjay Chauhan said that in the last elections, when Janwadi Party and Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party joined with SP, the latter had increased its seats from 41 to

111. In this election, both these parties associated with the interests of extremely backward people have joined hands with BJP and the SP will be wiped out in the elections.

Attacking SP, Sanjay Chauhan said that SP will lose both the seats of Azamgarh in this election and the same will also be happened to SP in Ghazipur. Apart from these two districts, the Bharatiya Janata Party will win all the seats of Purvanchal because this time Janwadi Party is with it as the party has the support of the most backward society. On the occasion, BJP's Varanasi Lok Sabha in-charge and former state government minister Satish Dwivedi, district and city in charge and MLC Arun Pathak, Mayor Ashok Tiwari, MLC Dharmendra Rai, Lok Sabha co-convenor Rahul Singh, regional media in charge Navratan Rathi etc were also present.

27 file nomination papers on last day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 27 candidates filed their nomination papers from Varanasi parliamentary constituency on the sixth and last day here on Tuesday which included Prime Minister Narendra Modi of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). With this, the total number of candidates increased to 41 in this high-profile seat. Surendra Narayan Singh also filed papers as Bharatiya Janata Party candidate.

Those who filed papers during the day were Narendra Modi (Bharatiya Janata Party), Vinay Kumar Tripathi (People Party), Surendra Narayan Singh (Bharatiya Janata Party), Dinesh Kumar Yadav (Independent), Reena Rai (Independent), Neha Jaiswal (Independent), Ajit Kumar Jaiswal (Independent), Ashok Kumar Pandey (Independent), Sandeep Tripathi (Independent), Harpreet Singh (All India Parivar Party), Narsingh (Independent),

Santosh Kumar Sharma (Fundamental Rights Party), Hemant Kumar Yadav (Manaviy Bharat Party), Suresh Pal (Rashtra Uday Party), Ramkumar Jaiswal (Independent), Yashwant Kumar Gupta (Gandhian People's Party), Nityanand Pandey (Independent), Amit Kumar (Independent), Vijay Nandan (Janhit Kisan Party), Sanil Kumar (Indian National Samaj Party), Shyam Sundar (Independent), Tusha Mittal (Independent), Vikram Kumar Verma (Independent), Pervez Qadir Khan (Peace Party), Yogesh Kumar Sharma (Independent), Vedpal Shastri (Vanchit Insaaf Party) and Surendra Reddy (Independent).

Under the election process, the last date for scrutiny of nominations is Wednesday while last date for withdrawal of candidature is May 17 before 3 pm. The day of voting is June 1, from 7 am to 6 pm and counting of votes will take place on June 4.

EPIC cards should be given to voters timely: Negi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

General observer (Varanasi) Amit Singh Negi appointed for Lok Sabha Varanasi- 77 General Election-2024 conducted a surprise inspection of the control room as soon as he reached the city on Monday. The control room in charge and ADM (Finance/ Revenue) Vandita Srivastava gave the information about all the procedures in the control room before the observer. She also gave complete information regarding toll-free number 1950, SVEEP, cVIGIL, print media, electronic media, social media etc to the observer.

Negi instructed the officers that all the prepared EPIC



Poll observer AS Negi at election control room in Varanasi on Monday.

cards should be given to the voters timely. On the occasion police observer Sanjay Kumar San was also present. During the inspection general observer sought information about all the complaints received so far. He was given all the related

information. Negi also sought the information about complaints received during the day and in reply, the CDPO in charge of cVIGIL app said that two complaints had been received. The observer also directed the officers concerned

to work closely and motivate more people to download the cVIGIL app. Social media in charge Amit Shukla informed the observer about the general election on social media and monitoring being done on paid news. Information about print media and electronic media monitoring was given by district information officer Surendra Pal. Meanwhile, Negi has fixed the time from 9.30 am to 10.30 am to meet representatives of political parties, candidates and others want to meet him. He is an IAS officer of 1999 batch from Uttaranchal cadre and his mobile number is 9236030443. Police observer Sanjay Kumar San who also arrived here a day ago is staying in the New Circuit House.

Maintain transparency during election process: Observer

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Observer (General) appointed for Mirzapur parliamentary constituency M Vallalar has directed the officials related to the poll to maintain the transparency during entire election process. Such direction was issued by him while inspecting the nomination room on Tuesday. He made it clear that any laxity regarding the model code of conduct will not be tolerated.

Liaison officer to the observer District Horticulture Officer (DHO) Meva Ram has informed that the observer will be available from 9.00

am to 11.00 am for the candidates as well as the common people at the Ashtabhujra guest house for the complaints related to the violation of the model code of conduct and suggestions. He informed that the observer can be contacted on phone numbers 8423179079 and 05442-298200. On the day the observer inspected cVIGIL room and other rooms related with the election process at the Collectorate and was accompanied by Deputy District Election Officer Shiv Pratap Shukla, CRO Satya Prakash Singh, city magistrate Lal Bahadur Singh and other officials concerned.

Mayawati's public meeting in Soraoon area on May 18

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati is coming to Prayagraj after two years to hold a public meeting and rally in support of party candidates. She will hold a public meeting in Soraoon area here on May 18. Earlier, Mayawati had come here to hold a public meeting before the 2022 assembly elections but she was disappointed on 12 seats here. Party's Prayagraj division in-charge Sabir Siddiqui said the arrival of BSP chief will increase enthusiasm of workers. We are busy preparing for the public meeting, he

said. On May 21 the party's national general secretary Munkad Ali is also coming to hold a public meeting in Prayagraj.

BSP had won only once in the history of Lok Sabha elections in Phulpur. In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, Mayawati had fielded Kapilmuni Karwaria as the candidate. Kapilmuni won that election. After that, BSP kept fielding candidates in every Lok Sabha election but did not get success. This time Ramesh Singh Patel is the candidate from Allahabad Lok Sabha seat and Jagannath Pal from Phulpur.

5 teenagers meet watery grave

PTI/PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JALAUJAN/KANPUR

Five teenagers, who had gone for a picnic at Betwa river here, drowned while taking a bath, police said on Tuesday.

Superintendent of Police Iraj Raja said the victims were identified as — Aryan (16), Anubhav Bundela (17), Shiva (16), Mahendra Pratap (17) and Hemant (17) — residents of Bagaura locality of Orai Kotwali area.

The incident occurred on Monday when the five boys went for a picnic and were taking a bath in Salaghat of the Betwa river in Kotra area. They slipped into deep water and drowned, the SP said.

The matter came to light when some villagers saw the boys' clothes, motorcycle and scooter on the banks of the river and informed the police, he said. Later, the victim's family members also reached the ghat and identified their clothes, Raja said. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) on Tuesday fished out the bodies from the river and they were sent for the post-mortem. Further investigation is underway, he added.

SUICIDE: Upset with the alleged humiliation by the police, a vegetable vendor committed suicide by hanging himself in Sachendi police station area late on Monday night. Prior to hanging himself, he

prepared a video alleging torture. In the viral video, he accused the Chakarpur Mandi outpost incharge and a constable of snatching cash and beating him up. Sunil (26), youngest son of Balakrishna Rajput of Sachendi, after uploading the video on social media late on Monday night, hanged himself.

The police and forensic team rushed to spot and carried out investigation. Station House Officer Sachendi, (Independent charge) assured to lodge an FIR in the matter. He said FIR against the Mandi outpost incharge and a constable had been lodged. Action against them would be initiated after probe, he said.

Ticket checking drive conducted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A special ticket checking campaign was conducted in train number 12538 Bapudham Motihari Express under the leadership of Senior Divisional Commercial Manager (SDCM) Sheikh Rehman, along with the ticket checking special squad of Banaras and the raid team of Varanasi Commercial department on Banaras-Mau railway section on Monday. Ticket checking was also done in trains 15008 Krishak Express, 11072 Kamayani Express and 12792 Patna - Secunderabad Express. In this ticket checking campaign team, the SDCM along with four ticket checking employees and two teams of Railway Protection Force (RPF), conducted intensive ticket checking and 62 passengers travelling without tickets and 55 passengers travelling on irregular tickets were caught. A



DCM Sheikh Rehman inspecting Deoria Sadar station of Varanasi division (NER) on Monday.

total of 117 passengers were caught from whom a fine of Rs 64,760 was realised as Railway revenue. According to Sheikh Rehman, intensive ticket checking campaigns are being organised continuously on the instructions of DRM Vineet Kumar Srivastava. The SDCM

said that so far in this financial year 2024-25, a total income of Rs 2.62 crore has been received in the form of fine from 42,828 passengers traveling irregularly without tickets whereas in the last financial year till March 2023-24, various ticket checking campaigns were organised against the passengers traveling without tickets/ unauthorised and irregularly in the trains running under the division. A total income of Rs 38 crore was earned by the employees by charging 5,89,017 passengers traveling without tickets/irregularly he added. Meanwhile, the SDCM inspected the passenger reservation centre, unreserved ticket counters and passenger amenities at Deoria Sadar railway station of Varanasi Division. He was accompanied by divisional commercial inspectors Rajaram, Vishal, Belal Ahmed, Kamal and the employees of the Commerce department working at Deoria station.

AU to provide marksheet with QR code

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A good initiative has been taken for the convenience of lakhs of students of Allahabad University (AU). Now the marksheet that Allahabad University will provide to the students studying here will have a QR code on it.

This decision has been taken in the Academic Council meeting of Allahabad University held on Tuesday. Vice-Chancellor Prof Sangeeta Srivastava has approved it.

Apart from this, many important decisions have been taken. Information like hostel, RTI, health facilities etc will now be available through Samarth portal. Registrar NK

Shukla has handed over the responsibility to all the departments. Through this, all the work can now be done easily on a single portal.

All correspondence in the office will also be conducted through Samarth portal through e-filing. Allahabad University is also preparing to conduct graduation admissions through Samarth portal this year. The following important decisions were taken during the meeting. All mark sheets will have a QR code. This will facilitate verification of marksheets by scanning the code on the marksheet provided to students from anywhere in the world. Those post graduation courses running in col-

leges where admissions are less than half of the allotted seats, those courses will be closed. The reviewed and revised syllabus of various courses has been accepted. Joint PDP (Pre PhD Programme) curriculum for Social Sciences has been accepted and will be implemented in the new session.

TOURNAMENT: The chief guest at the closing ceremony of SHUATS Open Badminton Tournament was Dr Enid S Masih (Head Department of Business Studies) here on Tuesday. In his address the chief guest appealed to the players to play with true sportsman spirit and to maintain mutual harmony.



Devotees taking a dip in Ganga river on the occasion of 'Ganga Saptami' in Varanasi on Tuesday.

SPSEC students excel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The students of Sir Padampat Singhania Education Centre (SPSEC) achieved a remarkable feat in the class X examination of CBSE. In the results declared on Monday all the students were declared passed. Sampanna Nigam did the school and the city proud by securing first place (99.2 per cent marks).

This year, of the 235 students who had appeared in examinations, 92 secured over 90 per cent marks. In class X results, the average of marks in school was 87 per cent.

Principal Bhawna Gupta, while praising students for their hardwork, wished them a bright future and gave credit to the able guidance of the



Jubilant students at SPSEC after success in the examination

school management for its astounding success. Chairperson Manorama Govind Hari Singhania, vice-chairman Abhishek Singhania, vice-chairpersons

Versha Singhania and vice-chairman and director Partho P Kar also hailed the achievements of students and encouraged them to achieve more success in future.

Youth commits suicide

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth committed suicide by hanging himself from a mango tree in Behta Mujawar police station area of Unnao. The police sent the body for an autopsy. As kin alleged that after strangling the youth the body was hanged from the tree, they refused to perform the funeral till the arrest of accused. Police have lodged FIR on the basis of complaint. Mohan Lal of Pohpikheda, Ashayas, had gone to Ashayas market to sell musklemel on Saturday and did not return till late night. When kin were looking for him, villagers informed about his hanging from a mango tree near

hanging himself in his house in ward No.16, Sumerpur, in Hamirpur district on Monday night. On getting information the police rushed to the spot and probed the issue. The body was sent for an autopsy. Pradhuma Pratap Singh (40) of Margawa, under Kadamua police station, Jalaun, was living in ward No.16, behind Shivani Palace, in Sumerpur for the past 10-12 years. Nephew Pawan Singh said on Monday, uncle Pradhuma Singh hanged himself under mysterious circumstances in the house on Monday night. Outpost incharge Rahul Misra said kin could not divulge the cause of incident. The deceased is survived by wife son and daughter.

On the other hand, a truck driver committed suicide by

Team dedicated to expanding reach of CPR training

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Health Centre at IIT Kanpur, in collaboration with the NGO Pranodaya, has been actively conducting a certified CPR workshop-cum-demonstration course for the campus community. These workshops, aimed at equipping individuals with life-saving skills, have already trained over 400 participants, including students, faculty, security personnel and employees. The comprehensive program covers essential topics such as Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), Basic Life Support (BLS), and Primary Trauma Care. Participants receive hands-on training and a certificate upon completion. The workshops are led by a

team of experienced medical professionals such as Dr Sunit Gupta, an anaesthesiologist and intensivist with an MD from AFMC Pune, Dr Pradeep Tandon, a plastic and cosmetic surgeon with MS Mch from Delhi and Dr AK Agarwal, an ENT surgeon with MS from Kanpur. The Health Centre team involved in the CPR training initiative includes Dr Mamta Vyas, Head of the Health Centre, Dr Rakesh Mishra, Senior Medical Officer and Dr. Shailendra Kishore, Senior Medical Officer. With a focus on community well-being, the IIT Kanpur's Health Centre team is dedicated to expanding the reach of CPR training, empowering individuals with essential life-saving skills.

JM Financial Asset Reconstruction Company Limited
 Corporate Identity Number : U67190MH2007PLC74287
 Registered Office Address : 7th Floor, Energy, Appasaheb Marathe Marg, Prabhadevi, Mumbai 400025
 T: +91 22 6630 3030 F: +91 22 6630 3223 www.jmfinancialcar.com

DEMAND NOTICE

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The Piramal Capital and Housing Finance Ltd have assigned a pool of Loan (including below mentioned Loans) together with underlying security interest referred to hereunder along with all the rights, title and interest thereon under Section 5 (1) (b) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 ("SARFAESI ACT") vide an assignment agreement dated March 29, 2023 ("the Assignment Agreement") in favour of JM Financial (JM) (herein referred as Assignee). The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of (JM) assignee. Under Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to JM, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to JM by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor (s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date	Description of secured asset (immovable property)
(LC No. 19300043342 of Lucknow - Lalbagh Branch) Faiz Haider Rizvi (Borrower) Kamini Rizvi (Co Borrower 1)	23-04-2024 / ₹ 1972843 / (₹ Nineteen lakh Seventy Two Thousand Eight Hundred Forty Three Only) NPA (08-11-2022)	Flat No 203, 2nd Floor, which Built On Khasra No- 3 & 3a & 89/3, navi Ullah Road Ward-wazirganj, tehsel- Lucknow Lucknow Uttar Pradesh :- 226018
(LC No. 23400003184 of Agra Branch) Miraja Gayas (Borrower) Sahanzar Beggam (Co Borrower 1)	23-04-2024 / ₹ 2932584.04 / (₹ Twenty Nine lakh Thirty Two Thousand Five Hundred Eighty Four Only and Four Paise) NPA (13-10-2023)	House No-144(mig) First Floor Tajnagari Yojna First Round Tajnagar Ward, Agra Agra Uttar Pradesh :- 282001
(LC No. 24000002933 of Kanpur Branch) Abhishek Kumar (Borrower) Akanksha Sachan (Co Borrower 1)	23-04-2024 / ₹ 342456 / (₹ Three Lakh Forty Two Thousand Four Hundred Fifty Six Only) NPA (08-01-2023)	Pvt Plot No 1 & 2, Arazi No 267, Dps & Narega Road, Pipauri, Kanpur Kanpur Urban Uttar Pradesh :- 208001
(LC No. 2920000774 of Yamunanagar Branch) Khuram So. Shahjad Ahmad (Borrower) Shahjad Khan (Co Borrower 1)	23-04-2024 / ₹ 1215443 / (₹ Twelve lakh Fifteen Thousand Four Hundred Forty Three Only) NPA (09-07-2023)	Plot No-17, Khasra No-959/2,960 Near Alishan Banquet Hall Dara Aali Indra Chowk Saharanpur Saharanpur Uttar Pradesh :- 247001
(LC No. 29400000239 of Allahabad Branch) Brijesh Kumar (Borrower) Sadhana Singh (Co Borrower 1)	23-04-2024 / ₹ 3923534 / (₹ Thirty Nine lakh Twenty Three Thousand Five Hundred Thirty Four Only) NPA (08-08-2023)	Gata No 822, Gram Mahmoodpur, Pargana, Teh. & Distt. Amethi Amethi Sultanpur Uttar Pradesh :- 227405

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to JM as aforesaid, JM shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the said Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of JM. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

Authorised Officer
 JM Financial Asset Reconstruction Company Limited,
 acting in its capacity as trustee of Aranya - Trust

Date : 15-05-2024
 Place: Uttar Pradesh

NGOs seek SC listing of PIL for SIT probe into electoral bonds scheme

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two NGOs on Tuesday urged the Supreme Court to consider listing their PIL seeking a court-monitored probe by a special investigation team into alleged instances of "apparent quid pro quo" involving political parties, corporate entities and officials of investigative agencies in the electoral bonds scheme.

A bench comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta took note of the submissions of lawyer Prashant Bhushan, appearing for NGOs 'Common Cause' and the Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL), that the plea needed to be listed for hearing at the earliest.

"The CJT's office is seized of it. It will be listed," Justice Khanna told Bhushan.

