



OPINION 6 BUDDHIST INFLUENCE ON TAGORE'S WORK

WORLD 9 ZELENSKY VISITS SPAIN IN PURSUIT OF MORE WEAPONS

MONEY 10 NSE REDUCES TICK SIZE FOR SELECT STOCKS TO BOOST LIQUIDITY

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY MAY 28, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

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SHREYAS IYER'S JOURNEY TO IPL VICTORY 12 SPORTS

IMD forecasts Fry-days, relief only after June 1

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

With temperatures soaring as high as 47 degrees Celsius in some areas of the national Capital, Delhi, and in North West States like Rajasthan, Punjab, Chandigarh, and Haryana, as well as in Central parts of the country, people are grappling with intense heatwaves that have made outdoor activities nearly impossible. This challenging situation is expected to persist for at least the next three days, with the weather department issuing a red alert for heatwaves in several northern Indian cities, including Rajasthan. The Union Health Ministry has already advised employers to take essential heat safety measures at the workplace. "From providing hydration stations to scheduling outdoor tasks during cooler hours, let's ensure our workers stay cool, healthy, and productive," the Ministry said in a post on social media platform X. It also advised employers to train workers to recognise symptoms of heat-related illness. Relief from the blistering weather is anticipated from June 1, thanks to a fresh western disturbance, according to forecasts by the



Tourists at the Taj Mahal on a hot summer day in Agra

India Meteorological Department (IMD). The oppressive heat has driven residents indoors, resulting in public spaces being virtually deserted, particularly during the afternoon hours. In response to the ongoing intense hot weather in the national Capital, the Haryana Government has announced the advancement of summer

vacations in both State-run and private schools to begin on Tuesday. Additionally, Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj announced on Monday that 26 State Government-run hospitals will reserve two beds each for heatstroke patients, with an additional five beds reserved at the LNJH Hospital. The Centre Government

operated RML Hospital has already set up a heat stroke unit to tackle the likely heat-illness related cases. As large parts of North West and Central India experienced a punishing heatwave straining power grids, States are ready for disaster preparedness, like situation on Sunday. Continued on Page 2

Two die, life and property hit as Remal pounds Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

At least two persons were killed and several others injured as severe cyclonic storm Remal hit Bengal coasts on Sunday night, sources at State secretariat Nabanna said, adding the NDRF and SDRF teams were working overtime to restore normalcy in affected areas most of which lie in the vicinity of Sunderbans. Though the speed of the storm reduced to a great degree by Monday morning, incessant rains continued to lash eight districts of South Bengal nearly throwing life out of gear. The first death occurred after a wall collapsed under the impact of the rains at Bibir Bagan near Park Circus and Entally area of Kolkata, police said. Another person died when a tree collapsed under the impact of driving rains and gusting winds at 135 kmph at Mousuni Islands at the mouth of Bay of Bengal off Sunderbans. At least eight other persons were injured at various places in Kolkata and Kakdwip, sources said. Severe cyclone Remal made landfall between Sagar Islands in Bengal and Khepupara in neighbouring Bangladesh, sources said on Monday. Rivers surrounding most of the riverine islands — like Jharkhali, Geokhali,



Villagers at a flooded area following the landfall of Cyclone Remal in South 24 Parganas district on Monday

Kumirmari, Sandeshkhali Block I, Godkhali, Bakkhali, Gosaba — of the Sunderbans areas in two 24 Parganas districts were almost brimming and threatening to breach or overflow their mud embankments — under the impact of high tide and gushing rains — sources said, adding in many villages the embankments had been breached and salty water had entered the agricultural fields. "This flooding of the fields could have a deep impact on the local economy as there would be no agriculture for several years now," said former Minister from Sunderbans Kanti Ganguli who was actively involved in rescue work. By Monday evening the storm had nearly stopped but rains were still continuing. "Severe

Cyclonic Storm Remal over Coastal Bangladesh and adjoining Coastal West Bengal weakened into a cyclonic storm about 70km northeast of Canning and 30km west-southwest of Mongla on May 27. The system is likely to gradually weaken further," said India Meteorological Department post. "We have deployed appropriate number of teams all over Kolkata and adjoining areas to clear the uprooted trees and reach relief to people affected by the cyclone," Kolkata Mayor and Bengal Minister Firhad Hakim said, adding 14 teams of NDRF were working at various locations with modern equipment, cranes to hasten relief work. Continued on Page 2



'Depressed, in shock' Revanna promises to meet SIT on May 31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of sexually abusing several women, has said he will appear before the Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing the cases against him, on May 31. Terminating the cases against him as "false" and part of a "political conspiracy," he said he had gone into depression. "I will personally come before the SIT on May 31 at 10 am and cooperate with the investigation and also respond to it (charges). I have faith in the judiciary and I am confident that I will come out of false cases, through court," Pajwal said in a video statement. There was no independent confirmation from the JD(S) or the family of the suspended party MP immediately over the matter. Continued on Page 2



'Unwell' Kejriwal seeks weeklong reprieve from SC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, currently out on interim bail in connection with the excise policy case, has approached the Supreme Court seeking an extension of the same by seven more days to undergo a host of medical tests, including a PET-CT scan in view of his "sudden and unexplained weight loss, coupled with high ketone levels", which are indicatives of kidney, serious cardiac ailments and even cancer. Kejriwal, in his plea filed on May 26, stated that he will get all these tests done in the working week from 3.06.2024 (Monday) to 7.6.2024 (Friday) and then surrender on the weekend, i.e. 9.06.2024. Senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Atishi also on Monday said Kejriwal has sought a one-week extension of his interim bail as he needs to undergo tests due to his recent weight loss and rise in ketone level which could be symptoms of some kidney problem or even cancer. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva called this move a "drama" by the Chief Minister to avoid going back to jail after his interim bail in a money laundering case ends on June 1. The interim bail granted to Kejriwal has stirred controversy, with BJP leaders alleging preferential treatment by the Supreme Court. The PET-CT scan shows detailed pictures of organs and tissues. These tests are to be done in a particular sequence and would require about five-seven days, it said, adding "sudden and unexplained weight loss, coupled with high ketone levels could be indicative of kidney damage, serious cardiac ailments and even cancer". Early detection of these ailments is essential for preventing further progress of the disease and associated life risk and Kejriwal needed to undergo these tests, otherwise his life is at "high risk", it said. The fresh plea, which is likely to be taken up in the coming days by a vacation bench, said during the incarceration from March 21 to May 10, the Chief Minister suffered a lot of health-related complications which are also "partly attributable to the negligent and callous behaviour of the jail authorities". Continued on Page 2

Valley's thumbs-up to poll engagement

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In the first major electoral exercise after Article 370 abrogation and the bifurcation of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union Territories, the Valley has recorded the combined poll percentage of 58.46 per cent for the five Parliamentary seats, which is the record highest voter turnout in last 35 years, witnessing a "massive" 30 points jump in poll participation compared to 2019. Data shared by the Election Commission (EC) shows that the voter turnout of 50.86 per cent from the three Parliamentary constituencies in the Kashmir Valley echoes the faith of the people in the democratic process. The poll participation percentage witnessed 30 points jump from the last Lok Sabha polls in 2019 when it was 19.16 per cent. The three seats in the Valley — Srinagar,



Baramulla and Anantnag-Rajouri — recorded turnout of 38.49 per cent, 59.1 per cent and 54.84 per cent respectively, the highest in last three decades. The other two seats in the UT — Udhampur and Jammu — recorded 68.27 per cent and 72.22 per cent voter turnout respectively.

According to data, as against 58 per cent voting reported in five LS seats in J&K this year, 44.07 per cent polling was reported in 2019, 49.58 per cent in 2014, 39.04 per cent in 2009, 34.07 per cent in 2004, 30.89 per cent in 1999, 43.35 per cent in 1998, 47.99 per cent in

1996 and 29.93 per cent voter turnout in 1989. Notably, Baramulla had witnessed 5.48 per cent polling in 1989; 46.65 per cent in 1996; 41.94 per cent in 1998 and 34.6 per cent in 2019. Anantnag witnessed voting at 8.98 per cent in 2019 and around 5 per cent in 1989. According to EC, more young people have asserted their faith and embraced democracy in a big way. Another interesting perspective is the electors in the age group of 18-59 years form the major part of electors in the UT, it underlined. As per data, Baramulla witnessed voter turnout (between age group of 18 and 39) at 56.02 per cent voting. Srinagar at 48.57 per cent; Anantnag Rajouri at 54.41 per cent; Udhampur 53.57 per cent and Jammu at 47.66 per cent. Continued on Page 2

INDIA Bloc strategy meet on June 1, minus TMC

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Riding high on speculations that the Opposition parties led by Congress under the INDIA Bloc may tally better than incumbent BJP-led NDA in this year's general elections, top leaders of the Bloc are likely to meet on June 1 to assess their performance in the Lok Sabha elections and chalk out strategy ahead of the results. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has convened the meeting in Delhi when the last phase of polling will be underway. Sources said Opposition leaders will discuss their strategy ahead of the June 4 results and assess their performance in the seven-phase elections. The ruling alliance led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and CPI(M) Liberation general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya being garlanded during a public meeting in favour of INDIA Bloc (Congress) candidate Anshul Avijit for Lok Sabha polls, at Khusipur, in Patna, on Monday

claimed that it would form the Government at the Centre for the third successive time. Among those invited for the meeting is Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal who is also convener of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), and is currently on interim bail by the Supreme Court in the Delhi excise policy case. He has to surrender on June 2. Others invited are Sharad Pawar of NCP, Uddhav Thackeray of Shiv Sena, Tejashwi Yadav of RJD, Akhilesh Yadav from Samajwadi Party, Kalpana Soren (Hemant's Soren's wife) from JMM, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK chief MK Stalin who have contested the ensuing Lok Sabha polls under an alliance with the Congress in several States. Continued on Page 2



Two doctors of the Sassoon General Hospital being taken into police custody after their arrest for alleged manipulation of blood samples and destruction of evidence in the case of a car accident involving a 17-year-old boy in Pune

Pune doctors manipulated teen's blood sample, 3 held

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a major development in the Porsche car crash case, two senior doctors and an employee from the State-run Sassoon Hospital have been arrested for allegedly "tampering" with the blood samples of the minor accused in the case. The arrests of the two doctors — Dr Ajay Taware, Head of the Forensics Department, Dr Shrihari Halnor the Chief Medical Officer of the hospital and Atul Ghatkamble, an employee who works under Dr Taware — came after the police established that the blood samples tested at the Sassoon Hospital did not match with that of the accused Porsche car crash. The three arrested persons — including two doctors — were on Monday produced before Pune's Judicial Magistrate First Class (Small Causes) AA Pande, who remanded them in police custody till May 30. Dr Taware, Dr Halnor and Atul have been charged with

the alleged "manipulation" of blood samples and destruction of evidence in the case. While seeking police custody of the three persons, the police told the court that some financial transactions had taken place to "tamper" with the blood samples and they needed to search the homes of the 17-year-old accused in connection with it. The police told the court that the juvenile's blood samples were thrown into a dustbin and replaced with the blood samples of another person on the instructions of Dr Taware. It may be recalled that in the small hours of May 19, the 17-year-old boy — after partying with his friends at a Pune bar — who had driven off in his Porsche car in his inebriated state at a speed of some 200 kmph and rammed into a motorcycle killing killing Ashwini Koshta and Aneesh Awadhya (both aged 24 years) who were returning home after a reunion with friends. Continued on Page 2

Once burned, Govt orders fire audit of all hospitals

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

In the aftermath of the deadly fire at a neonatal hospital that charred seven newborns and injured five others in the national Capital on Saturday night, the Delhi Government on Monday sprung into action directing all hospitals to complete a fire audit by June 8. Police investigations revealed severe lapses including the hospital operating on expired licence and no clearance from the fire department. On Monday, the Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj convened a meeting of the Health Department officials to

discuss the incident in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar area. Following the high-level meeting, Bhardwaj said the Delhi Government will issue directions to all private and State-run hospitals to complete a fire audit by June 8 and submit a compliance report. "On April 24, we had issued directions to all hospitals for fire preparedness. On May 8, we had asked them to conduct a fire audit. We will ask all private and Government-run hospitals to complete a fire audit by June 8 and submit a compliance report to the health department," Bhardwaj said.



He declared that no culprit will be spared, irrespective of their status and announced stringent new safety regulations for nursing homes over nine metres tall, mandating water sprinklers

and smoke detectors, and directed all CDMOs to conduct random inspections. "The owner of this hospital also runs another similar hospital in Paschim Puri. Cases have been registered against him twice in different incidents. These cases are going on against him in Karkardooma Court and Tis Hazari Court. A surprise inspection was done in which deficiencies were found, so a case was registered against him. Once he was found running the hospital without registration, a case was registered against him. It is expected that soon the court will give its verdict against the

owner of this nursing home in these cases and he will be given a severe punishment," he added. Bhardwaj, while pointing out a very shocking thing regarding the incident, said there is a suspicion that the work of refilling oxygen was going on in the lowest floor of the nursing home. "We are also investigating this, if any such work was going on there, then does the hospital administration have its license and if not, then on what basis was this work going on in the hospital and by whom was this work being done, this is being investigated. Continued on Page 2

Sportsperson brandishes pistol, assaults cab driver

Viral video on social media spurs cops into action; culprit lands behind bars

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An international-level shooter, in a video grab, was seen brandishing his pistol and hitting a cab driver with its nozzle and butt in the middle of the Ayodhya-Lucknow road in Vibhuti Khand police station area of Gomti Nagar on Monday. Someone among the onlookers, who had gathered at the spot, made a video of the incident

and uploaded it on social media. Soon it went viral, forcing cops to step in and initiate action. The police arrested the accused in the evening and put him behind the bars. "The man was identified as Vinod Mishra, in his late 40s and a resident of Vivek Khand in Gomti Nagar, and he claimed to be a sportsman," said Amit Kumawat, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (East),

adding that further probe was underway. "An FIR has been registered under the relevant sections at Vibhuti Khand police station on the basis of the viral video and complaint received from the victim. The charges will be added on the basis of further probe," the ADCP added. According to the police investigation, Mishra was on his way from BBD University to Bhootnath Market in his Safari

car around 12:30 pm. "When he reached near Bans Mandi ahead of Polytechnic crossing, his car was allegedly hit from behind by an Ola cab driver identified as Ranjit Shukla of Sitapur. Vinod Mishra got down and started beating Ranjit Shukla with the butt of his licensed pistol," police said. Several pictures of the accused Mishra went viral where he could be seen posing with

senior politicians of Samajwadi Party. Reportedly, the man is an international-level shooter and has participated in several national and international tournaments and has won gold medals as well. "He has won a gold medal in the National Master Shooting Championship. He has also been the winner of the 10 metre air pistol competition," said a policeman wishing anonymity.



Tyre busters installed to enforce one-way traffic in the city seem to have failed in delivering the desired results. (Left) A two-wheeler crosses it in blatant disregard while (right) some of the obstructions go missing barely a month after the device was installed on the road over Gomati barrage road.



Pioneer

MOHINI DUBEY MURDER CASE

Police looking into contract killing angle

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The police team investigating the sensational broad daylight loot and murder of Mohini Dubey, wife of retired IAS officer Devendra Nath Dubey, is looking into contract killing angle. While senior officials were evasive on sharing the details of the investigation and some of them even avoided taking calls from the newsmen, sources privy to the investigation said the crime was executed by contract killers hired by someone very close to the family of the deceased. The suspected contract killers were seen traveling by a scooty

for over 20 kilometres between Sector 20 of Indira Nagar, where the crime was committed, and Nilmatha and were spotted at more than 20 places till they disappeared. They are untraceable as yet. The killers changed their clothes to cover their trail. The sources said the mastermind helped the killers gain entry into the house when Dubey left for the Golf Course where he used to go regularly for practice. The sources said the assailants took halts at three places — Lohia Park crossing, Nehru Enclave and Nilmatha and changed their clothes there. Though they were not seen

changing their clothes in the footage obtained so far, they were seen in changed attires in the every next footage the police got while scanning above 500 footage of several CCTVs. The sources said the police were still not clear about the motive behind Mohini's murder but they hoped to arrest the contract killers soon and unravel the mystery. During investigations, an interesting fact surfaced about the Dubey's drivers, Akhlesh and his brother Ravi. They live in Telibagh locality and both used to visit Cantonment area. On the fateful day, Akhlesh had not come on duty at Dubey's residence.

Auto-lifting gang headed by engineer busted in Hathras

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Hathras police busted a gang of auto-lifters, headed by an engineer, and claimed to have recovered over three dozen stolen two-wheelers. The cops claimed that after a week-long operation, they arrested eight inter-district thieves and recovered 37 stolen motorcycles from their possession. The modus operandi of the thieves was quite different as they not only used to change the number plates but also the chassis numbers, thus making the identification of stolen vehicle tough. They then used to sell the vehicle at a good price. What is shocking is that one of the accused, who has been arrested, is an engineer. Those arrested have already

had several cases registered against their names. The thieves were caught by the Sadar Kotwali police station and the Special Operations Group (SOG) team. One of the arrested, Aniket or Ankush is B. Tech in mechanical engineering. Ankush used to flee to Mumbai after each theft. He is involved in transport business and has 36 criminal cases against him. "Sadabad police station arrested three inter-district notorious vehicle thieves along with 15 stolen motorcycles. The arresting police team was given a cash reward of Rs 25,000 by the Superintendent of Police, Hathras," said officials. Superintendent of Police, Nipun Agarwal, led the operations against the motorcycle

theft gang. On May 20, the Sarni police station and SOG team apprehended three cunning inter-district vehicle thieves and recovered several stolen bikes from their possession. The police launched a second operation on May 25 in collaboration with the Sadar Kotwali police station and the SOG team. This led to the arrest of two more inter-district vehicle thieves and another 15 stolen motorcycles were recovered from them. The police team also seized one kilogram of narcotics from them. The third operation in the series took place on May 26 when the Sadabad police station arrested three more inter-district vehicle thieves and recovered 15 stolen motorcycles.

'Unwell' Kejriwal...

From Page 1

Kejriwal lost around six to seven kg of weight in the jail and has not been able to regain even after his release and renewing his earlier lifestyle to the extent possible, it said. "In the meantime, recent test reports confirm that the Appellant has also developed an unusually high blood glucose level as well as high ketone levels in urine, which indicate that in addition to increased blood sugar level, the appellant may have also developed kidney related complications and kidney damage," it said.

Once burned, Govt orders...

From Page 1

Because fire spreads very quickly due to oxygen, therefore the work of refilling oxygen cannot be done everywhere, there are some provisions for this, permission has to be taken from the government for this. Bodies of five of the seven newborns killed in the hospital fire have been handed over to their families after post-mortem while the other two bodies will be handed over after autopsy. Additionally, a Delhi court

allowed the Delhi Police's plea seeking three days of custodial interrogation of the owner Dr Naveen Khichi and on-duty doctor Dr Aakash of the hospital. Additionally, the District Magistrate of Shahdara, Rishita Gupta, has submitted a factual report to the divisional commissioner regarding the incident on Sunday. In the report it was revealed that out of the seven dead newborn babies, four were male and three female. Barring one 25 days old boy, the rest were 15 days old infants. A detailed report in the matter is awaited. He also said two nurses and some locals rescued the babies without worrying about their lives. "We will recommend their names for bravery awards," he added. He also informed that the revenue department will be asked to expedite the process of compensation to the families of the babies killed and injured in the fire.

IMD forecasts Fry-days...

From Page 1

In Maharashtra's Akola, authorities took proactive measures by imposing Section 144 until May 31, effectively banning public gatherings as a precautionary measure against the extreme weather conditions. At least eight places in Delhi recorded maximum temperatures above 46 degrees Celsius, with Mungeshpur and Najafgarh logging a sweltering 48.3 degrees Celsius and 48.1 degrees Celsius, respectively. Haryana's Narnaul simmered at 47 degrees Celsius and Punjab's Faridkot at 47.4 degrees Celsius. According to IMD chief Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Rajasthan and Gujarat saw nine to 12 heatwave days, with temperatures reaching 45-50 degrees Celsius. Delhi, South Haryana, South West UP and Punjab recorded five-seven heatwave days, with maximum temperatures ranging from 44 degrees Celsius to 48 degrees Celsius, said the IMD chief. Assam

also experienced a heatwave with record breaking temperatures on May 25-26. The IMD attributed the heatwave in northwest India and some parts of the Central region in the second half of May to the lack of rainfall, stronger dry and warm winds and an anti-cyclonic circulation over southwest Rajasthan and adjoining Gujarat. Mohapatra said only two of the five western disturbances that affected north India were active. However, three days now, Northwestern and Central parts of the country are likely to get some relief from scorching heat after three days due to a fresh western disturbance, said the IMD. On their part, authorities in the heatwave affected regions are taking measures to address the health risks posed by heat related illness, including reserving beds for heatstroke patients in Government-run hospitals. With temperatures remaining high even at night, many

people are struggling to find relief, especially those without access to air conditioning or proper cooling facilities, said the officials. Doctors are urging people to take precautions to stay safe during this challenging period, emphasising the importance of staying hydrated and avoiding prolonged exposure to the sun. They warn that the situation could worsen if the heat wave persists. Some doctors said there has been a significant rise in urinary tract infections and kidney stones in adults due to sweltering heat conditions. Hence, one should drink water at regular intervals during hot weather, and urine colour should be like clear water. Yellow urine indicates dehydration, they said. Similarly, cases of patients suffering from heat-related illness such as dehydration, fever, nausea and abdominal pain too are being reported from some hospitals in Lucknow.

Valley's thumbs-up...

From Page 1

Between 40 and 59 age groups, Baramulla, Srinagar, Anantnag-Rajouri, Udhampur and Jammu witnessed voters turnout at 30.85 per cent, 34.87 per cent, 31.59 per cent, 32.65 per cent and 35.28 per cent respectively. If it is combined (between 18 to 59 age group), Baramulla, Srinagar, Anantnag Rajouri, Udhampur and Jammu recorded at 86.87 per cent, 83.44 per cent, 86.00 per cent, 86.22 per cent and 82.94 per cent respectively. The EC said 18-59 years age group constitutes over 80 per cent of the electorate in each of the five Lok Sabha seats of the Union Territory. The historic participation in the UT was realised by earnest efforts of the election and security officials who had worked tirelessly to empower the people of J&K, especially the youth to

participate in the elections. The high poll percentage in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls is reflective of their faith in democracy, which is a positive and heartening development, the EC stressed. The commission has also enabled Kashmiri migrant voters residing at various relief camps in Delhi, Jammu, and Udhampur to also have the option of voting in person at designated special polling stations or using postal ballot. 21 Special Polling Stations were established at Jammu, 1 at Udhampur and 4 at Delhi. Ladakh, which was constituted as a separate Union Territory in 2019, also saw an enthusiastic response to the call of democracy as reflected in the voter turnout of 71.82 per cent. "This active participation is a huge positive for the Assembly elections to be held soon so that the democratic process continues to thrive in the Union Territory," said Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar while responding to the turnout. Commission led

by CEC Kumar along with ECs Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu thanked the polling personnel and security officials over the peaceful conduct of elections in the UT. "This achievement sits on a credible wave of 25 per cent increase in number of contesting candidates since 2019, C-vigil complaints showing enhanced citizen involvement and Suvidha Portal showing 2455 requests for rallies etc., reflecting the steady retaking of the election and campaign space away from hesitation and to fuller participation". "Compared this outcome of the layered depth of electoral mobilization and participation, as reminiscent of the fame and deft of the legendary Kashmiri artisanal weave. This active participation is a huge positive for Assembly elections to be held soon so that the democratic process continues to thrive in the Union Territory", CEC Kumar said.

'Depressed, in shock' Revanna promises to...

From Page 1

"Let the blessings of God, people and my family be on me. I will surely appear before SIT on May 31. After coming, I will try to put an end to all this. Keep faith in me," he said in his video statement in Kannada. Apologising to his parents, grandfather and former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, uncle H D Kumaraswamy, people of the State, and party workers, Prajwal said, "I have come before you to share information, as I had not disclosed as to where I'm in foreign (country)". Noting that he had sought a week to respond to the SIT notice through his social media account and his lawyers, Prajwal said, "Despite seeking time, the very next day Congress senior leaders including Rahul Gandhi started discussing things (about me), at public meetings."

Alleging that a political conspiracy was hatched against him in his constituency of Hassan too by some forces, the MP said, "As I was growing politically, to diminish me, they all got together. Looking at all these things, I was shocked, so I was a bit away. So, no one should mistake (me) for it." Prajwal (33), the grandson of JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda and the NDA candidate from Hassan Lok Sabha segment, is facing charges of sexually abusing women. He reportedly left for Germany on April 27, a day after Hassan went to polls, and is still at large. A 'Blue Corner Notice' seeking information on his whereabouts has already been issued by Interpol, following a request by the SIT via the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

INDIA Bloc strategy...

From Page 1 PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti and National Conference leader Omar Abdullah are also part of the meeting scheduled for which the coordination command has been tasked to top Congress leaders Bhupesh Baghel and Ashok Gehlot, sources said. Twenty-eight Opposition parties came together to form the INDIA Bloc then initiated by JD(U) supreme and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar followed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee last June. Later in Nitish, and subsequently Jayant Chaudhary-led RLD switched over to the NDA and Sharad Pawar-led NCP too broke away. Mamata, who too walked out of the INDIA Bloc days before the elections, has already sent feelers that her party would be supporting the Congress Bloc post the poll results in case the coalition is in position to form the Government.

Pune docs manipulated...

From Page 1

Earlier, talking to media persons after the arrest of the two doctors, Pune Commissioner of Police Amitesh Kumar said on Monday: "The blood samples analysed at the Sassoon Hospital did not match that of the minor accused in the mishap case. The blood samples belong to a 'third person'. We are investigating the matter". "We had taken a second

blood sample of the minor accused which we had given to another hospital for analysis with the intention of carrying out a DNA test later. Now, we have come to know that the Sassoon Hospital blood forensic report was of some other person," Kumar said.