A five-judge Constitution bench had on February 15 scrapped the electoral bonds scheme of anonymous political funding introduced by the BJP government. Terming it a "scam", the plea

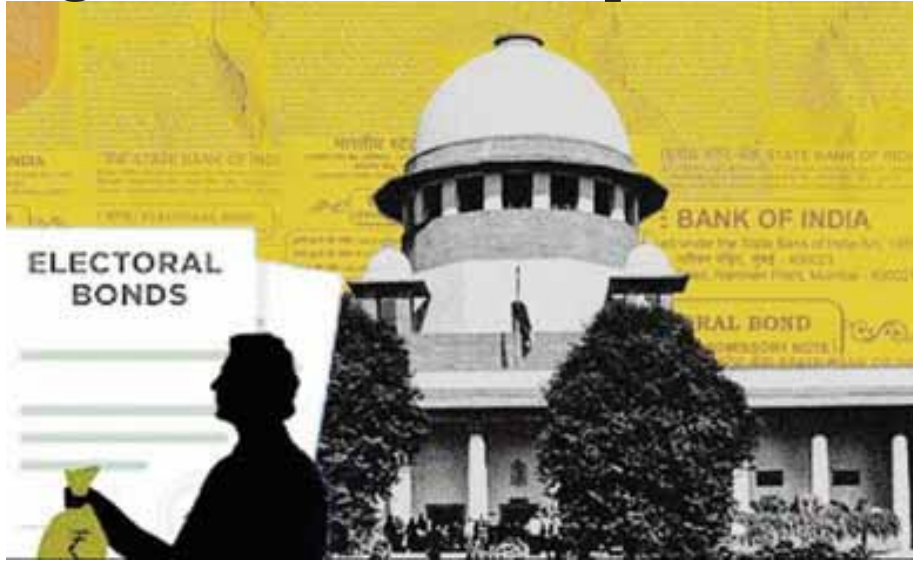
filed by the NGOs has sought a direction to the authorities to investigate the source of funding of "shell companies and loss-making companies" which made donations to various political parties, as has been disclosed by the data released by the EC.

The petition has also sought a direction to the authorities to recover the money donated by companies as part of "quid pro quo arrangements where these are found to be proceeds of crime".

Following the top court's judgement, the State Bank of India, the authorised financial institution under the scheme, had shared the data with the Election Commission (EC), which later made them public.

The electoral bonds scheme, which was notified by the government on January 2, 2018, was pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of its efforts to bring in transparency in political funding.

"The electoral bond scam has a money trail unlike the 2G



scam or the coal scam, where allocations of spectrum and coal mining leases were arbitrarily made, but there was no evidence of a money trail. Yet this court ordered court-monitored investigations in both those cases, appointed special public prosecutors and formed special courts to deal with those cases," the plea said.

The plea said in the "electoral bond scam, some of the country's main investigative agencies such as the CBI, Enforcement Directorate and the Income Tax department appear to have become accessories to corruption".

It claimed that several firms which were under investiga-

tion by these agencies have donated large sums of money to the ruling party, to potentially influence outcome of probes.

"Thus, the investigation in this case would not only need to unravel the entire conspiracy in each instance, which would involve officers of the company, officials of the government and functionaries of political parties but also the officers concerned of agencies like the ED/IT and CBI etc, who appear to have become part of this conspiracy," it alleged.

The plea said this "scam" needs to be investigated by an SIT of sitting/retired investigating officers of impeccable integrity chosen by the apex court and working under the supervision of a retired judge of the top court.

It has sought a direction for a "court-monitored investigation by an SIT into the instances of apparent quid pro quo between public servants, political parties, commercial organisations, companies, officials of investigation agencies and others, and other offences as highlighted in the present petition, as have been disclosed from the electoral bond data published by the Election Commission of India..."

The petition has also sought a direction for investigating alleged violation of section 182(1) of the Companies Act,

2013 by companies which donated to political parties through electoral bonds within three years of their incorporation and for penalty to be imposed on such firms in terms of section 182(4) of the Act.

The plea claimed the electoral bond data showed that the bulk of the bonds purchased by corporate entities appeared to have been donated as quid pro quo arrangements by corporates to political parties for getting contracts, licences, leases, clearances and approvals worth crores of rupees and securing other benefits from governments or authorities controlled by governments which were in turn controlled by political parties.

It alleged that electoral bonds were given in close proximity to action by agencies like the ED, IT or CBI, raising suspicion about the donations being "protection" money to avoid or stall action by or in exchange for regulatory inaction by various regulators like the drug controller etc

and as a consideration for favourable policy changes.

"Though these apparent pay offs amount to several thousand crores, they appear to have influenced contracts worth lakhs of crores and regulatory inaction by agencies worth of thousands of crores and also appear to have allowed substandard or dangerous drugs to be sold in the market, endangering the lives of millions of people in the country," it said.

"That is why the electoral bonds scam has been called by many astute observers as the largest scam in India so far, and perhaps in the world," it claimed.

It said data also showed that various loss-making companies and shell companies were donating huge sums to political parties through electoral bonds.

"Data suggests that the introduction of electoral bonds led to the mushrooming of shell companies, which were used by corporate houses as conduits to launder illicit money," the plea alleged.

TMC approaches EC over poll code violations by BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Trinamool Congress on Tuesday asked the Election Commission to stop "blatant violations" of the poll code by the BJP and its leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while alleging that the model code of conduct has been turned into "Modi Code of Conduct".

After submitting a letter over the matter to the poll panel, the TMC's Rajya Sabha MPs Saket Gokhale and Sagarika Ghose addressed the media and expressed dismay over the "inaction" of the EC against PM Modi over Model Code of Conduct (MCC) violations.

"(BJP chief) J P Nadra was served a notice but there has been absolutely no action taken on our complaints. Instead, PM Modi has become more emboldened in his remarks. He is making promises he has no right to make during elections, announcing financial schemes which his party cannot enact as the ruling party. Yet, there seems to be a disregard for the model code of conduct,"



Gokhale told reporters outside the Nirvachan Sadan. Both Ghose and Gokhale claimed that PM Modi was not being held accountable for the violations of the poll code. "Under the watch of the Election Commission, the Model Code of Conduct has now become the Modi Code of Conduct. Any statement made by Modi goes unchecked and no action is taken against him. This undermines the fairness of our elections," Ghose said.

Gokhale said, "We have written to the EC demanding that for the remaining phas-

es of the election, the Model Code of Conduct be strictly enforced, complaints be acted upon, and Prime Minister Modi not be given a clean chit every time he violates election rules."

The TMC's letter to the Election Commission outlines specific instances of alleged violations by the BJP, including false and malicious allegations and appeals for votes based on religion, and divisive statements made by Prime Minister Modi in his rallies.

"The brazen and unabashed comments made by Modi are not only a deliberate attack on our secular republic but also against the ethos of free and fair electioneering," the letter stated.

"Since many of these breaches of the MCC have been committed by Narendra Modi and the ruling party at the Centre, BJP, the Election Commission has refused to act strongly on the basis of such complaints. In fact, many are compelled to conclude that the MCC has been turned into the Modi Code of Conduct!" it said.

The letter detailed instances where the TMC had lodged complaints against the BJP for allegedly violating the model code of conduct and urged the poll panel to take immediate and decisive action.

"You are earnestly requested to put a stop to such blatant violation of the MCC by the BJP and its leaders under the aegis of Modi. Failure to address these concerns would not only undermine the credibility of the electoral process but also erode public trust in the ECI and ultimately violate the basic structure of the Constitution," it added.

PM, President, others condole death of former Bihar Deputy CM Sushil Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several senior leaders cutting across the party lines condoled the death of senior BJP leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi, who was suffering from cancer.

Murmu said the sudden demise of Sushil Kumar Modi is an irreparable loss. "His gentle nature, contribution as an efficient administrator and integrity in public life were reflected in his personality and work. As Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, Member of Parliament and Member of both the Houses of the State Legislature, Shri Sushil Kumar Modi upheld high ideals," she said.

The prime minister said Sushil Kumar Modi has played an invaluable role in the rise and success of BJP in Bihar. "Strongly opposing the Emergency, he made a name for himself in student politics. He was known as a very hardworking and sociable MLA. He had a deep understanding of the issues related to politics. He also did a lot of com-



mendable work as an administrator. His active role in the passage of GST will always be remembered," PM Modi said in a social media post.

He breathed his last at around 9.45 pm at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi and cremated in Patna in presence of top political leaders including Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and BJP president JP Nadra. Modi, 72, had served as the deputy chief minister of Bihar from 2005 to 2013, and again between 2017 and 2020.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar also expressed grief over the demise of Modi. In a statement, Kumar said, "It's a personal loss for me. We were

together during JP movement. His death has created a vacuum in the political arena of the country as well as in Bihar".

Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari said the demise of Sushil Kumar Modi is an irreparable loss for Bihar and the country. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she was sorry to hear about the sad demise of Sushil Kumar Modi and that their thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends. RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav also said he was extremely saddened to hear the news of Modi's death. He described Modi as "our guardian, struggling and hardworking leader".

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale too paid tributes to Sushil Kumar Modi and said that with his demise, the nation has lost an awakened social worker and a skilled political leader.

Last month, the BJP leader took to social media to announce that he was battling cancer for the last six months and will not be able to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections. During his political career spanning over three decades, Modi held various positions, including MLA, MLC and member of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. He became an MLA for the first time in 1990 from Patna Central constituency and was made the chief whip of the BJP legislature party. From 1996 to 2004, he was the leader of the opposition in the state assembly. He became a member of Lok Sabha in 2004 from Bhagalpur.

He gave up his Lok Sabha membership in 2005 and became a member of the legislative council, following which he was made the deputy chief minister while Nitish Kumar was the CM Modi was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2020 and he retired earlier this year.

Congress attacks PM Modi over clean Ganga

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi as to why he has abandoned the Varanasi villages adopted by him and why the Ganga has gotten dirtier despite spending Rs 20,000 crore. On a day PM Modi filed his nomination from Varanasi, Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said the outgoing PM must answer for his "failures" in Varanasi. "Today's questions: After spending Rs 20,000 crore, why has the Ganga gotten dirtier? Why has the PM abandoned the Varanasi villages he had 'adopted'? Why is the PM determined to destroy Mahatma Gandhi's legacy in Varanasi," he asked in a social media post.

Ramesh said when he came to Varanasi in 2014, Modi had said "Maa Ganga ne mujhe bulaya hain" and promised to purify the waters of the Holy Ganga, but soon after coming to power, rebranded the existing Operation Ganga as Namami Gange.

"Ten years later, the 'Namami Gange' project has cost the exchequer more than Rs. 20,000 crore. Here are the results: the number of Polluted River Stretches has increased from 51 to 66, 71% of monitoring stations have reported dangerous bacteria at up to 40 times more than safe levels, and antibiotic resistant bacteria have now been found in the waters.

"Where has the 20,000 crore in taxpayer money gone? How much has been siphoned off in corruption and mismanage-



ment? How can the people of Varanasi trust a man who has given a jumla even to Ma Ganga," the Congress leader asked.

He also said outside the city of Varanasi lie eight villages that the PM had "adopted", but a March 2024 ground report found that despite big promises of "smart schools", health facilities and housing, the villages have seen absolutely no progress in 10 years.

Domri village has almost no pucca housing, he said, adding Nagapur village has extremely shoddy roads. Dalit communities in Jogapur and Jayapur have no toilets and no water, and the flagship Nal Se Jal Scheme seems to have missed Parampur village entirely, he claimed.

"The condition of Modi's adopted villages tells us a lot about his sense of duty, or lack thereof, towards serving his constituents. Why has the PM abandoned his 'adopted' villages? Is this the true face of 'Modi ki guarantee'," he asked. Ramesh also alleged that "It is well known that the outgoing

41 civil servants from Sri Lanka undergo training in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) has started training 41 civil servants from Sri Lanka to help them gain insights into India's transformative policies such as right to service, housing for all and leveraging digital technology among others, according to an official statement issued on Tuesday.

The third capacity building programme for senior civil servants of Sri Lanka organised by the NCGG from May 13 to 24 at Mussoorie, it said. The programme is being attended by 41 senior civil servant officers from Sri Lanka from the PM Office, Presidential Secretariat, Department of National Police Commission, Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption, National Audit Office, Department of IT management and Ministry of Finance among others, the statement said.

The NCGG, an autonomous institution under the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), is mandated to work in areas of public policy, governance, reforms and capacity building.

NCGG's efforts align with the Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' i.e. "The world is one family" and emphasises strengthening bilateral ties and fostering cooperation with other countries, said the statement issued by the Personnel Ministry.

V Srinivas, Director General of the NCGG and Secretary of the DARPG, inaugurated the ses-



sion and highlighted the significant milestone achieved with the participation of fourteen senior civil servant officers from Sri Lanka in the first capacity building programme led by Secretary to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Anura Dissanayake.

In his address, Srinivas emphasised the commonalities between India and Sri Lanka in governance practices and the potential for mutual learning. He emphasised on fostering closer ties between the government and its citizens.

"Central to this vision is the concept of 'maximum governance, minimum government', emphasising digitally-driven governance with a citizen-centric approach," the statement said. The programme delves into specific policy areas such as Skill Development, Agriculture, Disaster Management, and healthcare initiatives like the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana. Participants will gain insights into transformative policies such as right to service, housing for all and the Digital India initiative, it said. Moreover, the programme offered ses-

sions on planning eco-friendly smart cities, Aadhaar as a tool for good governance, and gender and development, among others, the statement said.

"Emotional intelligence, land record management and national security were also explored in detail. Additionally, sessions on election management in India and Indo-Sri Lanka relations enriched participants' understanding of strategic governance areas," it added.

The programme also features immersive field visits to prestigious institutions including the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA) and the Forest Research Institute (FRI) in Dehradun, providing practical exposure to governance mechanisms, the statement said.

The NCGG in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has imparted training to civil servants of 17 countries, viz. Bangladesh, Kenya, Tanzania, Tunisia, Seychelles, Gambia, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Laos, Vietnam, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Cambodia, it said.

Over half million displaced due to floods, earthquakes, storms in 2023 in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Deadly floods last year left behind a trail of destruction in the Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand last year while glacial lake outburst flood in Sikkim led to the collapse of a hydroelectric dam, killing more than 100 people, and affecting more than 88,000.

In Delhi, identified as a "flood displacement hotspot", the Yamuna River overflowed after heavy rains on July 9, 2023, leaving at least 27,000 displaced, according to a report by the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) said around 27,000 displacements in the national capital, according to a global report released on Tuesday.

India experienced over half a million internal displacements due to floods, storms, earthquakes, and other disasters in 2023, a sharp dip from around 2.5 million displacements in 2022. On July 9, Delhi recorded 153 mm of rainfall in just 24 hours, the highest single-day rainfall since July 25, 1982. Overall, South Asia reported around 3.7 million internal displacements in 2023, with disasters causing 3.6 million, the lowest figure since 2018.

Researchers attributed the decline in displacements due to disasters partly to the El Nino event, which brought below-average rainfall during the monsoon and a weaker cyclone season.

However, floods and storms continued to displace people, often in the same areas.

At 3,52,000, India's flood displacement figure was the lowest since 2008, with the largest event triggering about 91,000 displacements in Assam in June, affecting 20 districts.

Cyclone Biparjoy, which formed in the Arabian Sea in early June, led to widespread flooding across Gujarat and Rajasthan, causing 105,000 displacements as it moved inland.

Cyclone Mocha, the largest disaster displacement event of 2023 in South Asia, triggered 1.3 million displacements in Bangladesh, mainly in Cox's Bazar district.

Forecasting and early warnings allowed authorities to initiate emergency procedures before Mocha's landfall, aiding pre-emptive evacuations from densely populated areas.

The IDMC said South Asia's cyclone season was less intense in 2023 than in previous years because of El Nino, but storms still triggered 1.8 million movements, about half of the region's disaster displacements.

Government-led pre-emptive evacuations accounted for at least three-quarters of this figure.

According to the report, disasters triggered 26.4 million displacements in 2023, the third highest annual total in the last 10 years.

No country is immune to disaster displacement, said Alexandra Bilak, the director of IDMC.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Bitter ballot battle

Poll rivals are rarely known for praising one another, but the current discourse has hit rock bottom

If the choice were for selecting the more entertaining option between the ongoing IPL or Lok Sabha elections, the latter — with its innovative taunts, snide remarks, branding family members with dirty accusations, obnoxious campaigning and mudslinging — would win hands down. With this election turning out to be more brutal and bloody than normal, social media is agog with videos of politicians that would put streetside rowdies to shame. A case in point: BJP's Mandi candidate, Kangana Ranaut, took a barrage of abuses, some too explicit to be printed. Disturbingly, even star campaigners are merrily throwing decency to the winds. The recent exchange between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and leaders of the Opposition, particularly the Congress, encapsulates the bitter nature of debate. Modi accused the Opposition leaders of being "cowards, scared of Pakistan", and the Congress shamed him by calling a corporate stooge, besides warning ominously that if he won this time too, India will see no more elections. This



exchange not only underscores the intense political polarisation, but also highlights the alarming decline in campaign standards. Modi's accusation resonates with the BJP's narrative to project itself as the sole guardian of national security. Such remarks, while appealing to a certain segment of the electorate, contribute to toxic polarisation of the polity. By insinuating that the Opposition is soft on Pakistan, Modi attempts to discredit his rivals and consolidate support by tapping into jingoistic sentiments. On the other hand, the Congress response reflects the prevalent perception of the BJP Government's policies favouring big business owners. The Opposition's strategy of portraying Modi as a representative of corporate interests seeks to appeal to the concerns of the common man. However, such charges, without substantial evidence, contribute to the erosion of trust in democratic institutions and further polarise the electorate. Besides, the Opposition has time and again accused him of being autocratic without any basis. What is particularly disconcerting is the way these accusations are delivered: Personal attack, character assassination and inflammatory rhetoric have become commonplace. Instead of engaging in substantive debates on policy issues and governance, the parties resort to sensationalism and vitriol. The falling standards of campaigning are symptomatic of deeper structural issues plaguing the democratic process. The influence of money power, the proliferation of fake news and misinformation, and the erosion of institutional checks and balances have created an environment conducive to negative campaigning and polarisation. Moreover, the advent of social media has amplified the reach and impact of divisive rhetoric. Unfortunately, the Election Commission has been rather ineffective in controlling these foul-mouthed leaders. That said, it is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that the leaders do not cross the 'Laxman Rekha'. We all can ensure that by pressing the blue button on voting day.

According to recent opinion polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is predicted to secure an unprecedented third-term win in these elections. There is a debate about whether the BJP tally will increase or decrease its tally. BJP leaders, including Narendra Modi, claim the NDA, led by the BJP, will win over 400 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha. Home Minister Amit Shah says NDA will secure 200 of the 283 seats in the first three phases. The Congress party won over 400 seats only once in 1984. Political players need a game-changing strategy as there is no apparent wave of support. To gain an advantage, the BJP has implemented five key strategies: Celebrity Candidates Fighting Polls, strengthening the Hindu base, appealing to minority groups, exploiting redrawn boundaries to maintain the Hindu vote in areas controlled by the opposition and projecting Modi magic. The Congress and its allies are making a strategic move, attempting to consolidate the Hindu subaltern. The ongoing election witnessed a decline in voter turnout and it is still being determined whether it will recover or continue to decline. The Election Commission of India (ECI) expressed disappointment with the turnout in some metropolitan

This election is wide open

Amidst predictions of a third-term triumph for Prime Minister Modi, internal rifts, defections and dwindling voter turnout inject an element of unpredictability

Like many other countries, political parties in India often claim victory during elections even before official results are announced. It is part of their politics. The ongoing polls are not just another political event; they are of paramount importance, as well as the fate of several political party leaders. They have profound and far-reaching implications.

In the current scenario, the ruling BJP has declared victory that the results will meet its expectations. However, the actual outcome remains uncertain, adding a layer of suspense to the political landscape. Four of the seven-phase polling have already occurred and the remaining three will occur on May 20, 25 and June 1. The outcome of these could significantly impact the election results, which will be revealed on June 4.

According to recent opinion polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is predicted to secure an unprecedented third-term win in these elections. There is a debate about whether the BJP tally will increase or decrease its tally. BJP leaders, including Narendra Modi, claim the NDA, led by the BJP, will win over 400 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha. Home Minister Amit Shah says NDA will secure 200 of the 283 seats in the first three phases. The Congress party won over 400 seats only once in 1984. Political players need a game-changing strategy as there is no apparent wave of support. To gain an advantage, the BJP has implemented five key strategies: Celebrity Candidates Fighting Polls, strengthening the Hindu base, appealing to minority groups, exploiting redrawn boundaries to maintain the Hindu vote in areas controlled by the opposition and projecting Modi magic. The Congress and its allies are making a strategic move, attempting to consolidate the Hindu subaltern. The ongoing election witnessed a decline in voter turnout and it is still being determined whether it will recover or continue to decline. The Election Commission of India (ECI) expressed disappointment with the turnout in some metropolitan



KALYANI SHANKAR

cities, highlighting the rigid voter apathy in high-tech cities. This underscores the significance of each voter in shaping the election results.

CP Joshi, former Chief Minister of Rajasthan, lost an election by one vote. His wife and daughter missed voting while praying for his victory. This shows how even one vote can significantly impact election results. This anecdote emphasises the potential impact of even one vote on the election results. High temperatures in some parts of India may reduce election turnout. However, low turnout can sometimes harm the ruling party, as local issues can sway the outcome.

BJP aims to improve in six Indian States: West Bengal, Odisha, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. However, it could face challenges from regional parties, which have the potential to sway State elections and impact overall results. During a recent rally, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi spoke about the uncertainties in predicting election results. Congress President Mallikharjun Kharge posted a message in Hindi on



THE BJP AIMS TO IMPROVE IN SIX INDIAN STATES: WEST BENGAL, ODISHA, TELANGANA, ANDHRA PRADESH, TAMIL NADU AND KERALA. HOWEVER, IT COULD FACE CHALLENGES FROM REGIONAL PARTIES, WHICH HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO SWAY STATE ELECTIONS AND IMPACT OVERALL RESULTS

X, saying the Prime Minister attacked his friends, indicating that Modi's chair is shaking. SP leader Akhilesh Yadav tweeted that the BJP's condition will worsen after the first two voting phases. The Congress party's strategy primarily concerns social welfare and economic empowerment. This all-encompassing approach aims to address the primary concerns of the voters and has the potential to connect with a vast section of the electorate. It could significantly impact the election results if it garners the voters' support. The Congress Party's challenge is to keep its members united. Since Modi's rise, many politicians, including State leaders, have defected to the BJP. The BJP has given tickets to some of them. How voters treat these turncoats remains to be seen. Internal disputes within Congress are currently a significant concern. Allegations of connections with rival parties raise questions about loyalty. They could affect the party's unity, which could, in turn, impact their performance in the upcoming elections. Therefore, it is crucial to close-

ly monitor any developments within the party to gain a more accurate understanding of their prospects in the polls. Political leaders' connections with rival parties have raised concerns about their loyalty. Between 2016 and 2020, 170 Congress MLAs and 7 Rajya Sabha members switched parties, causing an impact on Indian politics. It has created confusion and doubts about their loyalty. The allegations could influence voters' perception of these leaders and their parties. India's Satta Bazaar predicts the BJP will win between 330 and 335 seats at Re. 1, 350 seats at Rs. 3 and 400 seats at Rs. 12-15. The odds for the NDA to win 400 seats are Rs. 4-5. The predictions reflect the market perception of election outcomes that could impact politics. India's stock benchmarks fell by 1.5% on Tuesday as investors cut their bets, expressing concern that the BJP may not get as many seats as projected. The voters will decide the winner of the election on June 4.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

PICTALK



Smoke rises from a forest fire, in Shimla

PTI

Fostering innovation from schools to startups

Early education is essential for shaping future innovators and entrepreneurs so that they can drive the nation towards a bright future

The boundary between science and engineering is so narrow that it is hard to differentiate them. They are two sides of the same coin and they go hand-in-hand. Whereas science explores the fundamental principles governing the universe, engineering focuses on applying scientific knowledge to design and develop solutions that meet specific requirements. So, engineers gather more respect in front of the public, as their output is tangible. Every year, the Govt. of India celebrates National Technology Day on 11th May to commemorate the contributions of Indian scientists, engineers and innovators who act as catalysts for the country's development. This year's National Technology Day was celebrated on the theme "From School to Startups: Igniting Young Minds to Innovate", giving thrust to nurture innovation from the school period onwards. One would doubt the need to promote a startup culture in schools. As the common adage goes, the seeds of character and attitude are sown during one's school life.



When we look at the life histories of great entrepreneurs and scientists, we can see that the spark for doing something special was initiated during their school years. Elon Musk, the founder of companies like SpaceX, Tesla and Neuralink, reportedly sold a video game he created at the age of 12 and later started a web software company while attending the University of Pennsylvania. Mark Zuckerberg, the co-founder of Facebook, started coding in middle school, where he developed a messaging programme called "Zucknet" for his father's dental office. Schoolchildren possess the ability to think freely and come up with crazy ideas. The limitations of reality do not shackle their minds. They are unfettered by the comments made by others

and don't have any preconceived notions about an idea. School students also have an inherent curiosity. The insatiable curiosity drives them to seek new knowledge and experience, fueling their creativity and innovation. The quality of innovation observed in the exhibits at various school science fairs, children's science congresses and IISF's students' science village provides ample proof of this. Some of the innovations displayed by the students in these exhibitions are at par or better than what our adult scientists have achieved in their lifetime. The Department of Science and Technology has instituted INSPIRE - MANAK (Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge) Awards to support student innovators. MANAK, implemented through the National Innovation Foundation - India (NIF), seeks to inspire students in grades 6 to 10 to pursue their studies. The initiative aims to focus on one million unique ideas/innovations based on scientific principles and have practical applications in soci-

ety. Its goal is to promote a culture of creativity and encourage inventive thinking among schoolchildren. Another premier scientific organisation, the CSIR, has instituted the CIASC (CSIR Innovation Award for Schoolchildren) to harness schoolchildren's creative and innovative spirit. Though initiatives like Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATLs) by the Government of India foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds, most of our schools still put more stress on the traditional mode of rote learning. Rote memorisation and standardised testing prioritise conformity over creativity, relegating innovation to the sidelines. Furthermore, the fear of failure and the pressure to excel academically discourage risk-taking and experimentation. As a result, many children are discouraged from pursuing their innovative impulses, losing their untapped potential.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

MALIWAL'S ALLEGATIONS

Madam — Apropos the news article "Kissa Kursi Ka: Why Maliwal was thrashed," published on 14 May, this is my response. The unfolding drama surrounding Swati Maliwal's allegations against Arvind Kejriwal's personal assistant paints a troubling picture for the AAP. As a daily reader, it's concerning to witness such internal strife within a political party. The lack of formal complaints and the delayed response from all parties involved only adds to the murkiness of the situation. The fact that senior AAP leaders are already entangled in legal troubles exacerbates the issue, hinting at deeper rifts within the party. The swift condemnation from opposition leaders underscores the gravity of the accusations. Additionally, the involvement of the National Commission for Women (NCW) signifies the broader societal implications of such incidents. It's crucial for authorities to conduct a thorough investigation to ensure justice is served and perpetrators are held accountable. Overall, this episode serves as a stark reminder of the complexities and challenges inherent in the realm of politics and the importance of transparency and accountability in governance.

Avani Chawla | Pune

EMPOWERING MOTHERS

Madam — Apropos the news article "Empowering working mothers financially," published on 13 May, this is my response. Mother's Day is a poignant reminder of the extraordinary women who shape our lives. Yet, amid their selfless dedication, the need for securing their financial future often goes unaddressed. Despite the strides in insurance awareness, women remain underrepresented in safeguarding their loved ones. Whether as working professionals or homemakers, mothers are the backbone of many households, balancing myriad responsibilities with grace. However,

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Legal pillars of democracy



Apropos the news article "SC judgments have strengthened democracy," published on 14 May, this is my response. India's journey through elections is a testament to the strength of its democratic framework, fortified by landmark legal rulings. These decisions not only uphold the sanctity of the electoral process but also embody the nation's commitment to fairness, transparency and inclusivity. The fundamental right to vote, upheld in cases like Mohinder Singh Gill v. The Chief Election Commissioner, forms the bedrock

of India's electoral democracy. Judicial interventions, such as those seen in Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India, ensure transparency while balancing individual privacy rights. Inclusive representation, as highlighted in the Indra Sawhney v. Union of India case, underscores the importance of equitable participation, especially for marginalised communities. Concurrently, efficient resolution of electoral disputes, as emphasised in various judgements, safeguards the credibility of the electoral process. Moreover, cases like Mohd. Sattar v. State of Rajasthan reaffirm the principle of universal suffrage, ensuring every citizen's voice resonates in the democratic chorus. These legal pillars not only shape India's electoral landscape but also serve as guiding lights, illuminating the path towards a more robust and inclusive democracy.

Arjun Banerjee | Chandigarh

amidst the daily chaos, ensuring financial protection can be overlooked. Term insurance emerges as a vital tool in providing comprehensive coverage against life's uncertainties. For working mothers, it acts as a safety net, guaranteeing their family's well-being in their absence. Its flexibility allows customisation to meet specific needs, offering peace of mind amidst life's unpredictability. With retirement planning gaining importance, term insurance with maturity benefits becomes crucial. As women embrace diverse roles, securing their financial future becomes imperative. It's time for mothers to prioritise their financial security, ensuring a stable tomorrow for their loved ones.

Sanvi Reddy | Hyderabad

THE SONGSAREK HERITAGE

Madam — Apropos the news article "Vibing to the dance of a 100 drums," published on 12 May, this is my response. Exploring the lesser-known West Garo Hills of Meghalaya unveils a cultural tapestry woven with the

ancient traditions of the Songsarek people. In the face of modernity and religious conversions, their practices stand as guardians of a fading era. The partnership between Royal Enfield and UNESCO emerges as a beacon, spotlighting these intangible treasures. Wangala dances, Chubitchi rituals and matrilineal societal norms narrate stories of resilience and identity. The meticulous documentation not only honours these customs but also amplifies their significance, ensuring their legacy transcends generations. As custodians of heritage, it's our collective duty to cherish and safeguard these cultural jewels nestled amidst the Himalayan foothills. Through respectful engagement and awareness initiatives, we pave the path towards a future where diversity thrives and ancient wisdom finds its rightful place in the modern world.

Vihaan Singh | Ahmedabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

THE ROLE OF MEDITATION IN SLEEP

Meditate every night for a relaxed mind and better sleep



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

A recent newspaper article caught everyone's attention, featuring an elderly woman who initiated a 'Sleep Service Center' for those struggling to find restful sleep. This compassionate woman would just engage in conversation with the person and sing a lullaby offering comfort akin to a mother lulling her child to sleep. The result? Clients emerged refreshed and rejuvenated after just half an hour of her soothing sessions. Isn't it astonishing that we now seek sleep therapists for what should come naturally? What does this say about our society? If animals and birds can sleep peacefully, why can't humans enjoy this innate gift of carefree slumber?

Sleep is the best form of relaxation, akin to meditation, that's why those who sleep well always keep well & feel well. It's a fact that if we get sound sleep during the night, we get up fresh being more active & feeling more energetic. However, in today's world getting sound sleep has become a rare occasion because today millions of people suffer from sleep disorders like sleep apnea, insomnia, restless leg syndrome, narcolepsy etc. In addition, the number of those who get a very broken, fitful sleep would be many times more. Sadly, many of these individuals resort to sleeping pills and drugs which ultimately make the problem worse. Knowing that tranquilisers are usually prescribed for insomnia and such other disorders as are due to anxiety and mental depression etc., one would say: 'Where are we heading?'



Medical science has acknowledged several causes that lead to sleep disorders. The biggest hindrance of all that contributes to sleeplessness is bad mental health. We must understand that not being able to have restful sleep is not only in itself an unhealthy condition but also causes or aggravates many other diseases. For example, it is now recognised that sleep disturbance is one of the factors that lead to coronary heart disease. But most of us would agree subconsciously that tranquilisers are not the answer to the question of sleep disturbance.

They now know well that these drugs represent a purely symptomatic approach, ignoring the underlying problems that cause these conditions. A British medical journal recently published a report about experiments that have shown that sympathy can work well in cases of sleep disorders. It further said that in one trial, the doctors, instead of giving tranquilisers as they would have normally given, spent some time with the patients and talked with them in an open atmosphere. They just had a brief chat with them, with sympathy and also gave them a few words of advice and explained to them why they had those conditions. The results of these informal chats were astounding and the follow-up assessment showed that with this replacement of allopathy by sympathy, depression in those patients dropped from a level of 80 per cent to 40 per cent. The other fact being realised is that mental depression, anxiety, etc. are mainly due to certain lifestyles, behavioural patterns and personality traits. It was also felt that the pattern of behaviour, designated as type 'A' which is characterised by competitiveness, impatience, etc., predisposes a person to coronary diseases, hypertension, etc. As a result of these new findings, doctors all over the world are now increasingly advising such patients to practise meditation and to have proper dietary patterns. It's a medically proven fact that mental ill health adversely affects one's eating habits, which in turn, drastically influences our sleep and health. Under such a medical condition, proper meditation techniques can be of great help if practised regularly. In the hustle and bustle of living a modern life, we tend to forget that it is the quality of life that matters the most & not the quantity. Hence if we jeopardise our sleep for silly reasons, we are knowingly undermining our health.

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

Stopping thieving through DBT

A lot of pilfering from fertiliser subsidies is happening due to policy flaws. This can be curbed if only the subsidy is given under Direct Benefit Transfer



UTTAM GUPTA



On January 22, 2019, addressing NRIs and Indian-origin people at the inauguration of the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention in Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Prime Minister Narendra Modi recalled what Rajiv Gandhi had Stated "Of the funds the Central Government sends, only 15 per cent of that reaches the people. If one rupee is sent from Delhi, only 15 paise reaches the villages, 85 paise disappear. Even as the country's middle class kept giving tax honestly, this "loot" of 85 per cent also continued". Modi added "I also want to tell you today's truth as well. We used technology to end this loot of 85 per cent completely." Elaborating on this theme, he explained: "In the last four-and-a-half years, about Rs 580,000 crore, our Government, through various schemes viz. for a home, for education, for scholarship, for gas cylinder and to other such ends etc directly gives to the people, transferring it in their bank accounts. Now, just consider that if the country was being run through the old system, then even today from this Rs 580,000 crore, about Rs 450,000 crore would have disappeared or leaked. If we would not have brought a change in the system then this amount would have been looted like the former Prime Minister had accepted..." Modi said.

That was before the 2019 General Elections. Today, when the 2024 General Elections are underway, the same discourse reverberates in the air even as the PM cites a figure that is nearly seven times. The amount spent on welfare schemes during the last ten years under the Modi - regime has gone up to a gargantuan of around Rs 4000,000 crore. Had the old system (read: before 2014) continued, the amount disappearing from the distribution pipe would have been Rs 3400,000 crore (4000,000x0.85).

What do the facts say?
The Union Government executes a plethora of welfare programs aimed at providing basic and necessary amenities and upliftment of the most disadvantaged members of society. It does so mainly through "Central Schemes" (CS) which are fully funded and implemented by it. A total of 740 CS schemes are currently under implementation. During FY2022-23, the CS



UNDER ITS FLAGSHIP DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAMME, THE MODI-GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTING WHAT IS POPULARLY KNOWN AS DIRECT BENEFIT TRANSFER FOR TRANSFERRING CASH BENEFITS AND SUBSIDIES 'DIRECTLY' TO THE AADHAAR-LINKED BANK ACCOUNTS OF INDIVIDUAL ELIGIBLE BENEFICIARIES

spending was Rs 1208,000 crore. In addition, there are "Centrally Sponsored Schemes" (CSS) designed to supplement the efforts of the States in achieving various socioeconomic goals and implementing national priorities. These are funded by the central Government and the States in varying proportions viz. 90:10, 60:40, 50:50 and so on depending on the scheme. These schemes are implemented by the States. During FY2022-23, the spending on a total of 50 CSSs was Rs 412,000 crore. Put together, the total expenditure of the Central Government on CS and CSS schemes during the year was Rs 1620,000 crore.

Now, if we were to apply the 85 per cent magic formula dished out by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the amount pilfered while on the way to the beneficiaries would have been Rs 1377,000 crore. Only Rs 243,000 crore would have reached. Under the Modi - model, the entire Rs 1620,000 crore has been reached; courtesy of, the use of technology to transfer the money to their bank accounts.