CLASSIFIEDS

सूचना

मेरे अपना नाम NAJMA BEGUM से बदलकर NAJMA BEGAM पती Habib Ahmad Khan निवासी 130/561, बाकरीगंज आजाद नगर, कानपुर नगर कर लिया है अब इसी नाम से जाना जाए।

NOTICE

Name and date of birth of my minor son have wrongly been mentioned as Prakhar Shukla and 7.8.2011. His correct name and date of birth be read as Shaurya Shukla and 7.12.2010. Anuradha Shukla W/o Mohit Shukla R/o 117/246, Q Block, Sharda Nagar, Navin Nagar, Kanpur Nagar

NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given that, Sri Pankaj Gupta S/o Late Mangal Prasad Gupta and Smt Priya Gupta W/o Sri Pankaj Gupta have informed that the Original lease deed dated 12.12.1968 registered at Serial No. 3456 with its duplicate no. 3457 on 28.12.1968 and Original registered will dated 9.6.1997 registered at Serial No. 155 on 9.6.1997 of the property i.e. House No. 128/Y-641 Kidwai Nagar, Kanpur Nagar built over the Plot No. 641 Block Y Scheme No. 2 Kidwai Nagar, Kanpur Nagar admeasuring 219.894 Sq. Mtr. have been lost somewhere and is not traceable. They are intended to sell the said property to Sri Praveen Shukla S/o Sri Virendra Kumar Shukla and Smt Anamika Tiwari D/o Sri S. C. Tiwari W/o Sri Praveen Shukla and they will mortgage the said property in favour of PNB Yashoda Nagar Branch Kanpur. As the PNB Yashoda Nagar Branch Kanpur is going to grant finance facility to said Sri Praveen Shukla S/o Sri Virendra Kumar Shukla and Smt Anamika Tiwari D/o Sri S. C. Tiwari W/o Sri Praveen Shukla collaterally securing this finance by creation of Equitable Mortgage over property. The Punjab National Bank Yashoda Nagar Branch Kanpur intend to create Equitable Mortgage in respect of the above mentioned properties, details which are given in the notice. Any person claiming any interest or title in the property or otherwise having any objection can make representation to the Bank within seven days of this notice.

NOTICE

Vivek Awasthi Advocate (Panel advocate of Punjab National Bank) Chamber Opposite New Hanuman Temple, Gate No. 4 Near Registrar Office, Civil Court Compound, Kanpur Nagar-208001 Mobile: 7007568625

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have changed my name from SONAL SRIVASTAVA to SONAL SAXENA. In future I Shall be known as SONAL SAXENA. SONAL SAXENA W/o Pranshu Shrivastava, Flat No. 410 Sangam Enclave, Kydganj, Prayagraj

NOTICE

My original Mark Sheet and Pass Certificates of ICSE year 2016 and ISC year 2018 under UID 6249758 appeared from Welham Girls' School, Dehradun have been lost. Ananya Garg D/o Sanjay Garg, 15/78 Civil Lines, Kanpur, Mobile 8299187477.

NOTICE

My name is Rakesh Kanojia and my name is mentioned in my passport J6915533 as Rakesh Kumar Kanojia. I want to renew my passport and Rakesh Kanojia is written in all my documents. Please mention the name Rakesh Kanojia on my passport same as my adhaar.

NOTICE

Original allotment letter, registry copy and possession letter of my property No-1/203 Mini LIG Ruchi khand First Sharada nagar LDA Colony Raibareli road Lucknow. has been lost somewhere. Any use of the same shall be illegal. Nilam Singh W/o Mahindra Pratap Singh.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I Ravi Prakash Pandey S/o Indra Prakash Pandey R/o A-65 Type-3 Kendranchal Colony Gujaini udyog Nagar Kanpur nagar Uttar Pradesh-208022 have changed my name to Ravi Narayan Pandey.

PD(480A)

I Aastha Jalan D/o Subhash Jalan W/o Pushpak Khemka R/o Sh-15/44 Shivpur Behind Thana Varanasi Tarna Vsi Uttar Pradesh-221003 have changed my name to Aastha Jalan Khemka.

PD(481A)

Two die, life and property hit...

From Page 1

Disaster management teams of Kolkata Police and Kolkata Municipal Corporation which had cancelled all the leaves of its staff were working overtime to bring things to normal. Properties and infrastructure were damaged due to storm and rains, vehicles were shattered under fallen trees which had been uprooted at various places in Kolkata KMC sources said, adding scores of full-grown trees had uprooted blocking roads at Golpark, Jadavpur, Southern Avenue, Ballygunge Road, Alipore, DL Khan Road, Sarat Bose Road, Dufferin Road, Hatibagan, College Street, Jagat Mukherjee Park, Behala and elsewhere. Meanwhile, candidates of all political parties rose up to the occasion visiting interior areas by taking time out of electoral

campaigns amid complaints of deficient service, BJP leaders said, "Cyclones like Remal showed what sin the TMC has committed by eating away the funds meant for Prime Minister housing scheme." This even as hundreds of kuccha houses were either flooded with water or had collapsed. CPI(M)'s Pratikur Rehman said even TMC's Jaynagar candidate Pratima Mandal was seen running from area to area to listen to the complaints of the people. "The problem is we cannot reach relief now as the model code of conduct is in vogue but still we have requested the administration to take adequate steps," she said. Elsewhere in Kolkata as the ferocity of storms reduced flights and ferry service, as also train services resumed from Monday morning, sources said.

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Prayagraj Power Generation Company Limited invites expression of interest (EOI) from eligible vendors for Procurement of "STRUCTURE STEEL OF DIFFERENT TYPES-May' 24" of 3x660 MW Thermal Power Plant at Prayagraj Power Generation Company Limited, Bara, Dist. Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India.
Details of pre-qualification requirements, bid security, purchasing of tender document etc. may be downloaded using the URL- <https://www.ppgcl.co.in/tenders.php> Eligible vendors willing to participate may submit their expression of interest along with the tender fee for issue of bid document latest by 3rd June 2024.

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Seventh phase of LS elections crucial for SP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The election results of the seventh and the final phase polling of the Lok Sabha elections on June 1 in 13 constituencies of eastern Uttar Pradesh will be crucial for the main contenders in Uttar Pradesh — Bharatiya Janata Party and Samajwadi Party. The politics of the last two phases — sixth and seventh — of the elections that include 27 Lok Sabha constituencies and 135 assembly segments of Purvanchal region does not revolve only around Narendra Modi alone. It is centered around caste-based identity politics where the 'ati pichhari' or most backward classes are at the centre stage. The determined bid by the BJP for the outreach to the most backward class since 2014 Lok Sabha elections has paid rich dividends to the saffron party in the state assembly elections

in 2017 and 2022 and the Lok Sabha elections in 2019. However, the BJP suffered a setback during the March 2022 UP assembly elections as the SP forged an alliance with small caste-based parties representing the Most Backward Classes and increased its tally of 47 assembly seats in 2017 to 111 in the 2022 assembly polls. However, the situation has changed in the last two years after the assembly polls. In the 2022 UP assembly polls, the SP had an umbrella alliance with different regional parties claiming to have influence over Other Backward Class voters — Om Prakash Rajbhar-led Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party, Janvadi Socialist Party (now named Jan Janvadi Party), Apna Dal (Kamerawadi) and Mahan Dal. The SP has parted company with all these parties. Currently, the SP has an alliance with only the Congress in UP. Of total 80



Lok Sabha seats in UP, SP is contesting on 63 seats, while the Congress is in the fray on 17 seats. Of the state's 403 assembly seats, the SP won 111 with 32 per cent vote share, while the Rashtriya Lok Dal won eight and the SBSP bagged six seats. The other parties in the alliance did not win any seat. The BJP won the election, bagging 255 seats with 41.29 per cent votes.

In the 2017 UP assembly polls, when SP had not allied with small caste-based parties but was in partnership with the Congress, it had won 47 seats with 21.82 per cent votes, while the Congress had won seven seats. The BJP had swept the polls, bagging 312 seats with 39.67 per cent votes. SP spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary says these smaller parties "do not matter" to the

party. "They have no base. Each of them was demanding three to five Lok Sabha seats... It was not possible to give them these seats. These parties come, and leave when their self-interests are not fulfilled. Their move will not cause any damage to us," he claimed. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP in alliance with SBS, NISHAD Party, Apna Dal (Sonelal) and RLD has bounced back. In all the rallies in eastern UP addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, along with the flags and cut-outs of the BJP leaders, the flags of its alliance partners — the Apna Dal (Sonelal), the Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party and the NISHAD Party (Nirbal Indian Shoshit Hamara Aam Dal) also flutter. On the dais, sharing the stage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief

Minister Yogi Adityanath are the founders of these parties — Anupriya Patel of the Kurmi party Apna Dal (S), Om Prakash Rajbhar, a prominent leader of the Rajbhar, and Sanjay Nishad who formed the NISHAD Party. Each of these leaders claims the affiliation of their sub-castes or 'jati' and all three are cabinet ministers — Anupriya Patel in the Modi government at the Centre, and Om Prakash Rajbhar and Sanjay Nishad in UP. This is a formidable line-up of leaders from the 'ati pichhari' or most backward class, and their support has been one major part of the BJP's success story in UP. The election results of the sixth and seventh phases which cover 27 Lok Sabha seats that cover as many as 135 assembly segments will be crucial for the SP as it had won a majority of seats in 2022 UP assembly elections from this region.

Shah launches scathing attack on Cong, SP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a fiery speech at a public rally in Belthara Road, Haldimangal, in Ballia, Union Home Minister Amit Shah asserted that the Bharatiya Janata Party would secure more than 400 seats in the ongoing elections.

Electronic voting machines (EVMs), predicting that Rahul Gandhi would claim BJP's victory was due to EVM tampering. "On June 4, Rahul Baba will hold a press conference and say that BJP won because of EVMs," Shah remarked. Highlighting the BJP's achievements, Shah pointed out that



He predicted that the Congress would be reduced to less than 40 seats and claimed that Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party would struggle to win even four seats. Addressing the gathering on Monday, Shah drew a sharp contrast between the BJP and its opponents. "This election is between those who fired bullets at Ram devotees and those who built the Ram temple," Shah said, emphasising the BJP's commitment to Hindu religious sentiments and citing the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya as a significant achievement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure. Shah launched a scathing attack on the opposition, accusing them of nepotism. "These people want to make their sons and nephews the chief minister or prime minister. Lalu (Prasad Yadav) wants his son, Sonia wants her son to become Prime Minister. The only person who can genuinely work for the welfare of the people is Narendra Modi, whose family is the 130 crore citizens of India," he declared. Shah pre-emptively dismissed potential allegations from the opposition about elec-

previous governments had shut down sugar mills, whereas the BJP government had reopened them. He assured the people that the Modi administration would not abolish reservations, countering rumours spread by Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav. "I guarantee that as long as Modi is prime minister, reservations will not be abolished," he said. Shah also addressed local issues, promising to permanently solve the flood and erosion problem in Ballia's Salempur region. Claiming knowledge of the results from the first five phases of the elections, Shah confidently stated, "We are crossing 310 seats and forming the government. The sixth and seventh phases will push us beyond 400 seats." He urged the people of Salempur to support BJP candidate Ravindra Kushwaha by pressing the button with the lotus symbol, thereby contributing to Modi's third term as prime minister. Shah asserted, "Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is part of India and will remain so. Rahul Baba may fear their atomic bombs, but BJP does not."

'Bahujan Samaj' should support INDIA bloc: AKY

PTI ■ GHAZIPUR

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Monday claimed that the BJP and BSP have joined hands covertly and urged the voters from SC, ST and OBC communities that have been supporting Mayawati's party to choose the INDIA bloc this time "to save the Constitution". Addressing an election rally here, Yadav said only Uttar Pradesh "can save the country" by voting out the BJP. "This election is about saving our future. At the same time, this election is also about saving the Constitution, which gives us respect, which protects our rights. "It is being seen that BJP and BSP have joined hands covertly. Hence, we want to appeal to the people of 'Bahujan Samaj' that this election is also to save the Constitution of Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar and they should support the INDIA bloc," the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said. The SP and BSP had jointly fought the 2019 Lok Sabha election but this time the BSP is going it alone. "If these people (BJP) come to power, they can do anything...

on many occasions they did not allow the MPs in Lok Sabha to present their views," the SP chief claimed. Taking a jibe at the BJP's '400-paar' election slogan, he said, "Those who were talking about 400-paar are going to lose 400 seats. "The BJP used to say big things, but their confidence has shattered. Even their tongue is faltering due to this. Now no one wants to listen to the BJP's old stories and old worn-out dialogues," he said. Yadav alleged that every promise made by the BJP in the last 10 years has turned out to be false. "The government did not pay attention to the development of Purvanchal (eastern Uttar Pradesh). After the elections, if the INDIA bloc government is formed at the Centre, the Samajwadi will have to run special schemes for development in Purvanchal," he said. Yadav reiterated the promise of scrapping the Agniveer scheme if the opposition alliance is voted to power. "Those in power at present have realised that their government is not going to be formed after June 4... that is why their language has changed," the SP chief said.

CM lauds Modi's contributions

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Monday, vigorously campaigned for party candidates, addressing massive public meetings for the Lok Sabha seats of Ghosi, Ballia, Robertsganj, and Varanasi. Targeting the Congress and SP, he also highlighted the achievements of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 10-year tenure before the public. Criticising the Congress on its manifesto, Yogi said that it talks about imposing a 'Jiziya' tax in the country, as well as implementing personal law in India and reintroducing practices like triple talaq. CM Yogi said that the INDI alliance aims to grant reservations to Muslims at the expense of the backward classes. Simultaneously, he highlighted that during SP rule, the mafia targeted the sons of the impoverished, but today these criminals have been eradicated. Addressing a public meeting in Gazipur in favour of party candidate Neeraj Shekhar from Ballia Lok Sabha seat, CM Yogi said that the clearing out mafia from Uttar Pradesh has resulted in large-scale investment flow into the Purvanchal region of the state. He added that the projects being set up in



the region will facilitate jobs for many youths from the region. He took a dig at the Samajwadi Party, pointing out that while the party vowed to kill the poor, he has resolved to eliminate the mafia from Uttar Pradesh and has succeeded also in this pursuit. Yogi added: "After Ayodhya and Kashi, we are preparing to head towards Mathura." Addressing a public meeting in Duddhi, Sonbhadra, Yogi Adityanath remarked, "Prime Minister Modi is deeply committed to India's development and heritage. A testament to this is the completion of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya

after 500 years." PM Modi has declared 2025 as the year dedicated to Lord Birsa Munda, stating, "Next year, India will celebrate 'Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh', he added. Yogi Adityanath remarked, "Lord Birsa Munda was a great freedom fighter who sacrificed everything for India's independence and worked tirelessly to unite the tribal communities." During his speech, he also sought support for NDA candidate and MLA Rinki Kol from Robertsganj Lok Sabha and Shrawan Gaur, the candidate for the Duddhi Assembly by-election.

Addressing a public gathering in Varanasi, CM Yogi said that today, the chant of Kashi is resonating throughout the country. It was Kashi which once again raised the slogan 'Fir Ek Baar Gai Sarkar'. Kashi, counted among the most ancient cities, suffered negligence for 70 years. However, in the past 10 years, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it has transformed. The city's old glory has been restored. The ghats here now host festivities 24/7, whereas earlier, they were almost obliterated. The tangled wires in Kashi's lanes used to invite accidents. Over the past 10 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has changed the fate of Kashi along with the country. During Congress' time, terrorist incidents used to occur here, he further remarked. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath urged the people of Varanasi to ensure a record-breaking victory for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He highlighted that under Modi's leadership, world-class infrastructure is being developed. The construction of the country's largest ropeway has begun in Kashi, and it will connect Cantt station to Baba Vishwanath Dham by the end of the year, he added.

Private firm to maintain JMP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The prestigious Janeshwar Mishra Park (JMP) in Gomti Nagar will be handed over to the private entrepreneurs only for its maintenance aiming to make it of the international repute. This step has been taken for its better maintenance as the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) which managed the park was not having adequate funds for this purpose. The negotiations in this regard were in progress with the firm which has expertise in maintenance and is owned by a noted industrial house of the country. Besides, the JMP, the industrial house was also keen to adopt other parks of the state and Uttarakhand. LDA vice chairman (VC) Indrmani Tripathi said the ownership would continue to be of development authority, adding the firm would only engaged in its maintenance. He said that a ratio on the revenue would be given to the management of the firm as a loyalty. The VC refused to comment on the issue whether the firm was interested to run the parks of other organisations especially the Nagar Nigam. Interesting, this was part of the initiative of the government of India to take over the maintenance of the best parks of the country to make them of the highest repute. To begin with, Lucknow's prestigious JMP has been selected for this purpose. The VC claimed the firm would take over the maintenance work by monsoon as the negotiation was fast progressing. Presently, firm has not shown its interest in taking over the maintenance work of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) parks, he further added. The city has several big parks which have to be developed into beautiful ones. Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Park in Gomti Nagar was most wanted park in the city which was in bad shape and need to be maintained to a level where the public would appreciate and laud the beautification of park.



BJP National President JP Nadda during his visit at the Kaal Bhairav Temple in Varanasi (Kashi) on Monday.

City gears up for Bada Mangal, bhandaras

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The city is all set for Bada Mangal celebrations on Tuesday. Bhandaras, which mark the occasion, are likely to come up across the city and organisers of over 250 bhandaras have registered with the Nagar Nigam. Hanuman Setu Temple Trust secretary said that over 50,000 devotees are likely to throng the Hanuman Setu temple this Tuesday. Keeping in mind the intense heat wave, arrangement have been made to provide ample relief to devotees who brave the weather for darshan at the temple. He said the Bada Mangal highlights the folklore that the wish of Begum of Nawab was fulfilled and, hence, devotees visit the temple after their wishes are fulfilled. "Several

years ago, there were a large number of devotees who would come out to the temple in the dandvat posture and we would cool the approach roads of the temple for them by sprinkling water. They still arrive, although their numbers have reduced." Rakesh Dixit, from the Aliganj Hanuman Mandir, said that the temple will close at 12.30 noon and then reopen at 3 pm. He said that over 5 lakh people are expected to visit the temple on the first day. He said that the bhandaras by devotees will be held throughout the day which will start with halwa-puri as Bal Bhog in the morning, sabzi, puri, rice, gulab jamun in the afternoon and roti, dal, sabzi and rice in the night. Arrangements for coolers, mist fans and water coolers have been made for the devo-

tees. The city will also witness a large number of bhandaras spread across the state capital where devotees will be served with a wide variety of food items like chola-puri, sabzi-puri, kadhi-chawal, sherbets, ice creams etc. The tradition in the past several years has grown and the number of bhandaras have increased in the recent past with a large number of people and organisations opting for holding a bhandara on the four Bada Mangals of the month. Meanwhile, elaborate arrangements have been made to keep heavy traffic away from the route of the prominent Hanuman temples in the city. Traffic moving towards Hanuman Setu and the Hanuman temple in Aliganj will be re-routed to keep the areas congestion free.

Bundelkhand emerging as tourism destination in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bundelkhand, a culturally rich region in Uttar Pradesh, is renowned for its historical landmarks, vibrant local industries and unique traditional crafts. Its scenic landscapes and architectural marvels make it an emerging destination for tourism and cultural exploration. A Tourism department official said that comprising of seven districts of Uttar Pradesh — Jhansi, Lalitpur, Mahoba, Chitrakoot, Hamirpur, Banda and Jalaun — Bundelkhand was undergoing a transformation from a land of historical significance to a hub of opportunities, driven by its unique products, burgeoning tourism sector and agricultural strengths. "Bundelkhand is a treasure trove of historical and cultural heritage, offering immense

tourism potential. The region is dotted with majestic forts, ancient temples and beautiful palaces that narrate the tales of its glorious past. Notable sites include the Dashavatara temple of Lalitpur, temples of Rahila Sun temple, famous for their stunning architecture and intricate erotic sculptures, and the Kalinjar Fort complex, which boasts a blend of Rajput and Pratihara architectural styles. The natural beauty of Bundelkhand, with its picturesque landscapes, hills, and rivers, adds to its allure. Additionally, the serene river Betwa offers opportunities for water sports and tranquil boat rides, enhancing the region's appeal to tourists," he said. He said that the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative was instrumental in highlighting Bundelkhand's

unique products, fostering local industry, and creating job opportunities. Each district in Bundelkhand boasts a distinctive product that is recognised not only within India but also internationally. For instance, Jhansi is known for its exquisite soft toys, with artisans creating a variety of hand-crafted items popular among children and collectors alike. Jalaun is famous for its superior quality 'matar' (green peas) and intricate paper art, showcasing the region's rich artistic heritage. Chitrakoot stands out for its wooden toys and craft, producing beautiful and durable items reflecting the cultural richness of the region. Mahoba's metal craft and Gaura stone artifacts are highly valued, with artisans creating stunning metal artifacts and sculptures.

Banda's unique Shazar stone craft is used to make intricate jewellery and decorative items. Hamirpur is renowned for its traditional leather shoes and 'jooti', sought after for their durability and craftsmanship. Near Hamirpur, Chanderi is celebrated for its zari silk sarees, particularly the famous Chanderi sarees, cherished for their sheer texture, light weight and intricate zari work. "Jhansi Fort, associated with the legendary Rani Lakshmbai, symbolises bravery and resistance, with a museum housing artifacts from the freedom struggle. Serene locations like Baruasagar Lake and the Rahila Sun temple in Mahoba provide tranquility and spiritual solace, with the temple's intricate carvings being an architectural marvel. The

Dashavatara temple in Deogarh, Lalitpur, renowned for its exquisite sculptures depicting the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu, is a must-visit for those interested in ancient Indian art and mythology. Additionally, Bundelkhand's numerous dams, such as the Matatila Dam and Rajghat Dam, offer excellent opportunities for water sports and adventure activities, drawing thrill-seekers and nature lovers," the official said. He added that Mahoba is renowned for its betel farming, locally known as 'paan'. "The fertile soil and favourable climatic conditions of Mahoba make it an ideal location for cultivating high-quality betel leaves, which are widely used in India for chewing, particularly in the form of 'paan'. The betel leaves from Mahoba are highly valued for their tex-

ture, taste, and medicinal properties. Betel farming in Mahoba not only supports the local economy but also provides employment to a significant portion of the population. The process involves meticulous care, from planting the vines to harvesting the leaves, which requires a skilled labour force. This traditional practice, passed down through generations, has become a cornerstone of Mahoba's identity and economic stability," the officer said. "Agriculture is the backbone of Bundelkhand's economy, with pulses being one of the main crops cultivated in the region. The semi-arid climate and the soil conditions are well-suited for growing a variety of pulses, including chickpeas, pigeon peas, and lentils. These pulses are not only crucial for local consumption

but also contribute significantly to the agricultural exports of India. Pulses farming in Bundelkhand have seen advancements with the introduction of modern farming techniques and government support. Programmes aimed at improving irrigation facilities, providing quality seeds, and offering financial assistance have helped increase the yield and quality of pulses. This sector provides livelihood to a large segment of the rural population and plays a vital role in ensuring food security," he said. He said that by leveraging these strengths and investing in infrastructure and modernisation, Bundelkhand can emerge as a key player in India's growth story, transforming itself from a historically significant region to a thriving hub of opportunities.

Top BJP leaders in Kashi for Modi's record win

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has intensified its poll campaigning in this holy city in favour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as less than three days are left when the electioneering will come to an end for the last phase of Lok Sabha elections 2024. Polling will be held in 13 parliamentary seats of Purvanchal (eastern UP) which include the high-profile Varanasi Lok Sabha seat where Modi is seeking his third consecutive win and Gorakhpur, the home town of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The other seats which will go to the poll in this seventh phase are Chandauli, Ghazipur, Ghosi, Ballia, Mirzapur, Robertsganj (SC), Salempur, Maharajganj, Kushinagar, Deoria and Bansaon (SC).

As Varanasi and Gorakhpur are main centres of this region, the top BJP leaders have started reaching there. Being the constituency of the PM, Kashi is flooded with galaxy of top BJP leaders to ensure that he wins the seat by a record margin. The PM has already visited twice and is

expected to come once again. He has already visited Varanasi, Ghazipur, Mirzapur and other places. Besides, BJP president JP Nadda was in Kashi for a day-long hectic poll programmes on Monday which is his second visit here in the last few days.

During the last three days, Yogi Adityanath visited Kashi frequently to campaign for Modi. During the day, the CM addressed a public meeting at Sarvodaya Inter College in Sewapuri assembly segment of Varanasi Lok Sabha seat where a day ago he held a meeting with members of Vidvat Parishad and prior to that addressed an election meeting at Assi. Besides, Yogi during his Kashi visit also addressed a meeting at Kachcha Baba Inter College in trans-Varuna Shivpur assembly area in support of party candidate from Chandauli seat and Union Minister Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey. Shivpur and Ajgara (SC) assembly segments of the district are part of Chandauli Lok Sabha seat where Yogi had also addressed a meeting at Mughalsarai earlier.

Top BJP leaders, including union ministers, MP CM,



EAM S Jaishankar addressing social organisations at Banaras Club in Varanasi on Sunday evening.

deputy CM, Sikkim Governor, and others visited here with the aim of wooing the voters. In this direction Union Minister Piyush Goyal has been campaigning throughout the day, meeting voters, entrepreneurs and others besides attending various programmes. Union minister Giriraj Singh addressed a poll meeting at Jansa under Sewapuri assembly segment of Varanasi seat.

While addressing the gathering of social organisations on 'India Rise in Global Diplomacy' at Banaras Club near Kutcheri on Sunday evening, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said that

the whole world knows today that India will not leave anyone who teases the country under the Modi government.

"Today there is an atmosphere of instability in the world, yet India is developing rapidly", he said, citing the examples of Russia-Ukraine war, the Gaza-Israel dispute in the Middle East and the dispute related to the South China Sea. "Even amidst these instabilities, India is continuously moving forward on the path of development", he said, adding that today 28 kilometres of national highways and 14 kilometres of railway tracks are being laid every day while

eight new airports and Metro in two cities every year.

Besides, a public meeting was addressed at Seer Govardhan, birth place of Sant Ravidas, in Rohania assembly segment by Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav. Apart from this, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak addressed two public meetings organised at Chowk Ramnagar under Cantt assembly and at Bhadua Chungi under City South assembly of Varanasi Lok Sabha seat. Pathak said that Kashi has completely changed ever since Modi was elected as an MP in 2014. "Not only has the country developed, Kashi has also been rejuvenated", he said, adding that so much development work has been done in Kashi that today it is moving towards becoming a world class city.

At the Divya Samvad programme organised in Narayani Vihar Colony, the chief guest and Governor of Sikkim Laxman Acharya said disabled people need empathy, not sympathy. "The history of Kashi is older than history and Kashi has always been providing new direction to the society and is doing so even today", he said

and added that the contribution of persons with disabilities has been the best in all areas of national development. Eminent vocalist Padma Shri Soma Ghosh, the special guest of the programme, presented her speech in the form of singing, mesmerising the participants. Dr Uttam Ojha said that disabled persons are bringing glory to the country all over the world and are performing excellently in every field of society. Meanwhile, UP Public Works Minister Jitin Prasad, in the meeting held in Rohania, Shivpur Tarna, Sarmath Khajuri and Akatha, called upon the people to help the PM win by record votes. "The third term of Modi will make the country the third largest economic power", he said. Besides, a seminar was organised by the Sindh community on the topic of 'social harmony as the basis of New India' at Shubham Lawn in Mahmoorganj. National BJP general secretary Sunil Bansal was the chief guest while Indore MP Shankar Lalwani and Jagdish Sewani (Chairman of American and Indian Social Harmony Committee) were present as special guests.

Rahul, Akhilesh to address joint meeting in Varanasi today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav will address a joint public meeting in Mohansarai area here on Tuesday at 3.30 pm. Encouraged by the successful recent roadshow of Priyanka Gandhi and Dimple Yadav in Varanasi parliamentary constituency, the INDIA bloc has started preparations for organising this second big mega show in support of Congress candidate Ajay Rai. Regarding this, the preparations intensified with great enthusiasm among the parties associated with the alliance.