How does it work?
Under its flagship Digital India program, the Modi - Government has been implementing what is popularly known as DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) for transferring the cash benefits and subsidies 'directly' to the Aadhaar-linked bank accounts of individual eligible beneficiaries. Launched by the erstwhile UPA - Government on January 1, 2013, its use has picked up pace under Modi since January 2015. As of date, DBT is used in 314 CS schemes.

The JAM trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhar, Mobile) is a DBT enabler the 'mover and shaker' behind its successful implementation. Today, there are around 520 million Jan Dhan Accounts, more than 1.39 billion Aadhaar cards and 1.15 billion mobile connections. With this, the money can be 'instantaneously'

transferred at the click of a mouse to tens of millions of beneficiaries spread all over the country. The DBT is free from the delays corruption and associated pilferage that was germane to the earlier arrangements under which there was human intervention, a host of intermediaries/mediators and the money was flowing through multiple layers in administrative offices.

To improve transparency, the Government has put in place the Central Plan Scheme Monitoring System (CPSMS) which ensures that all transfers to bank accounts are made strictly as per the list of eligible beneficiaries. The persons included in the list are authenticated with the use of an Aadhaar card that contains their biometric details thus removing any scope for fictitious claimants. The provision for such checks and balances has helped hugely in preventing bogus claims. As per the latest update on the DBT portal, the total savings by way of plugging leakages in the schemes due to the implementation of DBT during FY2022-23 was Rs 63,000 crore.

However, if we look at the food subsidy (the excess of the cost of procurement, handling and distribution of food over the price paid by the beneficiary/consumer), during FY2022-23, the Government was able to save over Rs 50,000 crore which works out to around 18 per cent in the total food subsidy bill of Rs 272,000 crore. This was made possible because of the "deletion of over 50 million duplicate and fake/non-existent Ration Cards".

Likewise, under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi or PM-KISAN (, the Union Government provides income support of Rs 6,000 a year to farmers with a valid enrolment, paid in three equal cash transfers of Rs 2,000 every four months; the money is credited to their account via the DBT mode),

it was able to save over Rs 10,000 crore during FY2022-23. This is about 17 per cent of the total payment of Rs. 58,000 crores during the year. The savings were due to the deletion of over 21 million ineligible beneficiaries.

According to the DBT portal, the Government has been able to generate a cumulative saving of Rs 348,000 crore by plugging leakages since the inception of the DBT. Of this, more than half or Rs 185,000 crore are savings in the distribution of food subsidies alone.

Notwithstanding the above, there remains a huge untapped potential for garnering more savings. This is because in the initial years, neither States used Aadhaar for validation nor the Centre made it compulsory even as the latter's efforts in this regard were hamstrung due to protracted litigation in the top court. In such circumstances, a large number of 'ineligible' persons making their way to the beneficiary list was inevitable. While the Government has got rid of them in some schemes like PM-KISAN, it has a long way to go.

Meanwhile, Modi also needs to focus on areas where technology intervention alone won't help. For instance, in fertilisers, the Government asks manufacturers to sell fertiliser at a low price to farmers. The excess of the cost of supply over it is claimed by the latter from the former as a subsidy. Since the subsidy is embodied in the MRP (albeit low), the subsidised fertiliser product must reach the farmer and be used only for growing the crop. If it doesn't reach, then the benefit of subsidy is enjoyed by the person who grabs it. A lot of pilferage from fertiliser subsidies is happening due to this flaw in policy. This can be curbed if only the subsidy is given 'directly' to the farmers under DBT.

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

Filmmakers must calibrate branding of film festivals

In the ever-evolving world of branding, where impressions and connections are paramount, film festivals emerge as vibrant stages

The success of any branding exercise is the impact & impression it creates on the target audience, visibility of products, recall value and deep connection with the audiences cutting across campaigns, launches, events and the wide array of trends and styles. In a similar vein, it is important to understand the impact of the branding idea or strategy on a visible platform, where eyeballs determine the yardstick of success.



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

Film festivals today are the perfect ecosystem to understand the value, intensity and impact of branding on such a glamorous circuit and ecosystem. In the domain of cinema, where creativity meets commerce, film festivals serve as vibrant hubs where storytelling converges with culture,

artistry intertwines with industry and communities bond around a shared love for the silver screen. Beyond the showcases of cinematic aptitude, these festivals have evolved into powerful brands, each with its own distinct identity and allure. From the glitz of Cannes to the heritage of the Venice Film Festival and from the cosmopolitan charm of Berlinale to the intellectual

intricacies of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and the grandeur of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), the branding strategies of these festivals offer a fascinating glimpse into the intersection of culture, economics and politics.

Film festivals portray glamour, charisma, fashion and celebrity quotient that creates a unique buzz with audiences Cannes, Berlin, IFFI and Toronto, over the years have developed a unique brand identity that has crafted and shaped the storytelling and visibility narrative in the branding space. Festivals are known for their innovative burst disruptive proclivities that lead to unique "out of the box Branding". The hustle and bustle of any film festival cre-

ate a unique integral link and the relationship between arc lights that define cinema and colours, shades and images that constitute branding. A study of the branding quotient across film festivals portrays a reflection of the shifting strands of ideas, concepts & evaluation of branding across the festival space. The 4C's = Creativity, Culture, Content and Consistency outline the integral link between branding and the festival circuit.

It is a perfect convergence of creative minds, storytellers, narrators and inspirational Talking heads. Every festival has defining branding moments, which leave an imprint on the minds of audiences and a lasting impression on prospective consumers and supporters of cinematic excel-

lence. Opportunities at festivals are limitless.

Cannes, Berlin, IFFI & Toronto integrate branding platforms and ideas, with their filming culture leanings, narrator's values and storytelling nuggets. At these festivals branding as a medium has reinforced the soft power dynamics & equitations leading to better visibility, product value, loaded positive perception and enhanced outreach and networking opportunities. An idea by technology brands brings out another level of product display. Interactive experience and marketing outreach. Each of the prominent festivals in their editions has reinforced the image, identity, influence, interaction and interface of brands with tech tools cross-

cutting themes thereby positioning a unique product identity & space at the venues. Each major film festival, whether it's Cannes, TIFF, Venice, Berlinale, or IFFI, meticulously builds a blueprint for its branding elements to convey its individuality and values.

Cannes, renowned for its glamour, incorporates the illustration of the Palme d'Or trophy and celebrities on the red carpet, alongside a sophisticated logo design often featuring the Cannes coastline. The festival's colour palette of black, gold and red represents poise, prestige and excitement. Meanwhile, TIFF embraces diversity with dynamic iconography displaying film reels, diverse viewers and Toronto landmarks, complemented by

vibrant shades like red, blue and yellow that reflect energy, creativity and inclusivity. Venice Film Festival, with its rich heritage, opts for classical depictions of Venetian landmarks such as the Rialto Bridge or St. Mark's Square, accompanied by a refined logo design that captures the essence of Venice's timeless beauty. IFFI celebrates Indian cinema with displays of aesthetic motifs and sceneries, traditional logo design and vivid hues of orange, red and gold, beside serene blues and greens that capture India's cultural richness. Through these branding elements, each festival communicates its beliefs, attracts audiences worldwide and reinforces its significance within the global film industry.

For filmmakers, the choice of which festival to submit their work to often depends not only on the esteem and reputation of the event but also on its alignment with their artistic vision and career goals. A filmmaker seeking international recognition may gravitate towards Cannes or Berlinale, while those championing a wide and diverse range of filmography might find a home at Venice or TIFF. In this way, the branding of film festivals becomes a crucial factor in shaping the trajectory of filmmakers' careers and the cultural nuances of movies as a whole.

(The writer was addl. DG, DFF & director IFFI. Views are personal. Inputs by Zoya Ahmed & Vaishnavie Srinivasan)

Death toll rises to 14 in Mumbai hoarding tragedy

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The toll in the collapse of a 100-feet tall illegal hoarding at Ghatkopar in north-east Mumbai during Monday's dust storm rose to 14 on Tuesday, as six more bodies were recovered from under the debris. At least 80 people were injured in the first of its kind collapse triggered by a massive dust-storm that swept through the country's commercial capital on Monday evening. The hoarding came crashing down on a petrol pump at Ghatkopar's Cheddannagar Junction, trapping scores of people under the debris. The relief and rescue operations went on through the night. Almost all the persons rescued from the debris were injured. As many as 43 injured persons are undergoing treatment in various hospitals, including the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)-run



Rajawadi Hospital at Ghatkopar, HBT hospital, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Hospital at Vikhroli and Prakruti Hospital at Kalwa. Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who had rushed to the mishap site, announced an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh to each of families of the deceased. The Mumbai police have registered a case under 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 337, 338 (causing grievous hurt to any person by doing any act so rashly or negligently as to endanger human life, or the personal safety of others), and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code against owner Bhavesh Bhide, the owner of M/s Ego Media Private Limited, and others. Meanwhile, a major contro-

versy has broken out between the BMC and Central Railways over the ownership of the mishap site. Mumbai Municipal Commissioner Bhusan Gagrani declared the collapsed hoarding as illegal and said the BMC had not given any approval to the hoarding. "The collapsed hoarding was illegal. There are four hoardings at the location where the mishap took place. All four of them have been erected on the Railway land. Of the four hoardings, one collapsed yesterday," Gagrani said. On his part, the Chief Minister has ordered a structural audit of all hoardings across the country's commercial capital. "I have directed the BMC to carry out a special audit of all the hoardings in Mumbai and remove all the illegal ones," he said, while talking to media persons at the mishap site on Monday night.

Parties asses mood as Modi, Shah applaud voter turnout in Srinagar

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A day after the Srinagar Parliamentary constituency recorded over 38 per cent voter turnout, the second-highest so far after the 1996 Lok Sabha polls, several Kashmir-based politicians attempted to interpret the mood of the electorate to fine-tune their poll strategy for the next two rounds of voting in the valley. Meanwhile, both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have also applauded the people of the Srinagar parliamentary constituency for the "encouraging turnout" of 38 per cent, which is more than double the 14.43 per cent polling in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Ironically, former Congress leader and Chairman of the Democratic Progressive Azad Party Ghulam Nabi Azad Tuesday claimed the voter turnout in the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency is not high enough to know whether the people are happy or angry with the abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of Jammu



and Kashmir into two union territories in 2019. Azad said, "I had hoped Kashmir would witness 80 to 90 per cent turnout given what has happened in the past seven to eight years. Article 370 was removed, and statehood was snatched. So I thought the turnout would be high, like 90 to 95 per cent. "The increase of a few per cent hardly matters as it happens in every constituency of India. That way, we can not know whether the people are angry or happy (with the abrogation of Article 370 and snatching of statehood)," Azad told

reporters while campaigning for his party candidate in Kulgam district. His observation stood in total contrast to the statement made by the Union Home Minister. "The Modi Government's decision to abrogate Article 370 is showing results in the poll percentage as well. It has enhanced people's trust in democracy and its roots have deepened in Jammu and Kashmir," Amit Shah wrote on 'X' (earlier Twitter). Shah said that through the rise in the poll percentage, the people of Jammu and Kashmir have given a befitting reply to

those who opposed the abrogation of Article 370 provisions and are still advocating its restoration. Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) President Mehbooba Mufti Tuesday appealed to the voters to vote en-mass in the remaining two phases of parliamentary elections in Kashmir. Addressing people in Qazigund and Devsar, Mehbooba Mufti emphasized the importance of high voter turnout, warning against efforts by the BJP and its allies to suppress voter participation. The PDP President pointed to the recent elections in the Srinagar constituency, where voters turned out in large numbers, driven by a sense of suffocation and a desire to reject the actions taken on August 5, 2019. She alleged that in areas with strong PDP support, the voting process was deliberately slowed down. "In Srinagar, people who had never voted before participated in the parliamentary elections this time. They came out in droves to tell the BJP-led government that the actions taken in 2019 were unacceptable.

Mammootti is a jihadi, alleges close associate

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Mammootti, touted by his fans as the "super mega star" of Malayalam films, is a jihadi working hand in glove with the CPI (M), according to his own friends and associates. It was known for quite some time that the "super mega star" had close liaison with Islamic fundamentalists working for the disintegration of India. The star is the chairman of the CPI (M) owned Kairali TV Network which telecasts Marxist news and ideology 24x7. While addressing the all India conference of DYFI, the youth organization of the CPI (M), held at Chennai sometime back, Mammootti had come down heavily on the then Narendra Modi Government for the Gujarat riots. "Had there been DYFI in Gujarat, a riot against the minority community would not have happened," said Mammootti while delivering the keynote speech. Of late, Mammootti's antecedents as an Islamic fundamentalist had been a subject of discussion in the social media. What spilled the beans recently is the interview given by Mohammed Sharshad, a Chennai based businessman who is also a fellow traveler of the CPI(M) that his wife PT Ratheena, an upcoming movie maker was forced by Mammootti to direct a movie portraying the Hindus in poor

light. The film Puzhu (2022) created some controversy in Kerala but the producer laughed all his way to the bank. What made Ratheena to take up the Puzhu project instead of the script she had completed was the directive of Mammootti. What Ratheena had hoped was to make a light-hearted entertainer starring Mammootti and she was forced to toe the super star's line," said Sharshad. What Sharshad told an online portal is that Mammootti wanted Ratheena to make this movie, the story of which was written by Harshad whom Sharshad himself describes as a hardcore Islamic extremist "Puzhu" revolves around an IPS officer by name Kuttan (played by Mammootti) hailing from a high caste Hindu family and his hatred for his sister who eloped with a Harijan youth much against her family's wishes. The movie instead of delivering a social message, concluded with spitting venom and fire over the Sanatana Dharma. In Kerala, artists and technicians suspected of any links with Hindu outfits are ostracized from the film industry by the Mattancherry Mafia (a group of Islamists whose only mission is to make use of the medium of cinema to humiliate and tarnish the Sanatana Dharma). This Mafia was behind the agitation against CAA and is "credited" with the conspiracy to sub-

vert the national film awards distribution ceremony in New Delhi during the tenure of Smriti Irani as information and broadcasting minister. The Islamists, drawn out of the banned Popular Front of India, SIMI, SDPI, work overtime through social media and even in theatres to dissuade people from watching movies starred by Suresh Gopi, Unni Mukundan and Krishna Kumar whose association with BJP is known to all. These anti-Hindu collectives work unitedly for making the average Mammootti films success. Film reviewers working for mainstream media in Kerala are wary of writing anything offending the super star lest the latter is likely to use his influence to toe the persons writing against him. Interestingly, the "leading" film writers based in Kerala and Tamil Nadu never write anything against the actor despite the fact that his below average performances. A veteran movie maker who has dozens of super hits to his credit told The Pioneer on condition of anonymity that there is a Jihadi Mafia controlling Malayalam film industry. "You just go through films produced by the Islamists. You will see only artists and technicians belonging to a particular community. We do not want to comment on these issues as whatever is happening is clear that the Jihadis call the shots," said the producer.

Amarnath yatris to experience improved tracks this year: DG BRO



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Director General of Border Roads Organisation (BRO) Lt Gen Raghu Srinivasan Tuesday said the pilgrims planning to visit Amarnath cave shrine would experience "improved tracks" this year. The 52-day pilgrimage to the 3,880-metre-high cave shrine in south Kashmir will commence on June 29. "I am back from the Baltal (base camp). Last year, we were assigned the task of widening the track which was important for the safety of the devotees. We have completed the widening work and also covered the surface with blocks and attended curves and slopes," the DG BRO told reporters on the sidelines of a tunnel breakthrough function in Rajouri. He said the BRO has also completed the most important work of laying roadside railing and sidewalls at vulnerable locations, especially in the areas prone to shooting stones from the hillocks to keep the pilgrims safe.

BJP has crossed 270 mark, says Shah; Mamata predicts 215 seats for INDIA Bloc

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Mamata Banerjee and Amit Shah on Tuesday placed their own estimations of Parliamentary seats that their respective Blocs might have clinched till at the end of fourth phase of elections on Monday. While the Union Home Minister on Tuesday said that the BJP had already crossed the 270 mark out of the 380 seats — that went to polls till Monday — the Bengal Chief Minister quoted from her "internal reports" predicting 195 to 215 seats for the Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance adding, "the weather is changing." "The winds are changing and the weather too which suggests that the Guarantees Babu (read Prime Minister Narendra Modi)," is going and the INDIA alliance is surging ahead," Banerjee said. "Last time we knew that Modi Babu is returning to power ... before that also there was some inkling of his winning ... but as the weather changes after long spell of scorching sun ... as rain brings relief from heat ... this time the weather is changing ... this time the news is Modi's guarantee is not going to come true ... the only guarantee is that he is going out of power," Banerjee told an election rally at Serampore. "Till the fourth phase of elec-

End of phase IV elections



tions the reports that have come to me says that the INDIA alliance is going to come to power ... by now they have wrested 195 to 215 seats... so the only slogan now should be BJP Hatao ... Desh Bachao (Oust BJP to save the country) ... this is my earnest request to the people to break BJP ... break the Modi Government and save the nation from disintegrating," the Chief Minister said adding the BJP had demolished dreams of thefreedom fighters who led the country to freedom. "Please save India ... the free and united nation that was once envisaged by our freedom fighters who died for the country's freedom ... see what Modi has done to this country ... see how they are selling the country to the privateers ... see how

they are selling hatred ... see what they have done to the country ... so they must go from power," Banerjee said. In an apparent bid to distinguish between the Congress Party in Delhi and its branch in Bengal, Banerjee said that "not the Congress of Delhi but the one here has teamed up with the CPI(M) and the BJP to ruin the career of the youth." These three parties "snatch people's jobs ... we have seen man eating tigers ... these three parties are job eating tigers ... we create jobs ... provide employment and they eat them up by taking jobs," she said referring to the recruitment scam and the sacking by the Calcutta High about 26,000 school staff including teachers. The Home Minister on the other hand said that his party

had already moved close to the half-way mark. Addressing an election rally at Bongaon from where Matua leader and Union Minister Shantanu Thakur is contesting Shah said, "Polling has ended for 380 seats by the end of the fourth phase of elections and it is for sure that the BJP has already reached the 270 mark ... now the fight is for getting 400 and beyond." Telling the people that if the BJP could get 400 seats in Delhi and 30 seats in Bengal then there would be no Trinamool Congress government in Bengal he said, "only the BJP can rid Bengal from corruption, goonda raj, syndicate raj, chit fund scam and send those responsible for these-crimes to jail." Referring to Banerjee's strong protest against the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act Shah said that "Mamata Banerjee is lying that anyone who applies for citizenship under the CAA will be in trouble ... this is my assurance to the Matua community that after CAA you will get citizenship and will be able to live with respect in the country like any other migrants of the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Shikh or Christian communities." He said that "though the Chief Minister is trying to stop CAA no power can stop it from being implemented because granting citizenship is Centre's call and the State has nothing to do with

AAP admits to assault, Kejriwal promises...