Giving this information, senior Congress leader Prof Satish Rai, who is associated with the election management of the Congress candidate, said that senior Congress leaders along with general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh of All India Congress Committee (AICC) Avinash Pandey conducted an on-site inspection of the meeting venue. During his visit, Pandey gave instructions regarding preparations to the local party office-bearers. A field near Mohansarai crossing has been selected for the meeting of the two big leaders.

During the inspection of the meeting venue, UPCC secretary Rajesh Tiwari, state media department chairman Dr CP Rai, treasurer Shiv

Pandey, Varanasi district president Rajeshwar Patel, city chief Raghendra Choubey, Shailendra Singh and others were also present. They discussed control of crowd and other arrangements of this junction area of Cantt, Rohania and Sewapuri assembly constituencies. Earlier, addressing an election meeting in Chittanpura on Sunday evening, national secretary of Congress, ex-MLA and former NSUI president Nadeem Javed said that this time the election will be decided on the issue of protecting the Constitution and democracy. He criticised the ruling party for failure to make Kashi like Kyoto as per its promises. He said the Constitution has given equal democratic rights to everyone in the country, on which the country is proud. "Neither the Election Commission nor his own party sought answers from the responsible leaders who made arrogant statements about changing it instead of amending it. As a result, the common people are scared and have decided to change those who changed the Constitution", he said. Apart from Congress, SP, AAP and Communist leaders, including Pramod Pandey, Salman Bashir, Syed Hasan, Lallu Yadav, Imran Khan, Arif Khan, Devkant Verma, Manish Gupta, Saroj Kumar Sharma, Abdul Raqib etc were also present. A large number of local dignitaries were present.

Nadda attacks opposition



BJP chief JP Nadda addressing intellectuals in Varanasi on Monday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) President Jagat Prasad Nadda, attacking the opposition said that other political parties have nothing to do with the development of India, hence they should be left to their fate and we should move ahead towards a strong and powerful democracy by voting on a strong basis. "While making this, the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi should move forward towards getting an unprecedented majority for the third time". He was addressing a seminar of Lokmat Jagran Vidwat organised by Akhil

Bhartiya Brahmin Nyas Parishad at Marwari Samaj Bhawan Luxa here on Monday. Nadda said that today India is guiding the world community in all areas of development, there was a time when we used to depend on other countries of the world from technology to infrastructure, but since 2014, the result of the communication, technological, digital and social revolutions led by the Indian government, India is rapidly moving towards self-reliance in all sectors and in the coming few years it will be established as the third economy of the world.

The programme was presided over by Padma Shri Dr

KK Tripathi. Kashi region Lok Sabha in charge Satish Dwivedi, City South MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari, president of the parishad Pramod Mishra and others were present on the stage. Earlier, Nadda said that whenever he came to Kashi, he visited Baba Vishwanath and Baba Kal Bhairav and said that we all know that Kashi is a religious city and is a city that enhances Sanatan. He said whenever we come here, we get new energy and pray to Baba that everyone remains happy and peaceful and the society becomes prosperous and the country develops. "The country is progressing rapidly under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the NDA will get 400 seats in the Lok Sabha elections and the government will be formed for the third time under the leadership of Modi", he said.

After offering prayers at Kal Bhairav Temple, Nadda has sipped tea at a nearby crossing and enquired about the well-being of the people. He also performed puja at Kashi Vishwanath Temple.

Piyush Goyal interacts with morning walkers



Union Minister Piyush Goyal doing yoga at Shaheed Udyan in Varanasi on Monday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Union Minister Piyush Goyal said no matter what the opposition says, the public will ensure that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's target of crossing 400 is achieved. He expressed his views while talking to the morning walkers in Shaheed Udyan located in Sigra here on Monday. Goyal reached Shaheed Udyan in the morning and met the people doing morning walk there and enquired about their well-being. While walking with them he discussed the development of Kashi. He also practiced yoga sitting with some women doing yoga and laughed a lot while doing laughter yoga.

After early morning exercise and workout, Goyal reached a tea stall located in Shastri Nagar. Even before taking the tea, the union minister gave the money to the tea seller and after taking the tea, sat among the people present and started discussing the poll. In this discussion which started

with sipping of tea, he listened to the views of the people and said that Modi's Kashi is being transformed and after meeting the people of Kashi, it seems that Kashi is completely for Modi. The union minister said that the way the picture of Banaras has changed in the last 10 years and the work that the PM has done with the people of Kashi, it will continue in future also and the city will set new records of development. "This time the slogan of 400 Paar has become the voice of the mind of the people which will hand over the reins of the country in the hands of Modi again. "The PM has given a big mantra to all of us to achieve the big goal", he said, adding that a person should always dream big and work hard day and night to fulfil his dreams but one should always be honest towards his goal. Goyal was accompanied by Mayor Ashok Tiwari, Rajesh Trivedi, Rohit Kapoor, Vaibhav Kapoor, Prashant Sharma, Navratna Rathi, Dr JS Rai, Shailesh Gupta, Vijay Shankar etc.

Cong created obstacles in Ram Temple construction, alleges MP CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister (CM) Mohan Yadav alleged that Congress had created obstacles in the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya. He was addressing a public meeting at Seer Govardhan, birth place of Sant Ravidas, in Rohania assembly segment of Varanasi Lok Sabha seat here on Sunday evening.

"Not a single Congress leader visited Ayodhya to offer prayers. The Congress had excluded Lord Krishna from the syllabus but the BJP made the life of Lord Ram and Lord Krishna a part of the syllabus", said Dr Yadav, criticising Congress further for including Muslims in the reservation of backward classes in Karnataka.

"Under the leadership of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, be it Kashi Vishwanath Dham, Lord Shri Ram's Dham, Mahakal Dham in Ujjain, all the dhams are smiling", he said, inviting the locals to visit Ujjain's Mahakal Temple. He said the MP government has decided to develop pilgrimage at every place where Lord Ram stepped, be it Ujjain or Chitrakoot. "When we talk about Lord Ram and Lord Krishna, the opposition gets stomach ache", he said adding that whatever cannot be of Lord Ram and Lord Krishna cannot be of any use.

5-year old girl dies in attack by stray dogs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

In a tragic incident, a five-year old girl was killed while her two-year old brother is still struggling for his life at a hospital when a pack of stray dogs attacked them in CTI Kacchi Basti under Govind Nagar police late on Sunday night. At the time of incident both the children were fast asleep with their mother in front of the house. After the incident, irate mob blocked the Dadanagar flyover for about half an hour alleging the negligence of Kanpur Nagar Nigam and demanded compensation for the kin of the deceased.

Chhotu of Kacchi Basti is a party waiter while his wife Puja, a rag picker. Around 12.30 am on Sunday when she was sleeping with her elder daughter Khushi (5) and son Bholu (2) in front of the house,

a pack of stray dogs attacked them. Puja raised alarm and by the time Chhotu and local residents rushed to spot, both the children were badly bitten by the stray dogs. After rescuing them, they were taken to a private hospital in Ratanlal Nagar where Khushi was declared dead by the doctors. In view of Bholu's serious condition, he was referred to the LLR (Hallet) hospital. The irate mob staged an agitation and blocked the flyover.

The police pacified the issue and got the traffic restored on the one lane of the flyover after half-an-hour. ACP Babupurwa Amarnath Yadav said, "Nagar Nigam will be asked to initiate action against the illegal meat shops and launch drive to catch the stray dogs. On receipt of complaint, further action will be initiated in the matter."

This poll is to save Constitution: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary Avinash Pandey said this election is between the ideology of INDIA bloc which saves the Constitution and the ideology of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which 'changes' the Constitution. Talking to reporters along with party's social media and digital platform chairperson Supriya Srinetra, national spokesperson

Ahjay Dubey and Congress candidate of Varanasi Lok Sabha seat Ajay Rai, here on Monday, Pandey said after travelling 7,000 kilometres in Uttar Pradesh in the last 40 days, he experienced the misrule of Modi and Yogi governments.

"While travelling across the state along with Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra and Nyaya Yatra, he found that the people have awakened new political hope", he said, adding that in his

yatra, Rahul tried to understand the problems of the people and knowing the feelings of those who till date were living in an environment of terror and fear which has created a spark of hope.

"Today the political environment has changed quite rapidly increasing confidence among the public as the campaign of change is getting stronger after every phase and the credit for it goes to Rahul Gandhi", he said.

4 labourers from Kanpur killed as mini truck overturns in Guna

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Four labourers of Kanpur were killed while four others seriously injured when a mini truck carrying them to Karnataka fell from the culvert after breaking a divider and overturned on AB Road under Mayana police station area of Guna (Madhya Pradesh) on Monday evening. Station House Officer (SHO) Sanjit Mabai said the mini truck was carrying six labourers, a driver and a cleaner. During the prima facie investigation it was apprehended that the incident took place after the driver dozed off and the truck fell off the culvert and overturned. Three labourers were killed on the spot while another succumbed to his injury during treatment. The deceased were identified as Vishnu (32) son of Rampal; Meer (30), son of Chokhelal; Vikas (35) and Ranjit (25), son of Nathu Singh. Four others, including the cleaner Shahrulkh, driver Ashok and Nawab, were seriously injured and admitted to a hospital. All the labourers were residents of Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh) while the driver Ashok, a resident of Rae Bareilly, had been referred to Gwalior. The labourers were going to Karnataka with bike, cooking material, clothes and other household goods which all got scattered after the mishap. The kin of the deceased and injured had been informed, SHO said. Truck cleaner Shahrulkh said the vehicle belonged to Rae Bareilly. He was going to Shujalpur (Shajapur, Madhya Pradesh) from Fatehpur (Uttar Pradesh). The labourers boarded the truck from Kalpi (Jalaun,

Uttar Pradesh). When all were fast asleep, the truck hit the divider and fell down the culvert. The police sent them to the hospital.

In another incident a DCM driver and cleaner were killed when their vehicle collided with a truck in front of Rahi Hotel in Rania (Kanpur Dehat) on Kanpur-Etawah highway early on Monday morning. The police rushed to the spot and sent both the seriously injured persons to the district hospital by an ambulance where they were declared dead by the doctors. DCM driver Sadanand alias Satyanand (50) of Mohammdabad, Orai, after loading tomato from Barabanki was going to Kalpi. He was accompanied by cleaner Akhtar (40) of Orai. On the highway, in front of Rahi Hotel, the DCM collided with a truck-trolley. On the information on Dial-112, SO Rania Mahendra Patel rushed to the spot who, on the basis of DCM number, informed the transporter about the incident and sent the critically injured driver and cleaner to the district hospital by an ambulance. But prior to reaching to hospital, both of them succumbed to their injuries on the way. The SO said raids are on to nail the guilty truck driver. In yet another incident a woman labourer was fatally knocked down by a bike on Lucknow-Kanpur highway under Aijgan Kotwali police area of Unnao on Sunday night. She succumbed to her injuries during treatment late in the night. After the autopsy, the kin staged agitation with the body at the under-construction university gate to press for payment of compensation and indulged in stone-pelting on Monday. The

police rushed to the spot and made a futile attempt to pacify the issue after talks with the university management and kin of the deceased. Talks were still on with the manager/contractor of the university. According to reports, Rekha (35) of Narsinghpur village in Asoha police area of Unnao was employed as labourer in the under-construction university on Nawabganj highway. Late Sunday evening, after finishing duty when she was returning home and crossing the highway, bike rider Aditya (20) of Jaitpur village under Aijgan police station had hit her and caused injury. Her kin took her to the CHC, district hospital and then to a private hospital where the woman succumbed to her injury during treatment late at night. On Monday, kin staged agitation at the university gate with the body to press for payment of compensation. Immediately, Aijgan inspector Avaneesh Singh along with force rushed to the spot and made futile bid to pacify the issue in consultation with the authorities. University plant manager Jagrup Singh said higher officers had been apprised of the demand of compensation. They had not conveyed any decision so far. Inspector said as Rekha was engaged through the contractor Rishi, the university had nothing to do with her. The contractor had been called to settle the issue, he said.

CONCLUDES: The 15-day music summer camp 'Akshiptika' jointly organised by the Jai Narayan Vidya Mandir and Sangeet Safar Sansthan on the school campus concluded on Monday.

Denizens in Sangam city grappling with scorching heat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Denizens in Sangam city are grappling with scorching heat as the maximum temperature on Monday was recorded 45 degrees Celsius while the minimum temperature remained 31 degrees Celsius. The impact of 'Nautapa' (nine days of severe heat) was also visible in Prayagraj on the third day. Till 7:30 am on Monday the maximum temperature was 34 degrees Celsius. According to meteorological experts, it will hover up to 46 °C in the days to come.

Dr Shailendra Rai, Professor and Meteorologist of Allahabad University, said there will be blistering heat till June 2. The temperature will reach 47 °C. The impact of the storm in the Bay of Bengal will also cause strong winds. This will be the form of heat wave. It directly affects the body. There is a need to avoid it. The temperature can reach 46 °C on Tuesday.

Meanwhile a 33-year-old mobike-borne man was killed after he was hit by an unidentified vehicle in Sarayamrej, here late on Sunday night. The police has sent body of the victim, Anand Tiwari, for the post-mortem examination.

Indian Bank		Indian Bank	
Zonal Office: Tindwari Road Near Saint Mary School Banda (U.P.)-210001		Appendix-IV Under [RULE - 8 (1)] of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002	
POSSESSION NOTICE (Rule 8(1) for Immovable Properties)			
Notice is hereby given under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement (Security) Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under 13(12) read with rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer issued a demand notice on the mentioned below hereinafter, calling them to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the under noted borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said Rules on the dates mentioned against each Account. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealing with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of the Indian Bank (e-ALLAHABAD BANK), Branch Mahoba, Distt. Mahoba, for the amounts and interests thereon mentioned herein below. The attention of the borrowers detailed hereunder is invited to the provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.			
Sl. No.	Name and address of the Borrowers/Mortgagors/Guarantors	Description of the Immovable Property	Date of Demand Notice outstanding Amt.
			Dt. of Possession Notice outstanding Amt.
1.	Borrower & Mortgagor: Mrs. Saroj Sharma W/o Ravindra Kumar Sharma, R/o, Ksheer Sagar, Gali No. 1, Back Side of Essar Petrol Pump, Charkhari Bypass Road, Mahoba Borrower & Guarantor: Mr. Rohit Sharma S/o Ravindra Kumar Sharma, R/o Ksheer Sagar, gali No. 1, Back Side of Essar Petrol Pump, Charkhari Bypass Road, Mahoba Guarantor: Mr. Ravindra Kumar Sharma S/o Mr. Balkrishna Sharma, R/o Ksheer Sagar, gali no. 1, Back Side of Essar Petrol Pump, Charkhari Bypass Road, Mahoba	Property is situated at Gata No. 1688, Ward No. 15, Gandhi nagar, Mahoba. Admeasuring 1315.13 Sq Feet in the name of Saroj Sharma W/o Ravindra Sharma registered wide ded no. 1845, Bahi No.-1, Jild No.-1777, page No. 313-340, Dated 16.06.2012. Boundaries: East: House of Manoj Sahu, West: Rasta, North: Khet Hamid Rain, South: Foundation Jeetendra Yadav,	23.12.2022 Rs. 3,95,823.00 + intt. & Charges 22.05.2024 Rs. 3,95,823.00 + intt. & Charges
2.	Borrower: Shiva Sharma S/o Sunil Kumar Sharma, R/o, House No. 1003, Near Hamirpur Chungi, Bajrang Ward, Mahoba, U.P.-210427 Guarantor & Mortgagor: Sunil Kumar Sharma S/o Ramsaran Sharma, R/o, House No. 1003, Near Hamirpur chungi, bajrang Ward, Mahoba, U.P.-210427	Residential House situated at Gata No.-1256, having House No.-1003, New Ward No.-06, and old ward No.-11, Mohalla-Bajrang Nagar, Mahoba, District-Mahoba in the name of Sunil Kumar Sharma S/o Ramsaran Sharma. Admeasuring 113.85 Sq. Mtr. Boundaries: East: Cricket Ground, West: House of Krishna Kant Choubey, North: House of Suman Sharma. Hypothecated assets:- Hypothecation of Plant and machinery and Stocks in the name of Shiva Sharma S/o Sunil Kumar Sharma.	21.11.2023 Rs. 18,71,411.00 + intt. & Charges 22.05.2024 Rs. 18,71,411.00 + intt. & Charges
3.	Borrower: Nafees S/o Natthoo R/o, Mohalla - Digarray, Ward No. 9, kharela, mahoba -210425 Guarantor: Kuresha Bai W/o Nafees, R/o, Mohalla - Digarray, Ward No. 9, Kharela, Mahoba -210425	Equitable Mortgage of Land & Building constructed over Gata No. 811, Mauja Bhatipura, Ward No. 7, mahoba, Near Bus Stand having area 92.94 Sq. Mtr. Owned by Nafees S/o Natthoo. Boundaries: East: Plot of seller, West: Plot of Abdul Majeed, North: Plot of Abdul Majeed, South: 18' wide road,	28.02.2024 Rs. 12,58,892.00 + intt. & Charges 22.05.2024 Rs. 12,58,892.00 + intt. & Charges

Alternative to electoral bond scheme should be found: Shah

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Home Minister Amit Shah believes the influence of black money will increase during the ongoing Lok Sabha elections following the Supreme Court's decision to scrap the electoral bond scheme, and suggested all stakeholders will have to deliberate and decide on an alternative.

If the impact of black money rises, then an alternative should be found, he said, adding that it is for Parliament to debate and decide on any other mechanism for funding to political parties.

He told PTI in an interview on Saturday that the electoral bond scheme, which allowed donors to fund political parties anonymously by purchasing bonds from the SBI, was scrapped at a crucial time. The Supreme Court had struck down the scheme in February, a month before the Lok Sabha elections were announced.

Replying to a question on the issue, he said, "I believe and this is my guess that it will increase the influence of black money in elections and poli-

tics. When political parties submit their account for this fiscal year, then how much money is by cash donation and how much is through cheque will be known. The donation figure by cheques had reached 96 per cent at the time of the bond."

He added, "Now you will know. If the impact of black money rises, then an alternative should be found. There should be a debate in Parliament."

Asked if he thought the influence of black money would increase in the ongoing elections due to the scrapping of the electoral bond scheme, Shah said, "I guess so."

When asked what he considered an alternative to the bond scheme, he said the issue needed to be discussed with all stakeholders, including different political parties. He said, "This will have to be debated in Parliament. We will have to discuss this with

all parties. The Supreme Court's view since their judgment has come is also very important. The Attorney General and Solicitor General will also have to be consulted. So we will have to deliberate collectively and decide on a new alternative."

The apex court had struck down the electoral bond scheme, saying it violated the right to information and the freedom of speech and expression under the Constitution. The court had also made public the names of all donors and their beneficiaries.

The central government, however, insisted that the scheme was aimed at curbing the influence of black money in politics and that donors were allowed to remain anonymous so that they were not targeted by one political party or another for funding their rival parties.

Opposition parties have alleged that the scheme was used by the BJP to "legitimise" bribery by business interests, a charge rejected by the ruling party as it claimed that its rivals received more funding relative to their electoral strength.

Centre effects Secretary level reshuffle

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday extended the tenure of Defence Research and Development Organisation chief Samir V Kamat by one year while senior bureaucrat Pradip Kumar Tripathi appointed as the Lokpal Secretary as part of a secretary-level reshuffle effected on Monday.

Distinguished scientist Kamat was on August 25, 2022, appointed as secretary of the Department of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D) and the DRDO chairman, it said. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved an extension in service of Kamat as secretary, DDR&D and chairman, DRDO for one year from June 1, 2024, till May 31, 2025, or until further orders, it said. Tripathi, a 1987-batch Indian Administrative Service officer (IAS), is currently Secretary (Coordination) in the Cabinet Secretariat. He has been appointed as Secretary to the Lokpal till the date of his superannuation (June 30) and thereafter on contract basis for a period of two years beyond the date of his superannuation on usual terms and conditions applicable to re-employed central government officers, said an order issued by

the Personnel Ministry. Border Management Secretary Raj Kumar Goyal has been appointed as Secretary, Department of Justice under the Ministry of Law & Justice. Rajendra Kumar, Director General of Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), will be the Border Management Secretary in place of Goyal. New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) chairperson Amit Yadav has been named as Officer on Special Duty in the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment. "The officer will take over as Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment vice Saurabh Garg, IAS (OR:91) upon his superannuation on 31.07.2024," the order said. Rakesh Ranjan, Special Secretary in the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, has been appointed as Chairman of the Staff Selection Commission (SSC). West Bengal chief secretary Bhagwati Prasad Gopalika has been granted a three-month extension until August. Gopalika, a 1989-batch IAS officer, was originally scheduled to retire this Friday. However, with the approval from the Union Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), he will now continue as the state's chief secretary until August 31.

Plea in SC seeks exemption for lawyers from wearing black coats during summer



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to exempt lawyers from wearing black coats and gowns in the apex court as well as the high courts across the country during summer. The petition filed by advocate Shailendra Mani Tripathi also sought direction to the state bar councils to determine the "months of prevailing summer" for each state in order to exempt the wearing of the black coat and gown for those months.

It has sought a direction to the state bar councils to amend their rules and decide the time period when the lawyers would be exempted from wearing black coats and gowns depending upon the summer peaks in the particular state. The plea has requested the top court to consider relaxing the traditional dress code for

the advocates across the states considering that the same may cause hardships and health issues in the extremity of the growing summer heat.

Wearing coats during torrid summer makes it difficult for the lawyers to move from one court to another, it said. The top court in 2022 had refused to entertain a plea seeking exemption for lawyers from wearing black coats and gowns in the apex court as well as the high courts across the country during summer. The apex court had said it cannot entertain the plea under Article 32 and asked the petitioner to approach the Bar Council of India (BCI) with his grievance.

The lawyers' dress code is governed by the BCI Rules under the Advocates Act, 1961, and they make it mandatory for an advocate to wear a black coat with a white shirt and a white neckband.

Spiritual empowerment is real empowerment: President Murmu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Asserting that spiritual empowerment is the real empowerment, President Droupadi Murmu on Monday said when the followers of any religion or sect deviate from the path of spirituality, they become victims of fanaticism and suffer from an unhealthy mentality.

"Spiritual values connect people of all religions to each other," she said, addressing the national launch of 'Spiritual Empowerment for a Clean and Healthy Society' organised by Brahma Kumaris. The president said the forces promoting fear, terror, and war are very active in many parts of the world. "In such an environment, Brahma Kumari Institution has provided an effective platform for the empowerment of humanity through many cen-

tres in more than 100 countries. This is an invaluable effort to strengthen universal brotherhood by promoting

spiritual values," Murmu said. The president said the golden chapters of world history and the history of nations

have always been based on spiritual values.

"World history is witness to the fact that disregarding spiritual values and adopting only the path of material progress has ultimately proved disastrous. Holistic well-being is possible only on the basis of a healthy mentality," she said.

Murmu said a truly healthy person meets all three dimensions -- physical, mental and spiritual. Such individuals create a healthy society, nation and world community, she added. The president said spiritual empowerment is real empowerment.

"When the followers of any religion or sect deviate from the path of spirituality, they become victims of fanaticism and suffer from unhealthy mentality," Murmu was quoted as having said in a statement issued by the

Rashtrapati Bhavan. The president said working with the spirit of public welfare while rising above selfishness is a social expression of inner spirituality. "Doing charity for the public good is one of the most important spiritual values," she said.

The president was happy to note that the Brahma Kumaris Institution is probably the world's largest spiritual institute run by women, the statement said. She said in this organisation, "Brahma Kumaris remain in the front and their associates Brahma Kumaris work in the background."

"With such a unique harmony, this institution is continuously moving forward. By doing so, it has presented a unique example of spiritual progress and women empowerment to the world community," Murmu said.

Modi leads nation in paying tribute to Nehru on death anniversary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday led the nation to pay tributes to Jawaharlal Nehru on his death anniversary. India's first prime minister and a stalwart of the freedom movement, Nehru died in 1964 at the age of 74. Congress too paid rich tributes to India's first prime minister Nehru with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge saying the country's history is incomplete without the incomparable contribution of "the architect of modern India".

Kharge and former Congress president Sonia Gandhi also paid floral tributes to the former prime minister at his memorial 'Shantivan' here.

In a social media post Kharge said the history of India is incomplete without the incomparable contribution of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of modern India, who took India forward in scientific, economic, industrial and various fields. Nehru was a dedicated guardian of democracy and our source of

inspiration, he said. The Congress president quoted Nehru as saying that the protection of the country, progress of the country, and unity of the country is the national religion of all of us. Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi also paid tributes to his great grandfather. "Respectful tributes to the architect of modern India and the first Prime Minister of the country, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on his death anniversary. As a visionary, he dedicated his entire life to building India through the freedom movement, establishing democracy, secularism and laying the foundation of the Constitution. His values will always guide us," Rahul Gandhi said in a social media post.

Experts stress need for separate registry for AYUSH hospitals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Professor Bejon Kumar Misra, chairman of the Core Group of Experts for Insurance, Union Ministry of Ayush, on Monday stressed the need for a separate registry for Ayush hospitals even as he recommended promoting Ayush Healthcare Organisation (HCO) empanelment and adopting Ministry of Ayush-approved Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) and ICD-TM2 codes.

He was sharing his views at the sensitisation programme at the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) in the national capital, aiming to integrate Ayush treatments into mainstream health insurance schemes effectively. The initiative was prompted by the recent directives from the Insurance Regulatory

Development Authority (IRDAI) to include Ayush treatments under health insurance cover starting from April 1, 2024. The aim was to foster a deeper understanding and collaboration between Ayush hospitals, healthcare providers, and insurance sector stakeholders, ultimately ensuring affordable and accessible Ayush healthcare for all citizens. However, intriguingly while the government and private insurers are being encouraged to integrate ayurveda in their plans, the Centre is yet to

include Ayush interventions in its flagship Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). Sources said that efforts by the Ministry of Ayush and the National Health Authority (NHA) are still on.

Deputy Director General (Ayush) Dr. A. Raghu emphasized the need for a flat rate design for Ayush treatments, considering longer stays and categorization based on disease and patient strength, as well as the establishment of three levels of medical management for each disease.

Rajiv Vasudevan, MD and CEO of Apollo AyurVAID Hospitals, highlighted the importance of Ayush treatments in addressing long-term and chronic diseases, advocating for a shift towards identifying and addressing the root cause of diseases.