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He said the incident took place while Maliwal was waiting for Kejriwal in his drawing room and condemned the behaviour displayed by Kumar. "Swati Maliwal has informed about this incident to the Delhi Police through a PCR call. This is a condemnable incident. Kejriwal has taken cognisance of the incident and has directed for strict action." In the PCR call received by the police at 9.34 am by the former chairperson of Delhi

Commissioner of Women (DCW), Maliwal stated that she was beaten up badly by Kumar at the behest of the AAP chief. Thereafter, the Delhi BJP launched a scathing attack on Singh for trying to entrap a small fish and not stating who instigated the assault on Maliwal. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva questioned the incident at Kejriwal's residence and said, "The silence on yesterday's incident reflects the mentality of the AAP. Singh's

statement that we will think over the incident is quite embarrassing because an incident of violence against a woman, misconduct towards her has happened and yet the leaders of the AAP are still discussing this incident." Further, he called Kumar a 'small fish' and said, "They are just talking about entrapping small fish, but in the end, who instigated this incident, what were the reasons, all these questions should be answered by Kejriwal." Instead of contemplating after violence

against a woman, arrests should have been made immediately, he said. The BJP leader claimed that "the BJP knows through sources that this entire incident occurred at the behest of and in front of Kejriwal" and questioned why so much pressure was put on Maliwal. "When Singh says she is an excellent speaker, the BJP is also saying from the beginning that she keeps raising issues. Therefore, Singh's statement should be the basis for immediate filing

of an FIR by police and those guilty should be promptly dealt with," Sachdeva said. Further, he claimed that the Chief Minister's residence is famous for such incidents, whether it was the incident with the former Chief Secretary or yesterday with Maliwal. "It is the true character of the AAP, which is now in front of everyone," he said. Maliwal has not yet said anything officially and gave no response to messages and calls made to her for her comment.

Modi files...

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All four, along with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi, were present at the collector's office when Modi submitted his nomination papers. The Prime Minister held a dazzling roadshow in Varanasi a day ago and vowed to do a lot more to serve the holy city in his third term. He spent the night in the city and filed his nomination on Tuesday. Voting in Varanasi will take place in the seventh phase of the Lok Sabha election on June 1. The Congress has fielded its State unit president Ajay Rai from the seat and the BSP has nominated Athar Jamal Lari. As most of the parliamentary constituencies in this region, including the entire Purvanchal (eastern UP) and adjoining Bihar areas, will go to the polls in these phases, NDA unity will be crucial, especially when caste equations and social engineering factors always play a decisive role in election results.

To retain voters, CUET exam delayed in Delhi

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However, sources in the Ministry of Education said the decision was taken following the reports that since vacations have begun in the Delhi schools or likely this weekend, majority of the population leave the city for vacationing. "This was the only way to retain at least some voters for the May 25 Lok Sabha elections," said the sources, without citing any other reasons apart from the official manpower crisis.

EC the arbiter resolves 400 of 425...

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"With about two months completed since the MCC came into effect, campaigning by various political parties and candidates at constituency level has largely remained violence free, less noisy, less cluttered and intrusive, free of inducement..." the commission added. The poll body said a few complaints of INC and BJP against each other are pending alleging violation of MCC inter alia broadly in the genre of divisive statements by top star campaigners on communal,

caste, regional language divide, or on sanctity of Constitution of India. In the past, the commission has been issuing notices to individual leaders who had committed violations of MCC. Sharing data, the poll body said suo motu removal of officers holding dual charges as Principal Secretaries to Chief Ministers in six States namely Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, as they were holding charge of Home/General Administration department

also. This was to distance election-related senior officers with control over DMs/DEOs/ROs and SPs, from Chief Minister's offices. Suo motu removal of DGP West Bengal as he was barred from election duty in previous elections also. On Congress complaint of capturing of a polling booth and tampering of EVM in Dahod Parliamentary Constituency of Gujarat, re-poll was ordered and entire polling and police parties were placed under suspension, and concerned

State authorities have been directed to initiate departmental proceedings against them. On TDP complaint, the commission censured president YSRCP for violation of provisions of model code of conduct and commission's advisories relating to unverified allegations. On complaint from Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee, president, BRS was barred for 48 hours from holding any public meetings, public processions, public rallies, shows and interviews and

public utterances in media for making statements violating MCC during a press meet. On complaints from BRS, a Minister in Telangana was censured for making unverified allegations and maligning the image of the Opposition party/leader. On complaint of Congress, a post from 'BJP4Karnataka' Twitter 'X' account was taken down on being found violative of MCC. A FIR was also registered in the matter. On Congress's complaint that the morphed images of Congress leaders are being put up with a

malafide intent on a social media site, the ECI directed to lodge FIR against the Instagram handle 'Bol Himachal' and directed to take necessary statutory action for removal of alleged objectionable social media posts. On BJP's complaint, FIR lodged under Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 against Madhya Pradesh State INC president for making objectionable remarks against a former lady Minister. The poll body further said in complaint of AAP, CEO

Delhi was directed to re-examine and clear the song submitted by AAP for clearance. A FIR under provisions of Section 171F, 506 of IPC and Section 135 (c) of RP Act 1951 was ordered against an MLA of AITC for threatening local voters and opposition party workers after CAPF is withdrawn from West Bengal in an election rally in Chopra at North Dinajpur. In a complaint, the Congress told the EC to direct the CDBT for verification of any mismatch in assets

declaration by a Union Minister in his affidavit. DGP (HoPF) of Andhra Pradesh removed. Further, DGP (Intelligence) Andhra Pradesh, Commissioner of Police Vijayawada, DIG Anantpuramu and SPs of Prakasam, Chittoor, Palnadu, Anantpuramu were also removed based on various complaints/inputs. On similar complaints/inputs, four DySPs/SDPOs and 5 Police Inspectors/ SHOs/ Sub Inspectors were also shifted/suspended in Andhra Pradesh.



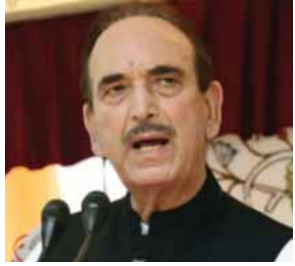
Azad, Mufti differ over Srinagar Lok Sabha polls voter turnout

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

Reacting to the voter turnout in the Monday polling at the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency, while DPAP chief Ghulam Nabi Azad remarked that the figures are not high enough to know whether the people are happy or angry with the abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti said it is a message that the people have not accepted the Centre's decisions.

The Srinagar constituency in Jammu and Kashmir (J-K) witnessed 37.98 per cent voting on Monday in the first Lok Sabha election in the valley since the scrapping of Article 370 in 2019, with the Election Commission (EC) stating that it was the "highest turnout in decades".

Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) president Azad Tuesday said, "I had hoped that Kashmir will witness 80 to 90 per cent turnout in view of what has been happening in



the past seven to eight years. Article 370 was removed, statehood was snatched. So I thought the turnout will be high, like 90 to 95 per cent.

"The increase of a few per cent hardly matters as it happens in every constituency of India. That way, we can not know whether the people are angry or happy (with the abrogation of Article 370 and snatching of statehood). It is a new thing for me," Azad told reporters while campaigning for his party candidate in Kulgam district.

About the rise in poll percentage in the militancy-infested areas like Tral town of Pulwama, Azad said the increase of a few per cent in the turnout is normal after



every election across India. "There were some pockets affected by militancy. After 1994-95, the militancy started waning. Today the militancy is next to nothing. The areas affected by militancy also witnessed 30-40 per cent votes and the areas which were not affected, also had similar turnout," he added.

On the other hand, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mufti Tuesday said the "high" voter turnout in the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency polls is a message to the Centre that people have not accepted the abrogation of Article 370 and other decisions regarding Jammu and Kashmir that followed.

"Polling yesterday was good because the people wanted to send a message to Delhi that the decision taken in 2019 and afterwards with regard to our land and state subjects and jobs are not acceptable to the people of Jammu and Kashmir," Mufti told reporters at Qazigund in Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha constituency.

The PDP president is contesting the Lok Sabha polls from the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat where polling is scheduled to be held on May 25.

"However, I would like to tell the Election Commission that wherever the footfall of voters was higher in favour of the PDP, the polling was deliberately made slow. I want the people of Rajouri-Poonch-Anantnag-Kulgam-Wachi to make sure that they vote even if it means standing in the queue for 10 hours," she said.

The former chief minister said the "good" voter turnout in the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat will have a positive impact in the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency as well.

Hope I get to file nomination from Choti Kashi in future as well, says Kangana Ranaut

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Actor Kangana Ranaut on Tuesday filed her nomination for the Mandi Lok Sabha seat as a BJP candidate and hoped she would keep getting the opportunity to file nominations from the constituency in the future as well.

"I hope this is not the first and last time for me and I get more opportunities to file nominations from Choti Kashi (Mandi) in the future as well," Ranaut told PTI.

The Leader of Opposition in Himachal Pradesh Assembly Jai Ram Thakur and state BJP chief Rajiv Bindal accompanied the actor to the nomination centre.

The BJP cadres carried placards of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and shouted slogans in support of Ranaut as she headed to the election office.

Mandi, an abode for over 300 temples with about eight temples dedicated to Lord Shiva, is popularly known as Choti Kashi.

"Today is a very fortunate day for me as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is filing his



nomination from Kashi (Varanasi) for the third time and I am filing nomination from Choti Kashi," the BJP nominee said as she exuded confidence that Modi would be re-elected as the country's prime minister for the third time.

"I am thankful to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP for fielding the daughter of Mandi from here, enhancing the prestige of the state," she said.

Her mother Asha Ranaut told PTI, "Our blessing is with our daughter and God is also listening to our prayers. Kangana is getting good response wherever she goes and would win with a huge mandate."

Will carve separate State of Bundelkhand if come to power, says Mayawati



PTI ■ JHANSI (UP)

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Tuesday said if her party is voted to power, it will carve a separate state of Bundelkhand — the region that straddles the states of Uttar Pradesh Madhya Pradesh.

Addressing an election rally in Jhansi, Mayawati said, "There have been demands for carving a separate Bundelkhand state. If our government is formed (at the Centre), then we will take positive steps in this regard. Bundelkhand will definitely be made a separate state."

Bundelkhand is a hilly region spread across 13 districts in southwest Uttar Pradesh and northern Madhya Pradesh. Seven districts in Uttar Pradesh — Banda, Mahoba, Hamirpur, Lalitpur, Jhansi, Jalaun, and Chitrakoot — and eight districts in Madhya Pradesh — Datia, Tikamgarh, Chhattarpur, Sagar, Damoh, and Panna — come in this region. The BSP chief also claimed that it "would not be easy" for the current BJP-led NDA to return to power, provided "the elections are free and fair," and the EVMS are not tampered with.

"For the past few years, the BJP and its allies have been in power at the Centre in most of the states. Owing to the casteist, capitalist, narrow, and vindictive policies and their style of working, and due to the significant difference in their actions and words, it now seems that it would not be easy for them to

return to power at the Centre, provided these elections are free and fair," she said.

People are fed up with the theatrics and rhetoric and they won't work anymore for the BJP in this election, she said.

Mayawati alleged that the BJP has "politicised" all central agencies under it, just as its predecessor, Congress, had done.

Urging her party workers to stop the BJP, the Congress, and their allies from coming to power at the Centre, she told them "not to get misled by the opinion polls and surveys," and warned them against the "saam, daam, dand, bhed" tactics of political parties.

The former UP chief minister criticised the free ration policy of the Centre, saying the dole alone cannot be a permanent fix to problems of the poor.

"The free ration, which is being given to you, the BJP and RSS is not giving them out of their own pockets. It comes from the tax which is paid by the public and not out of the beneficence of the BJP and the RSS. You don't owe them anything," said the Kanshiram proponent.

Jhansi will vote in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha polls in the state on May 20. The BSP has fielded Ravi Prakash from the constituency. The BJP has fielded Anurag Sharma, its sitting Lok Sabha MP, while the Congress has given ticket to former Union minister Pradeep Jain 'Aditya'.

Mamata's offer to cook food for Modi stirs controversy

PTI ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's offer to "cook food" for Prime Minister Narendra Modi elicited mixed responses from different political parties, with the BJP terming it a "political agenda" and the CPI(M) dubbing it as an "understanding" between the TMC and the saffron party.

Taking a jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his recent allegation that RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav last month had fish during a period when some Hindus abstain from having non-vegetarian food, Banerjee on Monday said she was ready to "cook something for him



(Modi) if he wanted though she was not sure whether he would eat what she cooked. Banerjee, at an election rally here, had made the remarks while taking a dig at the BJP for allegedly interfering with the food habits of the people and had said she would be happy to cook food for Modi but is not sure "whether the PM will be ready to savour my



cooked meal."

"I have been cooking since my childhood days. People have praised my cooking. But will Modi ji accept my food? Will he trust me? I will cook whatever he loves," she had said.

The TMC supremo had said, "I love both vegetarian foods like Dhokla and non-veg foods like macher jhol (fish

curry). Different communities, and different sects among Hindus have their own unique rituals and eating habits. Who is BJP to impose a diktat on an individual's dietary habits? It shows the BJP leadership has little idea and concern about the diversity and inclusivity of India and its people."

Banerjee's offer to cook for the prime minister, who is a vegetarian, drew sharp reactions from the saffron camp.

"Mamata Banerjee wants to feed Modi ji with fish and rice cooked by her. Good proposal. But before that, why doesn't she first offer pork chop to her lieutenant Firhad Hakim? It will serve three

purposes, secularism will be asserted, it will show charity begins at home and the fritters will also be praised," former BJP state president and ex-Tripura Governor Tathagata Roy posted on X.

BJP leader Sankudeb Panda claimed Banerjee had deliberately invited Modi knowing well that he is a strict vegetarian.

"This is nothing but her ploy to trap the PM. She knows on the one hand the PM will never eat fish or any non-veg item. If she believes everyone should be allowed to eat what he/she loves to eat, then why is she twisting Modi's comments about one's dietary habits? She is insulting devout Sanatani Hindus" he added.

Reacting to Banerjee's comments, CPI(M) leader Bikash Bhattacharya said, "Being Dada-Bon (brother and sister), Mamata didi can certainly offer to cook meals for the prime minister, do not know if it is to placate him."

Bhattacharya was referring to the jibe — "Didibhai-Modibhai" that the Left and the Bengal Congress unit use to refer to the alleged tacit understanding between the BJP and the TMC.

He said such comments in the backdrop of her public posturing against "Modi's politics and divisive speeches show an apparent contradiction" in what she publicly says and preaches in private.

Went to support my friend: Allu after being booked for alleged election code violation

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Days after he was booked for allegedly violating the Model Code of Conduct in the run-up to Lok Sabha polls, popular Telugu actor Allu Arjun on Tuesday said he went to the Nandyal district to support his friend and YSRCP constituency candidate S Ravi Chandra Kishore Reddy but isn't affiliated to any political party.

On Saturday, the "Pushpa" star waved to a large crowd from a balcony with the YSRCP candidate and also posted a message on X in his favour. The Andhra Pradesh Police booked a case against the "Pushpa: The Rise" star on Saturday under IPC Section 188 the same day.

Arjun said he remains neutral and supports "my people" including Janasena Party founder and actor-uncle Pawan Kalyan, regardless of their political affiliations.

"Firstly, I want to clarify that I'm not affiliated with any



political party. I remain neutral and support my people, regardless of their political affiliations. This includes my uncle Pawan Kalyan, whom I'll always stand by, along with my friend Ravi and my father-in-law, Mr. Reddy," the actor said in a statement.

The National Award winner, who cast his vote in Hyderabad on Monday, said he went to Nandyal district to support his friend Ravi.

"I made a promise to my friend, Mr. Ravi, to support him, but I couldn't fulfill it last time. To keep my word, this

time I went to Nandyal to support him," he further said. In a post on X on Saturday, Arjun thanked the people of Nandyal for a "warm reception".

"Thank you, Silpa Ravi Reddy (YSRCP candidate) garu, for the hospitality. Wishing you the very best in the elections and beyond. You have my unwavering love and support," he had posted.

Janasena, TDP and BJP are NDA alliance partners, who are taking on Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRCP in the elections. Andhra Pradesh went to the polls on Monday.

Hearing in 2018 defamation case against Rahul on May 27

PTI ■ SULTANPUR

Hearing in a 2018 defamation case against Rahul Gandhi over his alleged objectionable remarks targeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah has been fixed for May 27 following the appointment of a new judge to the special court.

The defamation complaint against Gandhi was filed by BJP leader Vijay Mishra six years ago.

The plaintiff's advocate, Santosh Pandey, said the matter would be heard on May 27. Gandhi's lawyer Kashi Prasad Shukla said the case could not be taken up during the day due to the non-appointment of a judge of the MP/MLA court. The judge was transferred a month ago and a new judge is yet to be appointed.

Last December, the court issued a warrant against Rahul Gandhi. Subsequently, Gandhi halted his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Amethi on February 20, appeared in the court and was granted bail.



The complaint was filed here on August 4, 2018, against Rahul Gandhi for his alleged objectionable comments against Shah made at a press conference in Bengaluru in May of that year during the Karnataka elections.

The complainant referred to Gandhi's comment that the BJP claims to believe in honest and clean politics but has a party president who is an "accused" in a murder case. Shah was BJP president when Gandhi made the comment.