Army forges partnership with IOCL for Hydrogen Fuel cell buses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



In keeping with the need to combat climate change threats, the Indian Army has taken yet another green step as on Monday it embraced eco-friendly transport solutions by forging a pioneering partnership with the Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) to conduct trial runs of Hydrogen Fuel Cell Bus technology.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Indian Army and the IOCL in presence of General Manoj Pande, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) and Mr Shrikant Madhav Vaidya, Chairman of Indian Oil. During the event, one Hydrogen Fuel Cell Bus was received by the Indian Army. This marks the commencement of mutually beneficial partnership between Indian Army and IOCL. Last year, the Indian Army

became the first government entity to ink an MoU with National Thermal Power Corporation Renewable Energy Limited for installation of Green Hydrogen based Microgrid Power Plants along the Northern Borders. The MoU for Hydrogen Fuel Cell Bus technology emphasised the commitment to fos-

tering innovation and advancing sustainable transport solutions for the future. Hydrogen Fuel Cell technology offers a clean and efficient alternative by converting Hydrogen gas into electricity through an electro-chemical process. The process leaves water vapour as the only by-product, thus ensuring zero

emission. The Hydrogen Fuel Cell Bus has a seating capacity of 37 passengers. It promises an impressive mileage of 250-300 km on a full 30 kg onboard tank of Hydrogen fuel. Last year on March 21, in line with the 'National Green Hydrogen Mission', the Indian Army had put in motion the

process for installation of a Green Hydrogen based Micro Grid Power Plant project in the forward areas along the Northern borders which are not connected by National / State Grid. Indian Army is providing requisite land on lease for 25 years with a commitment to purchase generated power through a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). The proposed projects will be installed by NTPC on Build, Own and Operate (BOO) Models at a jointly identified location in Eastern Ladakh. The project entails setting up a Solar Power Plant for hydrolysis of water to produce Hydrogen, which, during non-solar hours will provide power through fuel cells. This will set the stage for similar projects in the future and contribute towards reducing dependence on fossil fuel-based generator sets with concomitant abatement of green-house gas emissions.

Commitments made by political parties in election manifesto not corrupt practice: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court has said that commitments made by political parties in their election manifestos will not amount to "corrupt practice" under the election laws.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and K V Viswanathan made the observation while dismissing a plea by a voter hailing from the Chamrajpet Assembly Constituency challenging the election of a candidate belonging to the Congress.

The plea alleged that commitments by the Congress in its election manifesto for the 2023 Karnataka assembly polls were direct and indirect financial help to the public which amounted to corrupt electoral

practice. The contention of the learned counsel that the commitments by a political party in its manifesto, which eventually lead to direct or indirect financial help to the public at large, will also amount to corrupt practice by a candidate of that party, is too far-fetched and cannot be

accepted. "In any case, in the facts and circumstances of these cases, we need not to go into such question elaborately. The appeals are, accordingly, dismissed," the bench said.

The petitioner, Shashanka J Sreedhara, a voter from the Chamrajpet Assembly constituency, had filed an election petition against the winning candidate B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan.

He submitted that the five guarantees made by the Indian National Congress (INC) party in its manifesto amounts to corrupt practice. The Karnataka High Court had held that a party's announcement about the policies they plan to put into place

cannot be regarded as corrupt behaviour under Section 123 of the Representation of Peoples Act.

"The five guarantees of the Indian National Congress have to be considered as social welfare policies. Whether they are financially viable or not is altogether a different aspect."

"It is for the other parties to show as to how implementation of the said schemes amounts to bankruptcy of the State Treasury and it can only lead to mal governance of the State. It is possible that they can be termed as wrong policies under the given facts and circumstances of the case, but cannot be termed as corrupt practices," the high court had said.

Indian software professionals become catalysts of technological innovation in US

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Known for their exceptional technical skills and strong academic backgrounds, Indian software professionals have become the catalysts of technological innovation in the United States and the Indian software engineers have become integral to the technological landscape of the US, driving significant strides in innovation and development. Excelling in fields such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and software engineering, Indians' influence is evident in major technology companies, startups, and leading academic institutions, where they spearhead pio-

neering projects, drive research, and shape the future of technological advancement. A prime example of this impact is Himanshu Jain, a distinguished computer science graduate from Duke University, North Carolina. Himanshu's journey began far from the tech hubs of the United States. Growing up in India, he was always fascinated by computers

and the limitless possibilities they offered. Currently based in the Bay Area, Himanshu's role involves not just coding and developing software but also collaborating with diverse teams, solving complex problems, and continually pushing the boundaries of technology.

Jain's career is marked by significant contributions to multiple open-source projects and practical experience in startup environments and mobile application development. His scholarly contributions include articles published in esteemed scientific journals and co-authoring a book inspired by his experiences. Yet, beyond his technical achievements, what stands out

is Himanshu's dedication to giving back. He is an active mentor, regularly delivering tech talks and serving as a judge and reviewer for hackathons, fostering the growth of aspiring professionals. He believes in the power of community and the importance of nurturing the next generation of tech innovators. In his personal life, born and brought up to a top Indian bureaucrat, Himanshu is known for his love of learning and curiosity about the world while he spends his free time exploring new technologies, reading about the latest advancements in AI and machine learning, and experimenting with new coding techniques.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Up in flames

Ten fatalities in overnight Delhi fires reflect poorly on CM Kejriwal, who is busy campaigning

A tragedy of the highest order and an act of unpardonable negligence by civic authorities: Two blazes in Delhi have claimed 10 lives in separate incidents. A fire broke out late on Saturday at a children's hospital in East Delhi, resulting in the death of seven babies. The other incident, in the same district, occurred in the early hours of Sunday when three persons were killed in a fire that engulfed a residential building. The hospital fire which burnt seven infants alive is a horrible incident. The Capital, grappling with these tragedies, finds itself in grief and introspection. The Delhi incidents come on the heels of another inferno in Gujarat, where 27 children were charred to death in a gaming arcade. It is summer when, understandably, Delhi is more prone to fire incidents. Before the blame game starts and accountability fixed, someone in the Delhi Government must own moral responsibility and strict action should be taken against those who played with human lives. Prima facie it is a case of utter negligence as oxygen cylinders stored on the ground floor burst open, though the fire may have been triggered by a short circuit incident. Safety protocols exist only on paper and the authorities concerned look the other way when it comes to complying with the norms. Often, fire protocols that mandate safety measures are flouted at will, including fire drills which never happen. In a particularly devastating case, an entire family perished due to a fire caused by an electrical short circuit. Firefighters, despite their best efforts, face significant challenges due to narrow approach lanes and inadequate water supply in certain areas.



These tragic incidents have sparked a public outcry for improved fire safety regulations and more robust enforcement of existing laws. Amidst this sorrow and anger, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's absence has not gone unnoticed. Currently out on interim bail and engrossed in election campaigns in Punjab, his stance that he can manage Delhi's affairs from within jail has become a contentious issue. This claim, though technically plausible with today's technology, seems detached from ground realities that demand immediate and hands-on governance. The Chief Minister's current focus on electioneering in another State raises legitimate concerns about where his priorities lie and whether he can adequately address the urgent needs of Delhi while physically away from home and office. Indeed, the responsibility for these tragic incidents is multifaceted. On the one hand, the immediate causes point to systemic issues; on the other, the wider accountability lies with the city's administration and leadership. But whether it is the Ghatkopar tragedy, the gaming arcade fire or the Delhi blaze, we learn nothing from these incidents. After the initial hue and cry, everything is normalised and life goes on. It is time we at least ensure proper fire audits of at least hospitals and schools and do not put children's lives at risk. Hope our activist Chief Minister will take action and things will improve in the Capital before it is too late.

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PICTALK



A man feeds pigeons and crows on a hot summer day, in New Delhi

Buddhist influence on Tagore's work



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Gurudev drew heavily from Buddha's teachings on non-violence and respect for all life, which resonate deeply in a world starved for peace, offering tranquillity

The relevance of Buddha's teachings in the contemporary world is profound. His principles of non-violence and compassion offer a path toward greater harmony in a world often plagued by conflict. The Buddha's teachings also emphasise respect for all forms of life and interdependence, principles crucial for addressing today's environmental challenges. Embracing these values fosters sustainable practices and a deeper connection with nature. Ethical living, as outlined in the Buddha's Eightfold Path, remains pertinent in personal, professional and societal contexts, promoting integrity and cooperation.

Practitioners of this philosophy such as the Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, alias Thay have advanced the principles of non-violence, compassion and mindfulness to promote global peace. Their "Engaged Buddhism" encourages integrating mindfulness into everyday life and social activism, advocating for peaceful conflict resolution and environmental care. His teachings on deep listening and loving speech, help bridge divides and heal communities. Similarly, the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama promotes interfaith dialogue, compassion and ethical responsibility, inspiring global movements for human rights and sustainability. These leaders illustrate how ancient Buddhist principles can address modern challenges, fostering a culture of peace and understanding worldwide.

Nobel Laureate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore drew inspiration from Buddhism, which can be seen in his work. His vision of universal humanism aligns with the Buddha's teachings of compassion and loving-kindness. Tagore's works often reflect themes of inner peace and self-realization, akin to Buddhist concepts. His holistic approach to education also emphasised the development of the whole person and mirrored the Buddhist focus on the cultivation of wisdom. Buddha's teachings emphasise inclusivity, compassion and the inherent potential for enlightenment in everyone, regardless of



social status. He rejected the caste system, asserting the importance of ethical behaviour over birthright. British Historian and author Karen Armstrong notes that Buddha challenged the social and religious norms of his time by not endorsing the caste system. Even Buddha's monastic community, the 'Sangha', welcomed individuals from all backgrounds, promoting spiritual equality and inclusiveness.

In one of his plays "Chandalika", Tagore articulates the notion of oneness through the character of Prakriti, a woman from the untouchable caste and Ananda, a revered Buddhist monk. Drawing inspiration from Buddhist scriptures, Tagore reimagines the narrative to explore the enduring struggle against societal divides, particularly the historical plight of untouchables in ancient India. Ananda's humble acceptance of water from Prakriti poignantly rejects caste prejudice and acknowledges her intrinsic dignity. Despite Prakriti's attempt to ensnare Ananda with a spell in a desperate bid for affection, his unwavering faith in Buddha's teachings serves as a beacon of purity. Divine intervention ultimately frees Ananda from the enchantment, symbolising the triumph of spiritual integrity over worldly desires - which is one of the characteristics of



BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS EMPHASISE INCLUSIVITY, COMPASSION AND THE INHERENT POTENTIAL FOR ENLIGHTENMENT IN EVERYONE. HE REJECTED THE CASTE SYSTEM, ASSERTING THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR OVER BIRTHRIGHT

meditation in Buddhism. Through Tagore's lyrical prose, the story transcends its narrative framework, evolving into a profound meditation on the enduring power of love, redemption and the unity that connects all souls. This legacy, left by Buddha, urges his followers to break free from societal constraints, form a 'Sangha', and become messengers of peace.

Further, Tagore uses Prakriti's character elevating her to question societal norms restricting the freedom of women and thereby restoring her own identity. In his bid, Ananda's compassionate attitude — a specific characteristic of the Buddhist philosophy — rekindles Prakriti's sense of self-worth, asserting that all humans are fundamentally equal. The water she pours on Ananda's hands symbolises her purity and love, as well as his 'boundless benevolence and humanity. Tagore explores the themes of spirituality and untouchability through the symbolic union (read elevation) of Prakriti through the medium of Ananda. This (union) represents the harmony between man and woman, purity and impurity and spirituality and passion. Tagore uses this synthesis to depict a balanced and civilised society. Similarly, the Buddha emphasised the importance of compassion (karuna) and loving-kindness (metta) towards all

beings, advocating for empathy and support within the community, especially towards those who are suffering or marginalised. His First Noble Truth, addressing 'dukkha' (suffering), underscored the universal human experience of suffering, fostering a shared commitment to alleviating it for everyone. To this, Thich Nhat Hanh reflects, "Understanding suffering gives rise to compassion and from compassion, understanding deepens" (The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching). Buddha's teachings on right livelihood and ethical behaviour promoted social justice and fairness, contributing to a more inclusive and compassionate society. In Buddhist philosophy, the 'Middle Way' focuses on avoiding extremes and finding balance, a principle reflected in Rabindranath Tagore's works. For example, in his play "The King of the Dark Chamber," ('Raja' in Bengali), Tagore explores the themes of light and darkness and ignorance and enlightenment, mirroring the Buddhist search for harmony. The main character's journey to understand and accept both the light and dark aspects of life represents the Middle Way's emphasis on balance.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GUIDELINES FOR A HEALTHY LIFE

Madam — Apropos the news story "Key takeaways from ICMR's new dietary guidelines," published on May 27, this is my response. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) have released new dietary guidelines to address the significant burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India. With 56.4 per cent of diseases linked to poor dietary habits, these guidelines aim to promote healthier eating and lifestyle choices. The recommendations emphasise a balanced diet incorporating a variety of food groups, with a focus on whole grains, millets and natural protein sources. Limiting fat intake to 30 per cent of daily calories and including fresh vegetables and fruits in every meal are also crucial.

In addition to dietary changes, the guidelines highlight the importance of regular physical activity—at least 30-45 minutes for adults and 60 minutes for children. Special advice for pregnant and lactating women includes exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. For cooking and storage, using air fryers, granite-coated utensils and earthen pots is recommended to maintain nutritional quality and safety.

Aman Kumar | Dhanbad

LIVE HAPPILY ANONYMOUSLY

Madam — Apropos the news story "Embracing silence in the age of social media," published on May 27, this is my response. Recently, I came across a famous quote by Khalil Gibran: "Travel and tell no one; live a true love story and tell no one; live happily and tell no one; people ruin beautiful things." This reminded me of the cautionary advice from our elders to avoid flaunting good fortune to ward off the evil eye. Back then, we cherished and shared our joys within close circles.