About four years before Gandhi's remark, a special CBI court in Mumbai discharged Shah in a 2005 fake encounter case when he was a minister of state for home in Gujarat.

Sometimes a film is so bad people leave midway: Thakur's sally against HP CM

PTI ■ DHARAMSHALA/SHIMLA

BJP leader Anurag Thakur on Tuesday, in an apparent response to Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu, who said he will complete his term and go for another, said "sometimes, a film fails so bad that the viewers leave it before interval."

The Union Information and Broadcasting Minister made the remark while speaking to reporters after the filing of nomination of BJP candidate Sudhir Sharma from the Dharamshala assembly seat.

Thakur said it would be a difficult enough task for Sukhu to complete his current term, let alone getting elected to another.

Polling for the four Lok Sabha seats and bypolls for six assembly seats will be held on June 1 in Himachal Pradesh.

"I still remember when Sharma contested his first election, BJP leader Prem Kumar Dhumal wanted him to be in the BJP and today we are strengthened as he has joined the party. The BJP



workers will ensure his victory," Thakur told reporters.

Sudhir Sharma is one of the six Congress rebels who had voted in favour of the BJP in the Rajya Sabha polls held on February 27. These six MLA were disqualified for defying a whip to be present in assembly and vote for the government.

Later, all six joined the BJP and were given tickets from their respective assembly seats.

Sukhu, after the filing of nomination by Congress candidate Devinder Jaggi from Dharamshala assembly seat, told media, "We have fielded an honest candidate against

the leader of the Congress MLAs who sold themselves in the political market. The people of Dharamshala would give a befitting reply to him on June 1." On Tuesday, actor Kangana Ranaut also filed her nomination from the Mandi Lok Sabha seat as a BJP candidate.

She was accompanied by leader of the opposition Jai Ram Thakur and state BJP chief Rajiv Bindal.

The BJP cadres carried placards of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and shouted "Mandi ka sansad kaisa ho, Kangana Ranaut jaisa ho" as she headed for the election office.

Drugs big problem in Punjab; politicians only interested in mudslinging: SAD (A) nominee Sidhana

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Gangster-turned-social activist Lakha Sidhana, who is testing political waters from the Bathinda parliamentary constituency, claims that his rivals are shying away from speaking about real issues like the drug menace and are only happy slinging mud.

Forty-five-year old Sidhana, who is the Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) candidate, says he is getting an overwhelming response and the people have told him they would be giving him a chance, having tried all other major political parties.

Popularly known as Lakha Sidhana, Lakhvir Singh hails from Sidhana village of Bathinda district.

He had unsuccessfully contested the 2022 assembly

polls from Maur assembly seat as an Independent. Though lost, he had an impressive outing garnering 28,091 votes. In the 2012 assembly polls, he unsuccessfully contested from the Rampura Phul seat on the symbol of the People's Party of Punjab, which was formed by the state's current Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal after quitting the Shiromani Akali Dal.

"Drugs are a major issue. The situation is so bad that 'Chitta' (a synthetic drug) is easily available. In many villages like Manna, Raike Kalam, Kattianwali, several youths perished due to drug addiction," Sidhana told PTI.

"It is a very serious issue and it is not being discussed at all as rival political leaders fear that they will be questioned by



people about the steps taken to contain it when they were in power," he added.

Earlier, the Congress had promised to wipe out drugs and after it, AAP vowed to end it, he said, adding to the list of issues afflicting the state, unemployment and corruption.

"Real issues of Punjab are not being raised in these elections. They are missing. Only politics is being done. Political leaders are just indulging in mudslinging and criticising each other," he said.

Mounting state debt, a stagnation in MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee) wages, and revival of the old pension scheme for government employees are some of the issues Sidhana said

he is campaigning for. He said the people are "disappointed" with AAP's performance in the state.

"Mann had said that his government would do so much work that there would not be any need to seek votes as people will vote themselves. Now what is the need to seek votes? People of Punjab are thoroughly disappointed. They have seen governments of all parties, SAD-BJP alliance, Congress regime and now AAP is ruling in the state. People had voted for 'badlav' and they had high expectations but nothing happened," Sidhana claimed.

Asked about his prospects, he said, "People are silent... There will be a surprising result."

Sidhana said he is also working towards promoting Punjabi language and has formed a

'Punjabi Maa Boli Satkar Jathebandi' for the purpose. "We are not against any language but there cannot be a compromise on our mother tongue."

In 2002, Sidhana was booked under various sections of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act for defacing English text on the sign boards installed at a toll plaza in Barnala.

A postgraduate in history from Punjabi university, Sidhana is currently facing 13 criminal cases, according to his poll affidavit.

He is pitted against SAD candidate and three-time MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal, AAP's Gurmmeet Singh Meht AAR, BJP's Parampal Kaur Sidhu, and Congress's Jeet Mohinder Sidhu.

Ex-Indian Army officer with UN killed in Gaza

First international casualty since Israel-Hamas conflict

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

A former Indian Army officer working with the United Nations was killed in Gaza when the vehicle he was travelling in came under attack in a strike on Monday morning, becoming the "first international casualty" for the world body since the Israel-Hamas conflict started last year.

The United Nations has called for a full investigation while Israel has ordered a separate investigation into the attack. Col Waibhav Anil Kale, 46, who took premature retirement from the Indian Army in 2022, joined the UN as a Security Coordination Officer in the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (DSS) two months ago, officials in New Delhi said on Tuesday.

Kale, who had served with the 11 Jammu & Kashmir Rifles, was travelling along with

another DSS staffer to the European Hospital in Rafah when their UN vehicle was struck on Monday morning. The other person, not identified, was seriously injured. According to Kale's LinkedIn profile, he had joined the Indian Army in April 2004 and had also served as Contingent Chief Security Officer with the United Nations between 2009 and 2010. He did his B.A. from the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi and had degrees in Behavioral Science and International Humanitarian Law and had studied at, among other institutions, the Indian Institute of Management at Lucknow and Indore.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "deeply saddened to learn of the death of a United Nations Department of Safety and Security (DSS) staff member and injury to another DSS



staffer." A statement by Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General, said that Guterres condemned all attacks on UN personnel and called for a full investigation. Guterres sent his condolences to the family of the fallen staff member. "With the conflict in Gaza continuing to take a heavy toll — not only on civilians but also on humanitarian workers — the Secretary-General reiterates his urgent appeal for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and for the release of all hostages," the statement added. In a post on X, Guterres said

the UN vehicle was struck in Gaza, "killing one of our colleagues & injuring another" and said, more than 190 UN staff have been killed in Gaza. Responding to questions on the incident during a press briefing, Haq said at this point, "We are in the process of informing the relevant governments and the relevant family members..." He added that they were "international staff" and confirmed that "this is, in fact, the first international UN casualty." While there have been international casualties involving workers for the World Central Kitchen in Gaza, Haq said that "of UN staff, I believe I've not been previously aware of an international casualty." Haq added that the vehicle was headed to the hospital "as part of their regular work. They go to different locations to assess security conditions. And this was the European hospital in Rafah."

When asked for details about how their vehicle was struck, Haq said "We're still accumu-

lating details. We expect to get reports, including from the relevant authorities." He added that close to 190 UN personnel have been killed in Gaza since October 7, "most of them national staff of the UN Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA." Haq added that the UN is "going to set up measures for accountability. A lot of that... ultimately requires an end to the conflict so that we can work these out, but we will be working with the authorities on the ground to get restitution for all of those who have been killed."

Haq said he did not have the full details of whether the vehicle that was struck was part of a large convoy. "I believe it was in a convoy that was moving, and this was the DSS vehicle that was hit." BBC reported that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed it had received a report from the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) that said two of its workers were injured in the Rafah area — in southern Gaza — on Monday.

The IDF added that the incident was under review, it said. Director-General of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a post on X, "We are devastated to learn about the death" of a UN humanitarian worker and injury of another in Gaza. "Too many civilian and humanitarian lives have paid the price for this war. Ceasefire and work towards peace," the WHO chief said.

In April, seven members of the World Central Kitchen were killed in an IDF strike in Gaza. One of those killed in the airstrike was Zomi Frankcom, an Australian of Indian descent, according to reports.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that between October 7, 2023, and May 12, 2024, at least 35,091 Palestinians have been killed and 78,827 injured in Gaza.

More than 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals, including 33 children, were killed in Israel, the vast majority on October 7, when Hamas attacked Israel.

Indonesian rescuers search through rubble after floods kill 50

Tanah Datar (AP): Rescuers on Tuesday searched in rivers and the rubble of devastated villages for bodies, and whenever possible, survivors of flash floods that hit Indonesia's Sumatra Island over the weekend. Monsoon rains and a landslide of mud and cold lava from Mount Marapi caused rivers to breach their banks. The deluge tore through mountainside villages in four districts in West Sumatra province just before midnight Saturday.

The floods swept away people and 79 homes and submerged hundreds of houses and buildings, forcing more than 3,300 residents to flee to temporary government shelters, National Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said.

Muhari said 50 bodies had been pulled from mud and rivers by Tuesday, mostly in worst-hit Agam and Tanah

Datar districts, while rescuers are searching for 27 people who are reportedly missing. Television reports showed rescue personnel using jackhammers, circular saws, farm tools and sometimes their bare hands, digging desperately in Agam district where roads were transformed into murky brown rivers and villages covered by thick mud, rocks, and uprooted trees.

Scores of rescue personnel were searching through a river around the Anai Valley Waterfall area in Tanah Datar district where tons of mud, rocks and trees were left from flash floods. Rescuers were focused on finding four people from a group of seven that were swept away with their cars. Three other bodies were pulled out on Monday, said Abdul Malik, who heads the Search and Rescue Office in Padang, the provincial capital.

Palestinians mark 76 years of dispossession as even larger catastrophe unfolds in Gaza

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Palestinians on Wednesday will mark the 76th year of their mass expulsion from what is now Israel, an event that is at the core of their national struggle. But in many ways, that experience pales in comparison to the calamity now unfolding in Gaza.

Palestinians refer to it as the "Nakba," Arabic for "catastrophe." Some 700,000 Palestinians — a majority of the prewar population — fled or were driven from their homes before and during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that followed Israel's establishment.

After the war, Israel refused to allow them to return because it would have resulted in a Palestinian majority within its borders. Instead, they became a seemingly permanent refugee community that now numbers some 6 million, with most living in slum-like urban refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

In Gaza, the refugees and their

descendants make up around three-quarters of the population. Israel's rejection of what Palestinians say is their right of return has been a core grievance in the conflict and was one of the thorniest issues in peace talks that last collapsed 15 years ago. The refugee camps have always been the main bastions of Palestinian militancy. Now, many Palestinians fear a repeat of their painful history on an even more cataclysmic scale.

All across Gaza, Palestinians in recent days have been loading up cars and donkey carts or setting out on foot to already overcrowded tent camps as Israel expands its offensive. The images from several rounds of mass evacuations throughout the seven-month war are strikingly similar to black-and-white photographs from 1948. Mustafa al-Gazzar, now 81, still recalls his family's months-long flight from their village in what is now central Israel to the southern city of Rafah, when he was 5. At one point they were

bombed from the air, at another, they dug holes under a tree to sleep in for warmth. Al-Gazzar, now a great-grandfather, was forced to flee again over the weekend, this time to a tent in Muwasi, a barren coastal area where some 450,000 Palestinians live in a squalid camp. He says the conditions are worse than in 1948, when the UN agency for Palestinian refugees was able to regularly provide food and other essentials.

"My hope in 1948 was to return, but my hope today is to survive," he said. "I live in such fear," he added, breaking into tears. "I cannot provide for my children and grandchildren." The war in Gaza, which was triggered by Hamas' October 7 attack into Israel, has killed over 35,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, making it by far the deadliest round of fighting in the history of the conflict. The initial Hamas attack killed some 1,200 Israelis. The war has forced some 1.7

million Palestinians — around three quarters of the territory's population — to flee their homes, often multiple times. That is well over twice the number that fled before and during the 1948 war.

Israel has sealed its border. Egypt has only allowed a small number of Palestinians to leave, in part because it fears a mass influx of Palestinians could generate another long-term refugee crisis.

The international community is strongly opposed to any mass expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza — an idea embraced by far-right members of the Israeli government, who refer to it as "voluntary emigration." Israel has long called for the refugees of 1948 to be absorbed into host countries, saying that calls for their return are unrealistic and would endanger its existence as a Jewish-majority state. It points to the hundreds of thousands of Jews who came to Israel from Arab countries during the turmoil following its establishment, though few of them want to return.

Georgian parliament approves divisive 'foreign influence' bill

AP ■ TBILISI

The Georgian parliament on Tuesday approved in the third and final reading a divisive bill that sparked weeks of mass protests, with critics seeing it as a threat to democratic freedoms and the country's aspirations to join the European Union.

The bill requires media and nongovernmental organisations and other nonprofits to register as "pursuing the interests of a foreign power" if they receive more than 20 per cent of their funding from abroad. The government says the bill is necessary to stem what it deems as harmful foreign influence over the country's politics and to prevent unspecified foreign actors from trying to destabilise it.

The opposition has denounced the bill as "the Russian law," because Moscow uses similar legislation to crack down on independent news media, nonprofits and activists critical of the Kremlin. Mass protests against the law in recent weeks have swept the South Caucasus



Demonstrators attend an opposition protest against "the Russian law" near the Parliament building in the centre of Tbilisi, Georgia, on Tuesday. AP/PTI

nation of 3.7 million. European Council President Charles Michel on Tuesday spoke of Georgia in Copenhagen, at a conference on democracy, and said that "if they want to join the EU, they have to respect the fundamental principles of the rule of law and the democratic principles."

The bill is nearly identical to one that the governing Georgian Dream party was pressured to withdraw last

year after street protests. Renewed demonstrations have rocked Georgia for weeks, with demonstrators scuffling with police, who used tear gas and water cannons to disperse the crowds.

Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili, who is increasingly at odds with the governing party, has vowed to veto the law, but Georgian Dream has a majority sufficient to override a presidential veto.

2 French officers killed, 3 injured in convoy attack

Paris (AP): Two French prison officers were killed and three others seriously injured when their prison convoy was attacked Tuesday in Normandy, officials said. The attack occurred as the convoy was returning to Evreux jail after a court hearing in Rouen, according to French outlet BFMTV.

Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti said he would join a crisis unit to address the emergency. "All means are being used to find these criminals. On my instructions, several hundred police officers and gendarmes were mobilized," Darmanin posted on X. He expressed condolences to the victims' families and agents of the Ministry of Justice.

French media reported that a prisoner being transported in the van may have escaped with the assailants.

The incident has prompted a significant law enforcement operation in the northwestern region of France as authorities worked to secure the area and apprehend the assailants.

Aussie army whistleblower sent to jail

Melbourne (AP): An Australian judge sentenced a former army lawyer to almost six years in prison on Tuesday for leaking to the media classified information that exposed allegations of Australian war crimes in Afghanistan.

David McBride, 60, was sentenced in a court in the capital, Canberra, to five years and eight months in prison after pleading guilty to three charges including theft and sharing with members of the press documents classified as secret. He had faced a potential life sentence. Justice David Mossop ordered McBride to serve 27 months in prison before he can be considered for release on parole. Rights advocates argue that McBride's conviction and sentencing before any alleged war criminal he helped expose reflected a lack of whistleblower protections in Australia. McBride's lawyer Mark Davis said he planned to file an appeal against the severity of the sentence.

Biden hiking tariffs on Chinese EVs, solar cells, steel, aluminum

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration announced plans to slap new tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, advanced batteries, solar cells, steel, aluminum and medical equipment — an election year move that's likely to increase friction between the world's two largest economies.

The tariffs come in the middle of a heated campaign between President Joe Biden and his Republican predecessor, Donald Trump, in which both candidates are vying to show who's tougher on China. The tariffs are unlikely to have much of an inflationary impact because of how they're structured. Administration officials said they think the tariffs won't escalate tensions with China, yet they expect China will explore ways to respond to the new taxes on its products. It's uncertain what the long-term impact on prices could be if the tariffs contribute to a wider trade dispute. The tariffs are to be phased in



over the next three years, with those that take effect in 2024 covering EVs, solar cells, syringes, needles, steel and aluminum and more. There are currently very few EVs from China in the US, but officials worry low-priced models made possible by Chinese government subsidies could soon start flooding the U.S. market. Chinese firms can sell EVs for as little as USD 12,000. Their solar cell plants and steel and aluminum mills have enough capacity to meet much of the world's demand, with Chinese officials arguing their produc-

tion keeps prices low and would aid a transition to the green economy. Lael Brainard, director of the White House National Economic Council, said the tariffs will raise the cost of select Chinese goods and help thwart Beijing's efforts to dominate the market for emerging technologies in ways that pose risks to US national security and economic stability.

"China is simply too big to play by its own rules," Brainard told reporters on a Monday call previewing the announcement. Administration officials have stressed the decision on tariffs was made independently of November's presidential election. But Brainard noted in her remarks the tariffs would help workers in Pennsylvania and Michigan, two of the battleground states that will decide who wins the election. Under the findings of a four-year review on trade with China, the tax rate on imported Chinese EVs will rise to 102.5 per cent this year, up from total levels of 27.5 per

cent. The review was undertaken under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which allows the government to retaliate against trade practices deemed unfair or in violation of global standards. Under the 301 guidelines, the tariff rate is to double to 50 per cent on solar cell imports this year. Tariffs on certain Chinese steel and aluminum products will climb to 25 per cent this year. Computer chip tariffs will double to 50 per cent by 2025.

For lithium-ion EV batteries, tariffs will rise from 7.5 per cent to 25 per cent this year. But for non-EV batteries of the same type, the tariff increase will be implemented in 2026. There are also higher tariffs on ship-to-shore cranes, critical minerals and medical products.

The new tariffs, at least initially, are largely symbolic since they will apply to only about USD 18 billion in imports. A new analysis by Oxford Economics estimates the tariffs will have a barely noticeable

impact on inflation by pushing up inflation by just 0.01 per cent.

The Chinese foreign ministry lashed out over the US move. A ministry spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, said the US is, under the banner of overcapacity, suppressing the advanced industries of other countries, carrying out protectionism with the excuse of free competition, and trampling on the principles of a market economy and international economic and trade rules.

"It's a naked act of bullying," Wang said. He said China's rapid growth in new-energy areas such as EVs, lithium batteries and photovoltaics is based on technological innovation, complete supply chain, sufficient market competition, and not so-called "subsidies."

The Chinese economy has been slowed by the collapse of the country's real estate market and past coronavirus pandemic lockdowns, prompting Chinese President Xi Jinping to try to jumpstart growth by

ramping up production of EVs and other products, making more than the Chinese market can absorb.

This strategy further exacerbates tensions with a US government that claims it's determined to strengthen its own manufacturing to compete with China, yet avoid a larger conflict. "China's factory-led recovery and weak consumption growth, which are translating into excess capacity and an aggressive search for foreign markets, in tandem with the looming US election season add up to a perfect recipe for escalating US trade fractions with China," said Eswar Prasad, professor of trade policy at Cornell University.

The Europeans are worried, too. The EU launched an investigation last fall into Chinese subsidies and could impose an import tax on Chinese EVs.

After Xi's visit to France last week, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen warned that government-sub-

sized Chinese EVs and steel "are flooding the European market" and said, "The world cannot absorb China's surplus production."

Biden's Democratic administration views China with subsidies of its own manufacturing as trying to globally control the EV and clean-energy sectors, whereas it says its own industrial support is geared toward ensuring domestic supplies to help meet US demand. "We do not seek to have global domination of manufacturing in these sectors, but we believe because these are strategic industries and for the sake of resilience of our supply chains, that we want to make sure that we have healthy and active firms," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said. The tensions go far beyond a trade dispute to deeper questions about who leads the world economy as a seemingly indispensable nation. China's policies could make the world more dependent on its factories, possibly giving it greater leverage in geopolitics.

EU agrees on a new migration pact

AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Union nations endorsed sweeping reforms to the bloc's failed asylum system on Tuesday as campaigning for Europe-wide elections next month gathers pace, with migration expected to be an important issue.

EU government ministers approved 10 legislative parts of The New Pact on Migration and Asylum. It lays out rules for the 27 member countries to handle people trying to enter without authorisation, from how to screen them to establish whether they qualify for protection to deporting them if they're not allowed to stay. Hungary and Poland, which have long opposed any obligation for countries to host

migrants or pay for their upkeep, voted against the package but were unable to block it. Mainstream political parties believe the pact resolves the issues that have divided member nations since well over 1 million migrants swept into Europe in 2015, most fleeing war in Syria and Iraq. They hope the system will starve the far right of vote-winning oxygen in the June 6-9 elections.

However, the vast reform package will only enter force in 2026, bringing no immediate fix to an issue that has fuelled one of the EU's biggest political crises, dividing nations over who should take responsibility for migrants when they arrive and whether other countries should be obligated to help. Critics say the pact will let

nations detain migrants at borders and fingerprint children. They say it's aimed at keeping people out and infringing on their right to claim asylum. Many fear it will result in more unscrupulous deals with poorer countries that people leave or cross to get to Europe.

Europe's asylum laws have not been updated for about two decades. The system frayed and then fell apart in 2015. It was based on the premise that migrants should be processed, given asylum or deported in the country they first enter.

Greece, Italy and Malta were left to shoulder most of the financial burden and deal with public discontent. Since then, the ID-check-free zone known as the Schengen Area has expanded to 27 countries, 23 of them EU members. It means

that more than 400 million Europeans and visitors, including refugees, are able to move without showing travel documents.

Some 3.5 million migrants arrived legally in Europe in 2023. Around 1 million others were on EU territory without permission. Of the latter, most were people who entered normally via airports and ports with visas but didn't go home when they expired. The pact applies to the remaining minority, estimated at around 300,000 migrants last year. They are people caught crossing an external EU border without permission, such as those reaching the shores of Greece, Italy or Spain via the Mediterranean Sea or Atlantic Ocean on boats provided by smugglers.

Golgappas makes frequent entries into WH menu

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Golgappa, pani puri or puchka is making frequent entry into the White House receptions with guests being served with this mouth-watering popular Indian street food. In the last year, it has been served at least a couple of times, the latest being the Rose Garden reception on Monday hosted by President Joe Biden to celebrate the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month.

The guests included scores of Asian-Americans and several Indian-Americans, including US Surgeon General Dr Vivek Murthy who played an important role in the fight against COVID-19. So far, only samosas used to appear on the



White House receptions menu. However, golgappas now appear to be catching up with the samosas fast.

"Last year when I was here, there were golgappas/pani puri. This year too, I was looking for them and then suddenly one of the servers brought in the pani puri/golgappa. That was amazing. The taste was dingy and a little spicy. Perfect!" communi-

ty leader Ajay Jain Bhutoria told PTI after attending the AANHPI reception in the Rose Garden of the White House on Monday evening. A curious Bhutoria met White House executive chef Cristeta Comerford on the grounds of the White House and asked her about the golgappa. "I asked her, did you make the golgappas-in-house? She said, yes, we made everything in the White House," he said.

There was another Indian item 'Khoya' on the White House menu at the reception, Bhutoria said. "It was sweet and made of khoya and they called it khoya. That was wonderful. It is good to see in the AANHPI Heritage month celebration, representation of all the Asian American communities, food and delicacies, and especially

for Indian-American golgappa and khoya," Bhutoria said in response to a question.

Over the last few years, golgappa is increasingly becoming popular in the US because of its mouth-watering taste. "A lot of US administration officials, whether the people from the State Department or the White House, have travelled to India many times. I'm sure the counterparts over there say out of all the street foods, you need to try golgappa. I'm sure they have stopped somewhere, taken them on the roadside or whichever of the five-star hotels. After they tested it out, they said, oh, we must serve this in the White House," Bhutoria said. "That's where we have seen golgappas, during the Diwali party in the State Department."

Swiatek on course for Madrid Rome double; facing Keys in the quarters

AP ■ ROME

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek remained on course for an uncommon Madrid-Rome double after beating Angelique Kerber to reach the Italian Open quarterfinals on Monday. It was a ninth straight win for Swiatek, and the two-time Rome champion will next face Madison Keys after the American player eased past Sorana Cirstea 6-2, 6-1 in a match that was interrupted by an environmental protest. Swiatek needed eight set points to secure the opener but had no such problems at the end of the second, sealing a 7-5, 6-3 victory on the first match point when Kerber's return went wide. The match against Keys will be a repeat of last week's Madrid

Open semifinal, which Swiatek won. The Polish player is attempting to become the first woman to win the "dirt double" since Serena Williams in 2013. "For sure, playing against Maddie is not easy," Swiatek said. "The score was pretty one way in Madrid. It's kind of easy for your mind to just drift off sometimes. The most important thing is to stay focused and really disciplined." Keys' match in Rome was temporarily suspended at 3-1 in the second set after two protesters jumped onto the court and threw confetti, while others from the environmentalist group glued themselves to the stands. "As soon as I saw them come over the barrier, my first thought was like, Should I go tackle one of them?" But I

stopped myself," Keys said. "And then the chair (umpire) started yelling at me to go sit down. Unfortunately, it's starting to become a little bit of a common thing that's happening." The players returned to the locker room and the protestors did not resist when security intervened before police and firefighters also arrived to handle the situation. Two more Americans were through to the quarterfinals after third-seeded Coco Gauff rallied to beat Paula Badosa 5-7, 6-4, 6-1 and Danielle Collins eased past Irina-Camelia Begu 6-0, 6-3. Second-seeded Aryna Sabalenka fought back from a set down and had to fend off three match points - after getting treatment for a back



problem - before beating Elina Svitolina 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7) in a match that finished well after midnight local time. Two-time champion Svitolina looked certain to secure the victory on her first match point as she had what should have been the simplest of volleys over the net with Sabalenka seemingly stranded right at the other side of the court. But Svitolina hit the ball into the net. Victoria Azarenka, Jelena Ostapenko and Qinwen Zheng also advanced. In the men's tournament, defending champion Daniil Medvedev survived a scare before prevailing against Serbian qualifier Hamad Medjedovic 7-6 (5), 2-6, 7-5 in their third-round match. Next Gen titleholder Medjedovic was given a

standing ovation as he left the court after some courageous tennis but he will be regretting not making the most of a set point in the opening set. The second-seeded Medvedev will face Tommy Paul in the round of 16 after the American beat Dominik Koepfer 6-4, 6-3. Both of the Madrid finalists were eliminated. Last week's winner Andrey Rublev, who was seeded fourth in Rome, was upset by French qualifier Alexandre Muller 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 for his first win over a top-10 player. Madrid runner-up Felix Auger-Aliassime was beaten by ninth-seeded Alex de Minaur 6-7 (2), 6-4, 6-4. Also advancing were Hubert Hurkacz, Stefanos Tsitsipas, Sebastian Baez and Nicolas Jarry.

Arjun top seed in Sharjah Masters, total 19 Indians in fray

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Grandmaster and world number seven Erigaisi Arjun starts as the top seed as he spearheads a strong Indian challenge in the USD 52,000 Sharjah Masters Chess tournament here. One of the strongest open events in the world will see participation of as many as 19 Indian Grandmasters and S L Narayanan will be the second highest rated Indian ahead of Nihal Sarin. The nine-round Swiss tournament, which carries a total prize pool of USD 52,000 with USD 12,000 reserved for the winner, begins later in the day. Arjun flew straight from Warsaw where he just finished the Superbet Rapid and Blitz tournament ending fifth overall. This is a rare case of a top-10 player participating in open events and Arjun has played exceptionally well in



the past few months. The reason top players avoid competing in open events is the huge risk to their rating but Arjun is setting new standards by actually gaining points from open events.

While there are nine players above Elo 2700 in the fray, Arjun is 29 points ahead of second seed Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran. The tournament comes close on the heels of Dubai Police Global Chess

challenge that was dominated by the Indians. V Pranav was the worthy winner taking home USD 16,500. For the first time ever in an International Open of this stature, the top three prizes were bagged by Indians with Aravindh Chithambaram finishing second and M Pranesh coming third. Chithambaram is a two-time national champion and has been making steady progress. For the first time in his career, the Chennai-based player has cracked into the top-50 of world rankings and will be hoping to make further progress. Nihal Sarin was in the eye of a storm when he was indirectly accused of online cheating by Russian great Vladimir Kramnik because of his stupendous results in the online blitz games. The champion from Kerala is exceptional in the faster version of the game and has been one of the best

players when it comes to online chess. A bit stagnant for some time, Sarin will also hope to have a good tournament and break free from the present levels. Abhijeet Gupta is a former world junior champion and has won tournaments across continents. He is a feared opponent for many but inconsistency has been a problem for him in the last few years. Having recovered from a serious hand injury, Gupta is another Indian to look forward to in the event that has 88 participants in all. PARTICIPANTS FROM INDIA: Erigaisi Arjun, S L Narayanan, Nihal Sarin, Aravindh Chithambaram, Raunak Sadhwani, Leon Luke Mendonca, Abhimanyu Puranik, Aditya Mittal, Abhijeet Gupta, S P Sethuraman, V Pranav, Bharath Subramaniyam, Sankalp Gupta, Pranav Anand, Raja Rithvik, B Adhiban, D Harika, Aditya Samant, P Niyan.



Duran Duran: Substitute bags two late goals in Villa thriller with Liverpool

AP ■ BIRMINGHAM

Substitute Jhon Duran was a late savior for Aston Villa on Monday, scoring twice in the last five minutes against Liverpool to grab a remarkable 3-3 home draw and edge his team closer to next year's Champions League. Watched by Villa fan Tom Hanks, who was in the ground in a claret tracksuit top, Villa played its part in a thrilling match in front of a packed house that Liverpool coach Jurgen Klopp described as "rocking." A win would have confirmed a place in the English Premier League top four for Unai Emery's side and a place in the European Cup for the first time since 1983. But the home side went behind in the second minute with a bizarre own goal from goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, and although Yuri Tielemans equalized soon after, goals from Cody Gakpo and Jarell Quansah put Liverpool in the driving seat. Until Duran's appearance after 79 minutes. The Colombian scored in the 85th and 88th, the second an astonishing lob executed on the run that sent Villa and its supporters wild with joy. "We created chances but we didn't score," Tielemans told broadcaster Sky Sports. "We got the draw and fought right until the end and that's the most important thing. Unfortunately, we couldn't score more, we felt like we deserved more in the first half. It's unlucky but we'll take the draw." Villa remained in fourth place, five points ahead of Tottenham. Villa has one game left to play and Tottenham has two,

starting with Tuesday night's visit by league leader Manchester City. The top four qualify for the Champions League. Liverpool was third, 14 points clear of Villa. The atmosphere was electric at kickoff but the power was quickly sapped for the home side when Liverpool had the ball in the back of the net after just 62 seconds. Harvey Elliott's cross from the right took a deflection and the wrong-footed Martinez fumbled the ball into his own net. It took the home side just 15 minutes to recover. Ollie Watkins did well on the left flank and cut the ball back for the unmarked Yuri Tielemans to slam home from around 16 meters. Liverpool regained the lead but only after a lengthy VAR review. Luiz Diaz fed Joe Gomez on the overlap and his low ball across goal was turned in by Cody Gakpo. Jarell Quansah made it three early in the second half when he headed home a cross from Elliott to bag his first league goal. And then it was Duran Duran when the Colombian slotted home from just outside the box and then scored that astonishing lob. "Jhon Duran is a special player," Emery said on Sky Sports. "He was very clinical and today was important for him." The Aston Villa players will tune into Tuesday's Spurs-Man City game. Anything other than a Spurs win means Villa are into the Champions League. "There's some of us that have never been close to the Champions League in our life," Villa captain John McGinn said.



UEFA wants Euro 2024 referees to speak more with captains and get more respect in return

AP ■ FRANKFURT (GERMANY)

The Union of European Football Associations is offering a communications deal between referees and teams at the European Championship - we will do more to explain decisions, you let only captains approach to discuss them. UEFA has this week gathered Euro 2024 match officials in Frankfurt to prepare for the June 14-July 14 tournament, and detailed on Tuesday the standards it expects. Yellow cards are promised for any player who is not the captain "showing any sign of disrespect or dissent" when approaching the referee. While the VAR system of reviewing decisions is widely unpopular in domestic games, it has provoked a few controversies in international competitions where UEFA can pick from the best match officials. UEFA referees do not broadcast explanations for video review decisions. "We are ready to speak and share more details with the

players and coaches to help them understand how a decision was taken," UEFA head of refereeing Roberto Rosetti said in a statement. "Importantly, we want only the captain from the team who wishes to discuss a decision to be able to approach the referee," said the Italian official, whose refereeing career peaked while handling the Euro 2008 final. "It is the responsibility of the captain to ensure his teammates respect the referee, keep their distance and do not surround him." When a captain is a goalkeeper and an incident happens far from his goal, an outfield player should be nominated to talk with the referee. Rosetti said UEFA's aim for the 51-game tournament is talking with captains "to foster a healthy atmosphere between all parties." "This will allow them to build significant amounts of trust with players, and show the kind of leadership required from modern officials in action.

In Tokyo, I was just happy to be there but I will be more focussed in Paris: Diksha Dagar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian golfer Diksha Dagar was just happy to be there when she made her Olympic debut in the Tokyo Games but having become "more balanced, and stable" since then, the Deaflympics gold-medallist is eager to deliver a solid performance when she competes in the upcoming Paris Games. The 23-year-old, who last week became the first Indian golfer to tee off in a 100 Ladies European Tour events, will be on a packed European sojourn ahead of the Paris Olympics in July-August. She made her Olympics debut alongside Aditi Ashok, who had pulled off a creditable fourth place finish. Starting this week at the Amundi German Masters in Berlin, Dagar will participate in at least nine events, almost all in Europe, to prepare for the Summer Games. "All events from here on will be like an Olympics for me," Dagar said on the 'Fit India Champions Podcast', a series that features India's top sportspersons. "In Tokyo, I was happy just participating. It was a great experience, learning and motivation for me. For Paris, I am more committed and focused on performing well rather than just participating," she said. Dagar is a special golfer. She is left-handed and is the only one to have competed at an



Olympics for the able-bodied and two Deaflympics (for the hearing impaired). She was born deaf and has a Cochlear implant to assist her. Managed by her father, Colonel Narinder Dagar, Dagar is a two-time Deaflympics medalist. The Rohtak player won a silver in 2017 in Turkey and a gold in 2022 in Brazil. Dagar turned professional in 2019. "I really want to get into the LPGA. That will test my levels. I want to finish in world top 50," Dagar, currently ranked 147th in the world, said. "Focusing on my discipline and process in all the tournaments that I am going to play will be important," said the Novak Djokovic fan. Dagar was a last-minute entry

in Tokyo after South African golfer Paula Reto withdrew. She has three professional titles in her career and is 37th in the Olympic rankings. She is part of the Sports Authority of India's Target Olympics Podium Scheme (TOPS). She and Aditi Ashok are the only two golfers funded by TOPS. Dagar will receive financial assistance of Rs 35.48 lakh to participate in the pre-Olympic tournaments starting this week. "I have improved on various aspects related to mental make-up, dealing with expectations, training, fitness, travel and preparation. In a way, I have kind of done my graduation and doing Masters' degree in nuances of professional golf.

"I am more balanced, stable and a happier pro," Dagar told SAI Media from Berlin on Tuesday. Having won a tournament in South Africa on her professional debut in 2019, Dagar has shown she is quite capable of performing on the big stage. "Golf and especially professional women's golf in India is at a very nascent level. Hope more girls and parents get inspired to take up this beautiful game. "I also wish and hope for more support for women's golf which is quite low at the moment. Happy to have reached a milestone and I guess it is equivalent to playing a 100 Test matches," Dagar added.

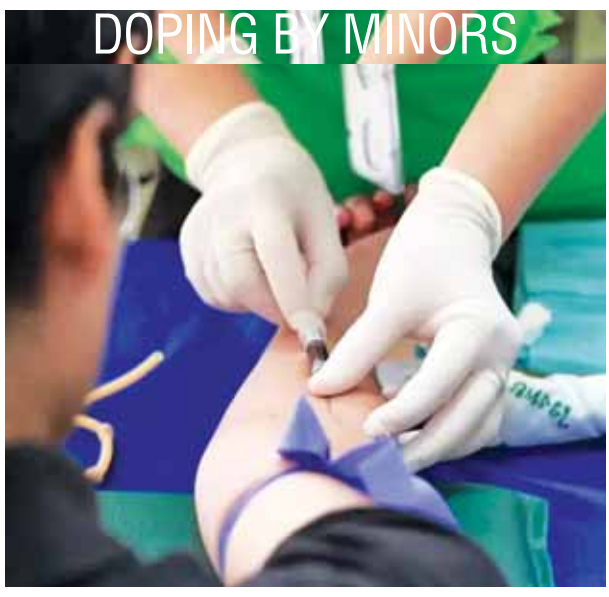
NADA needs enhanced budget to conduct more tests at junior level, says expert

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Increase in doping violations by minors in India is a cause of concern and NADA needs an enhanced budget to at least keep the menace in check as complete eradication would be tough, feels noted sports medicine expert PSM Chandran. Chandran, who is currently heading Sports and Exercise Science at the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence at Kalinga Stadium here, said roping in celebrities to propagate the harmful effects of doping could be a good way to reach out to youngsters. "First of all, let's make it clear, those who dope constitute 2.5 to three per cent of all the athletes, the other 96.5 to 97

per cent are clean. In sports, there always will be doping, it's a matter of how best you can keep it under control and not about eradicating it," Chandran told PTI in an interview. "Since the minors are also competing, some of them will do doping, whatever may be the reason. It (doping by minors) is a cause of concern but is not something unexpected. Just like adult sportspersons, they (minor athletes) also think they can get admission (to educational institutions) or get jobs if they get a medal. "Moreover, dope testing at junior levels is minimal because of lack of funds (for NADA) and they might be thinking that the chance of

getting caught is less." In a report published by World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in January, India was named as the second worst country in a 10-year global study of positive doping cases by minors. Russia topped the list, followed by India and China. Last month, in another WADA report, India registered the highest percentage of failed dope tests among countries which tested more than 2000 samples, based on the figures of 2022. India tested 3865 samples (urine, and blood combined) during the recorded period, of which 125 returned adverse analytical findings. This amounted to 3.2 per cent of the samples. Chandran, who has served as



consultant at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and as lead Dope Control Officer for the Indian Premier League, said lack of funds is a major hurdle in conducting tests at junior level competitions. "It costs around Rs 25,000 per test, this includes cost of the kits, transportation and laboratory charges as well as courier charges. But where is the money and how many tests you can do from the budget, these are the questions to be asked. "With the limited resources, how many tests can NADA do? Can they do testing for all sports? So, NADA has to go for sports like weightlifting and athletics (where doping is more rampant) and leave others.

"Even the labs have limitation in testing, they cannot take so much of load." In this year's interim budget, the government allocated Rs 22.30 crore to NADA, a slight increase than the 2023-24 amount of Rs 21.73 crore. Chandran also said that more than highlighting the moral aspect of doping, the focus should be on its harmful effects on health, especially on youngsters. "How it affects health, that should be highlighted. You talked about the moral side and the violation of the spirit of playing sports. That does not help," he said. Talking about innovative ideas on how to control doping, he said, "I always tell NADA people that they should spend

money on creating awareness of harmful effects of doping on health through mass media like during live telecast of big sporting events. "For example, during Indian Premier League (cricket) live telecast, celebrities from all walks of life, including sportspersons, can spread messages in a 10 or 20 second slot on the harmful effects of doping on health, especially on the youth. NADA can earmark money for doing this. "The message will reach millions of people, including parents. We have to reach out to more people, telling them that doping is injurious to health," said Chandran who has been a member of the NADA Anti-Doping Panel for many years.



LSG's LOSS TO DC IS RR's GAIN

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
 Commanding fifties from Abhishek Porel and Tristan Stubbs was complemented by a clinical bowling effort as Delhi Capitals kept their slim IPL play-off hopes alive with a 19-run win over Lucknow Super Giants in their final league fixture here on Tuesday.
 Porel (58 off 33 balls) and Shai Hope (38 off 27 balls) shared 92 runs off 49 balls to give the hosts an aggressive start.
 Tristan Stubbs (57 not out off 25) then hammered three fours and four maximums in his blitzkrieg and added 47 and 50 runs with Rishabh Pant (33) and Axar Patel (14 not out) to power DC to 208 for 4.
 The bowlers then joined the party to restrict the visitors to 189 for 9, despite a belligerent 27-ball 61 from Nicholas Pooran and a 33-ball 58 not out by Arshad Khan.
 After the loss in their penultimate league game, LSG are all but out of the play-off race. DC's win paved the way for Rajasthan Royals

qualification to the play-offs. Delhi moved to 14 points, same as Chennai Super Kings and Sunrisers Hyderabad, and their playoff chances depends on a sequence of other results.
 Chasing 209, LSG couldn't recover from a nightmarish start as Ishant (3/34), who replaced Porel as impact sub, removed both openers KL Rahul (5), Quinton de Kock (12) and Deepak Hooda (0) in his opening spell.
 Marcus Stoinis (5) was then bamboozled by Axar, while Stubbs had Ayush Badoni (6) caught at boundary line as LSG lost half their side for 71 in 8th over.
 Pooran hit six fours and four sixes to keep the runrate high as LSG reached 100 in 11th over. But once he was dismissed by Mukesh Kumar with Axar producing a special effort, Arshad Khan took centerstage slamming five sixes and three fours to keep them in the chase.
 Arshad added 33 runs each with Krunal Pandya (18) and Yuvvir Singh (14) to bring down the



equation to 29 off last 12 balls. But Mukesh and Rasikh Salam bowled superbly to limit them in the end. Earlier, DC's most dangerous batter Jake Fraser-McGurk fell to a trap at long-on but Porel took the onus, smashing six boundaries and four sixes during his stay. He cut the third ball of his innings over third man off Mohsin before picking up three

four and a six off Arshad Khan. Porel drove through the offside, cut and pulled anything short to race away to his second fifty of this IPL off 21 balls.
 Hope too stepped up with two fours and a six off Yuvvir Singh as DC crossed the 50-mark in a jiffy. Naveen was welcomed with a six by Porel, who sent him to the second tier next with another pull to take DC to 73 for one in powerplay.
 Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi (1/26) broke the partnership after having the West Indian caught as KL Rahul held on to the catch in his second attempt.
 Naveen then removed Porel, who was caught by Pooran at the boundary rope, leaving DC were 111 for 3 in 12th over.
 With Bishnoi keeping things tight, runs slowed down but Pant picked up two fours once Krunal Pandya was back in attack. Mohsin, however, gave just four in his third over as DC reached 136 for 3 in 15 overs.
 Stubbs then exploded with a six and two fours off Arshad in an 18-run over but Pant holed out to Hooda at long-on while going for a maximum off Naveen.
 Stubbs slammed Mohsin for a maximum before clobbering two more sixes off Naveen to reach his fifty in 22 balls. He added 50 off 22 balls with Axar Patel (14) as 72 came in last five overs.



Shastri, Ashwin back Impact Player rule

PTI ■ CHENNAI
 The "Impact Player" rule might have come in for sharp criticism in the ongoing IPL, but former India coach Ravi Shastri and senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin have backed it, stating that it leads to more close finishes.
 The rule, implemented in the competition last season, has been a topic of debate this edition, with some experts and current players saying that it will make all-rounders redundant.
 "When any new rule comes in, there will be people who will try to justify why that's not right," Shastri said.
 "But with time, when you see the scores — 200 and 190 — and then, individuals grabbing that opportunity and making the most of it, people will start re-looking at how they think about it," Shastri vouched for the rule, saying that the game has to evolve with time.
 "The Impact Player (rule) is good. You have to evolve with the times. It happens in other sports as well. It's got tighter finishes," he said on Ashwin's YouTube channel.
 "I think it's a good rule. You saw the number of tight finishes we had in last year's IPL. So, it has made a big difference." BCCI Secretary Jay Shah had recently said that the rule is not permanent.
 "Impact Player is like a test case. We have implemented it slowly. The biggest advantage of it is that two Indian players are getting a chance (in each game), which is the most important," he told the media in Mumbai last week.
 "We will consult with the players, franchises, broadcasters (and take a call). This is not permanent, (but) I am not saying that it will go. (We'll see) if it's making the game more competitive or not. Even then, if a player feels that this is not right, then we will talk to them. But no one has told us anything yet. So, it will be decided after the World Cup."
 India skipper Rohit Sharma and Delhi Capitals' Axar Patel and Mukesh Kumar, also expressed their displeasure with the rule.
 "I genuinely feel it is going to hold back the development of all-rounders because eventually cricket is played by 11 players, not 12," Rohit had said a couple of weeks back.
 "So, I am not a big fan of the Impact Player rule because you are taking so much from the game just to make it a little more entertaining for the people around you."

Rajasthan bank on Parag's 'Royal' homecoming

PTI ■ GUWAHATI
 R Ryan Parag, the hottest cricketing property to emerge from India's north-east, is expected to get a grand welcome from his home fans when Rajasthan Royals try to ensure a safe passage into the IPL play-offs against the ousted Punjab Kings in their penultimate league game on Wednesday.
 Placed second in the 10-team table with 16 points, Royals need to ensure one win in their next two 'home' games in Guwahati. That will be enough to seal a last four berth.
 For the past few years, Guwahati has been Royals' second home base and it was a strategic move by the franchise having invested a good six years in tapping Parag's potential.
 Panned for being inconsistent on social media platforms, Parag's homecoming this year

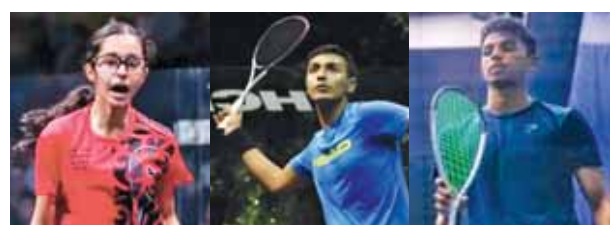
is special as his performance of 483 runs at a strike-rate of 153 despite not being an opener is simply outstanding.
 A stable core and improvisation as per match situations have already made Parag an India contender for the next T20 series where he is expected to make his international debut.
 As and when it happens, Parag will become the first cricketer hailing from the north-eastern part of the country to wear the senior team's iconic blue jersey. Parag's emergence as the cricketing face from the region makes this and the RR's next match against KKR more significant.
 The support for the 22-year-old will be organic and that will also help Sanju Samson and his men against Punjab Kings, which unearthed two T20 gems in Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma but once again failed to fire as a



team. Skipper Shikhar Dhawan's absence due to injury for the better part of the season matters worse as his stand-in Sam Curran didn't exactly look the part. Samson, on the other hand, has grown in stature as a

leader in what is expected to be his best season as a batter. He already is his team's top-scorer with 486 runs. The dynamic opening duo of Yashasvi Jaiswal (344 runs) and Jos Buttler (359 runs) have had an average season by their standards but Parag and Samson have ensured that batting remained solid and consistent with he low-scoring game against CSK being an aberration.
 RR's strongest aspect is their bowling unit that has never been taken to the task as such during the whole season. Sandeep Sharma (Economy Rate 8.07) at the death and Trent Boult (ER 8.38) at the start have executed plans to the 'T'.
 Ravichandran Ashwin has only become sharper as the tournament has progressed and Yuzvendra Chahal can always produce that magic ball against the run of play.

OTHER SPORTS



Three young squash players included in TOPS scheme

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
 With eyes firmly set on the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, young squash players Anahat Singh, Abhay Singh and Velavan Senthilkumar were on Tuesday included in the TOPS Development Group.
 Squash, which was inducted in the 2028 Olympics programme in October, is popular in India, with exponents doing well in the Asian and Commonwealth Games.
 For years, Saurav Ghosal, Dipika Pallikal and Joshna Chinappa have kept the flame burning and are now passing the baton to the next generation of players like Anahat, Abhay and Velavan.
 "The inclusion of squash in the TOPS programme marks a pivotal moment for the sport in India. Beyond immediate benefits like increased participation and enhanced training opportunities, this recognition signifies a broader endorsement of squash as a significant sporting discipline within the country," Squash Racquets Federation of India (SRFI) secretary general Cyrus Poncha said in a SAI release.
 "Including squash in TOPS opens doors to international exposure and collaboration, fostering exchange programs and partnerships with leading squash nations. This is bound to enhance the overall standard of squash in India."
 Anahat, 16, is already a

national champion, with over 46 titles in the national circuit so far. On the international front, she has started making waves as the current Asian U-17 champion and winner of two PSA World Tour titles. She also has two Asian Games medals.
 "I am really honoured SAI and SRFI considered me to be added to TOPS and I believe it will be a big support for me in improving my game and getting ready for international competition. I am sure when other Indian squash players hear about this, they will be encouraged to pick up squash professionally as they will know the government is supporting them if they perform well and represent India," she said. Among men, Abhay and Velavan were inducted in TOPS.
 At 25, Abhay is the current National Games gold medallist and national championship silver medallist. He has won nine PSA World Tour titles and was part of the Indian men's team that won the Asian Games gold in Hangzhou in 2023. "I've been working hard to climb up the PSA rankings and have been funding all my expenses to travel abroad and train under some of the best coaches. I'm happy that TOPS will now take care of me, and I really hope we keep producing results on the world tour especially the 2026 Asian Games and the again the Olympics," Abhay said.

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India will put to test its best strategies and combinations during the European leg of the FIH Pro League as it would be the last opportunity to shortlist the final squad for the Paris Olympics, said men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh on Tuesday.
 The team left for Antwerp, Belgium on Tuesday for the challenging league, where the winner of this season will be determined. India, currently third in the points table, behind the Netherlands and Australia, will play Belgium and Argentina in Antwerp between May 22 and 26. It will be followed by matches against Germany and Great Britain from June 1-9 in London.
 "We are trying out the best combinations before the final squad is selected for the Olympics. Hence, the Pro League outing is crucial in our preparations for Paris as well as for players to make it to the 16-member squad for Paris," said drag-flicker Harmanpreet in a Hockey India

We will try out best combinations before final squad for Olympics is selected: Harmanpreet

release before the team left for Europe.
 Last month, India, the Tokyo Olympics bronze medallists, lost all their five matches in Australia, raising doubts about their preparations for the Paris Games.
 Harmanpreet said the team will focus on eliminating any chinks in its armour ahead of Paris.
 "The team is quite excited to get back on the road again for yet another challenging outing where we will take on world's best teams in the Pro League. We will be travelling on the back of a very intense training camp over the past few weeks where we focused on our conditioning and played intra-squad matches regularly.
 "The team is shaping well and the Pro League is an important event for us to



iron out the flaws in our execution ahead of the Olympics," said Harmanpreet. The skipper said the Pro League will

not just help him asses his team's preparations but also provide cues into the rivals' strategies.
 "We have Belgium and Argentina in our pool at the Olympics along with Australia, Ireland and New Zealand. We play Belgium and Argentina both in Antwerp.
 Harmanpreet hoped that after finishing third in the last few seasons of the Pro League, his team would stake claim to the title this time around.
 "In the past few seasons of the Pro League, we have finished at third position. It will be great to finish on top this time and we are quite optimistic about it," Harmanpreet said.
 India will play Argentina on May 22 in Antwerp.

Paddler Manika Batra reaches career high ranking of world number 24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As women's table tennis player Manika Batra rose to a career-best singles ranking of 24 following her success in the Saudi Smash, becoming the first Indian woman paddler to break into the top-25 in world rankings.
 The 28-year-old Khel Ratna awardee, who was in 39th spot before the tournament, jumped 15 spots following her run in Jeddah, where she reached the quarterfinals.
 Manika, the 2018 Commonwealth Games gold medallist in individual and team categories, had shocked multiple-time world champion and Olympic gold medallist China's Wang Manyu (seeded second) on her way to the last-



singles quarterfinals at the Hangzhou last year, wrote that the ranking boost had come at the right time as she aims to secure a Paris Olympics berth.
 "An extreme confidence boost on the road to Paris 2024. Breaking into the Top-25 and achieving the best rank ever achieved by an Indian in women's singles of the ITTF Ranking," wrote Manika.
 Manika also thanked her coach Aman Balgu and sparring partner Kirill Barabanov of Belarus for her success.
 "Thank you, everyone, for your blessings and support. Especially my coach @amanbalgu, my sparring partner @kirill_barabanov and my family for the constant support. Onward and upward towards Paris 2024," she added.

Manu, Vijayveer win final 25m pistol Olympic Selection Trials

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Olympian Manu Bhaker and Paris quota winner Vijayveer Sidhu won the fourth and final Olympic Selection Trial (OST) in 25m pistol events here on Tuesday.
 At the M P State Shooting Academy, Manu, coached by the legendary pistol shooter Jaspal Rana, shot a world record-equaling 42 in the women's 25m Pistol OST T4 final, while Vijayveer shot 34 in the decider of the men's 25m rapid-fire pistol OST T4 to emerge triumphant.
 Manu displayed complete dominance in the trials, winning two and coming second in the other two.
 She was also the only shooter among the selected five to not score below 580 in the qualification round even once. Abhidnya Patil (35) was second, while Simranpreet Kaur Bar



(30) took home the final podium point. Esha Singh and Rhythm Sangwan were fourth and fifth respectively.
 In men's rapid fire, Vijayveer took the lead after the second five-shot series and held on to it till the eighth and final series to register his first outright victory in the trials.
 Anish Bhanwala was second with 30 while Adarsh Singh was third with 25. Ankur Goel (20) and Bhavesh Shekhawat (18) took the minor places. Anish, however, was the most successful of the five in the event, having won two trials and coming second in the other two.
 Bhavesh had won the second trial. Vijayveer, on the other hand, had come second twice in the three earlier trials.
 Wednesday will see the qualification rounds in men's and women's 50m Rifle 3 Positions event with local hopes Aishwary Tomar and Ashi Chouksey set to participate.