The times have changed. The shift from letters to emails marked a significant transition in communication, though Government and corporate sectors still

Chabahar's strategic masterstroke



Apropos the news story "India-Iran revitalise Chabahar Port," published on May 27, this is my response. The recent 10-year, \$370 million agreement between India and Iran to develop the Chabahar Port marks a significant milestone in regional connectivity and economic collaboration. As an avid newspaper reader, I see this project as a testament to

India's strategic foresight. Chabahar not only offers India a crucial gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia but also provides an alternative route that bypasses Pakistan, mitigating geopolitical roadblocks. The port's strategic location on Iran's south-eastern coast enhances India's regional influence, countering China's dominance with its Belt and Road Initiative. Moreover, Chabahar offers Afghanistan a viable alternative to the Karachi Port, potentially fostering greater economic stability in the region. Despite the hurdles posed by US sanctions and regional instability, India's commitment to Chabahar underscores its readiness to navigate complex diplomatic landscapes. This port symbolises India's assertive global stance, promoting regional stability and economic growth through enhanced connectivity.

Roshan Daa | Rourkela

cling to physical signatures for validation. Despite technological advances, the reluctance to embrace complete digital transformation persists, often due to the sender's unfamiliarity with digital tools. Reflecting on the past, I recall the anticipation of waiting for responses to my manuscript submissions. Today, a quick rejection email highlights the impersonal nature of modern communication. Social media's omnipresence underscores this shift, contrasting starkly with Gibran's timeless wisdom. In an age where oversharing is the norm, his advice feels both radical and refreshing, challenging our constant urge to broadcast every aspect of our lives.

Riya Aggarwal | Jind

INNER STRENGTH HELPS ENJOY LIFE

Madam — Apropos the news story "Strategies for Inner Peace and Empowerment," published on May 27, this is my response. Are we pursuing an illusion, like the golden deer of the Ramayana? This chase often feels like a self-destructive mission, driven by a mind over-

whelmed with 70,000 thoughts a day. Our lack of focus and the influence of negative environments and unhealthy habits cloud our judgment. I understand this deeply, having battled alcoholism myself. Recovery through Sudarshan Kriya and Pranayama showed me the importance of a strong mind and healthy surroundings. Effective time management is crucial. Techniques like the POSEC method help us prioritise, while a SWOT analysis and delegation aid efficiency. Tackling tough tasks first and maintaining flexibility prevent burnout. Developing hobbies and practicing gratitude can transform our outlook. To quiet our minds, we should embrace activities like walking, talking through problems and pursuing passions. Exercise and cold baths can invigorate our spirits. Ultimately, we must accept our inner strength, declutter our minds and cultivate positivity to truly celebrate life.

Priyanka Singh | Lucknow

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Science archives preserve our scientific legacy

Establishing a National Science Archives Centre in India is crucial to safeguarding our scientific heritage for future generations

As an ever-evolving discipline, science continually shapes our understanding of the world and our place within it. Each discovery, innovation and technological advancement contributes to the present and builds the foundation for future generations. Most scientific activity in our laboratories may become part of tomorrow's history. People who have seen and overcome the COVID-19 pandemic may understand the hardships people faced during the pandemic. The innovations and discoveries developed to combat the global pandemic are now part of scientific history. Similar is the case with most of our scientific discoveries and inventions. Scientific knowledge is inherently cumulative. Each generation of scientists builds upon the work of their predecessors, advancing our understanding of complex phenomena. For instance, the development of quantum mechanics in the early 20th century paved the way for modern advancements in quantum computing. Scientific developments also



help in driving the economy and civilisations. We can see the imprint of the scientific strength of our pre-historic period through archaeological pieces of evidence. Science is a critical component of our cultural and intellectual heritage. It reflects our collective curiosity, ingenuity and drive to understand the world around us. Historical scientific documents, such as Darwin's notes on evolution or Einstein's manuscripts on relativity, are valuable for their scientific content and cultural artefacts that highlight the intellectual milestones of humanity. Preserved scientific materials handled by great scientists serve as invaluable research and educational resources. Original research papers, laboratory notebooks, communications with contemporary researchers and policymakers, email communications and prototype instruments can

highlight the pain the researchers undertook during that time. It can act as an inspiration for future researchers to move forward. Unfortunately, we dig into the past of a scientist only when their work gets global recognition. By this time, we might have lost all resources related to the discovery except for the research publications available on the public database. Science archives are essential for preserving human knowledge's vast and intricate tapestry. They store various materials, including research notes, correspondence between scientists, experimental data, publications and even artefacts such as laboratory equipment and specimens. This preservation is critical because it ensures that valuable scientific information is not lost over time. For example, the archives of the Royal Society in London contain records dating back to the 17th century, chronicling the early days of modern science. These documents provide insights into the time's experimental techniques and intellectual debates, allowing historians and scientists to trace the evolution of scientific

thought and practice. In India, the Archives at NCBS (https://archives.ncbs.res.in/) serve as a novel initiative to preserve the scientific history of modern India. The centre has over 250,000 processed objects across 30+ collections in various forms, ranging from paper-based manuscripts to negatives to photographs, books, fine art, audio recordings, scientific equipment, letters and field and lab notes.

The documents stored in volatile electronic or digital storage are susceptible to being permanently erased by a single button press or the malfunction of a hard drive. If these artefacts are not systematically conserved, they will be permanently lost, leading to what has been referred to as the Digital Dark Age. The Government should also make it mandatory for every researcher to periodically submit the documents to archives so that age and memory don't fade the significance of their research work.

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



BIJU DHARMAPALAN



FIRST COLUMN

MITIGATING THE E-WASTE CRISIS

It can be tackled with innovations, regulations and corporate responsibility



SHAINY SHARMA

Today with the advancements in the field of science and technology, computers and other mobile devices have become such an integral part of everyone's work and personal lives that it is hard to imagine life without them. Not only that, but along with that the problem of e-waste continues to grow every year as consumers frequently upgrade their gadgets leading to the high turnover of electronic devices. E-waste or electronic waste refers to discarded electronic devices and appliances that have reached the end of their useful life or are no longer wanted by their owners. It is one of the significant problems due to its complex composition, rapid generation and the challenges it poses to human health and the environment. Due to the presence of various toxic substances such as lead, mercury and cadmium present in batteries and semiconductors can cause of neurological damage and can even damage the kidneys and bones. Not only this the toxic chemicals released from such wastes can leach into soil, making it infertile and unsafe for agriculture.

Not only will the soil get contaminated but the other sources of the environment that is water and air will also be affected badly as improper disposal of e-wastes can contaminate the waterbodies thereby affecting the water supplies and aquatic life and; toxic fumes released for extracting valuable metals will contribute to respiratory problems. It is believed that airborne toxins can travel long distances, affecting air quality and human health. Quite often in many developing countries, informal e-waste recycling activity is a significant source of income. Such activities are often unregulated and the workers are exposed to high levels of toxic substances without adequate protection.



This exposure can lead to respiratory problems, skin disorders and other severe health issues. The improper disposal and recycling of e-waste contribute to greenhouse gas emissions thereby contributing to environmental degradation and increased carbon footprints. According to the Global E-waste Monitor 2020, the world generated 53.6 million metric tons of e-waste in 2019 and this figure is expected to grow to 74.7 million metric tons by 2030. Only a fraction of this waste is properly recycled, with much ending up in landfills posing significant environmental and health risks.

Proper recycling of such wastes is the only solution that can help recover valuable materials and reduce the need for new resource extraction and the same is possible only and only when the Government enacts and enforces stringent regulations for e-waste management, including proper collection, recycling and disposal practices such as e-waste collection drives and recycling centres to facilitate proper disposal. Manufacturers should also be held responsible for the entire lifecycle of their products, including take-back programs and recycling initiatives. Investing in advanced recycling technologies can help improve the efficiency and safety of extracting valuable materials from e-waste. Encouraging the manufacturers to design such products that are easier to recycle, repair and upgrade can reduce e-waste generation. Educating consumers at the same time about the importance of proper e-waste disposal and the available recycling options can reduce improper disposal practices. Establishing international standards for e-waste management can help ensure safe and efficient recycling practices worldwide. Strengthening international regulations to prevent the illegal export of e-waste to developing countries where it is often processed unsafely. Remember, from gadgets to green initiatives, every individual living on this planet should recycle their e-waste and pave the way for a cleaner greener tomorrow.

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

Raisi's legacy endures in Iran, despite West



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Over three million mourners gather in Mashhad to honour the late President Raisi. The hold of hardliners in the country is much stronger than the West might think

Over three million Iranians have gathered in Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city, to honour the late President Raisi, who tragically perished in a helicopter crash along with eight others. The massive turnout, which filled the streets to capacity, reflects the deep respect and admiration many citizens held for Raisi, contradicting assertions by Washington that he was widely despised. Raisi's interment at the holy shrine of Imam Reza, a significant and unprecedented honour for a political leader, accentuates his esteemed status in the country. This unprecedented event defies the distorted and often misunderstood sentiments of the Iranian populace towards their leaders. Often, those who are demarcating the enemies, forcing others to accept their version of the story as gospel truth, are met with a ground reality that tells us the exact opposite.

The circumstances of the incident, however, have fuelled a wave of conspiracy theories. Moments after the crash, US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer declared there was no evidence of foul play, citing intelligence officials, despite Iran's rescue teams not yet having reached the crash site. Subsequently, some blame the secret organisation of Iran's arch-enemy State, Israel's Mossad. Others speculate that the death was the result of an inside job. However, this tragedy marked a significant event not only in Iranian politics but in the constantly growing West versus Rest dynamic, which is now more strongly questioning the partiality of international organisations while strengthening the established strong alternatives such as BRICS and the New Development Bank. Iran is playing a pivotal role in this.

Meanwhile, a segment of Western media recently published a series of stories about the helicopter crash suggesting that American sanctions have severely hindered Iran's ability to maintain its fleet of American-manufactured helicopters. It was suggested that a technical failure caused the crash, but so far there's no evidence to support this. The helicopter was one of three Bell 214 models; the other two returned safely, but President Raisi's did not. An Iranian defence firm, under the Iranian Aviation Industries Organisation (IAIO), specialises in maintaining and reverse-engineering US-model helicopters for Iran's military and the IRGC. Added to the US Department of the Treasury's SDN list in January 2018, its assets under US jurisdiction are frozen and transactions with US parties are prohibited under Executive Order 13382, targeting WMD proliferators. However, contrary to suggestions that Raisi's helicopter was overloaded and that this put undue strain on its engines, the aircraft was not operating beyond its capacity. The helicopter was carrying nine passengers and crew combined, well within its maximum capacity of 15 persons. The notion that the helicopter's age contributed significantly to the crash is also questionable. While the media has painted the Bell 214 as ancient, in reality, it was built in 1994 by Bell Helicopter Textron in Canada. With a global average age for commercial helicopters at around 23 years, Raisi's helicopter, though slightly older, was not exceptionally outdated. Moreover, helicopters used for presidential transport typically receive meticulous maintenance.

As Stephen D. Bryen, a leading expert on technology security who led the Pentagon's technology policy efforts during the Reagan



PRESIDENT RAISI WAS FOCUSED ON COOLING DOWN BORDER TENSIONS AND EXTENDING HIS DIPLOMATIC OUTREACH TO NEIGHBOURING ARAB COUNTRIES. HIS CHOSEN FOREIGN MINISTER, AMIR ABDOLLAHIAN, WHO ALSO PASSED AWAY WITH HIM, WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN REENGINEERING IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY

administration, pointed out, the engines of Raisi's helicopter, Pratt and Whitney PT6Ts, are also Canadian-made and widely regarded for their reliability. The implication that the helicopter's maintenance was compromised due to sanctions lacks substantiation, especially considering the high-profile nature of the passengers. The critical question of whether Canada currently supplies spare parts to Iran remains unclear, adding another layer of complexity to the narrative. Nonetheless, the assertions of technical failure due to sanctions remain speculative without concrete evidence and the focus should be on a thorough and unbiased investigation into the actual causes of the crash.

President Raisi was focused on cooling down border tensions and extending his diplomatic outreach to neighbouring Arab countries. His chosen Foreign Minister, Amir Abdollahian, who also passed away with him, was instrumental in reengineering Iranian foreign policy. A notable example of this effort was the steps taken to normalise Iran-Saudi Arabia diplomatic relations. This Chinese-backed diplomatic initiative is crucial for reshaping the West Asian diplomatic terrain. Similarly, the recent irrigation project constructed across the Aras River, which Raisi jointly inaugurated with his counterpart in Baku, is a demonstration of this new diplomatic approach.

The Aras River, spanning 1,072 km, originates in Eastern Turkey and flows along several borders: Turkey and Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan, Iran and Azerbaijan and through Azerbaijan into the Kura River. This region, a small riverine area in the Caucasus between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, has witnessed numerous tragedies, including the often-overlooked Armenian Genocide, which claimed around 1.5 million lives. The 689 km Iran-Azerbaijan border, demarcated by the Aras River, highlights the geopolitical sensitivity and strategic importance of this area. After the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, Azerbaijan gained independence and assumed control of part of the Iran-Soviet border, leading to

escalating disputes. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War saw Azerbaijan seize full control of the western border with Iran, heightening tensions. Relations between Iran and Azerbaijan slightly improved under President Hassan Rouhani, but Baku never hesitated to provide Israel with a strategic opportunity. Israel strengthened its alliance with Azerbaijan, turning it into a significant market for advanced weaponry. The 2020 conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh resulted in approximately 5,700 deaths, with Israel supplying a significant portion of Azerbaijan's arms, highlighting the deepening strategic ties between the two nations. As a result, Azerbaijan was able to absorb the Artsakh Republic, also known as Nagorno-Karabakh, a self-proclaimed republic dissolved in January this year.

In exchange for Israeli weapons, Azerbaijan provided oil. Ilham Aliyev, president since 2003, was re-elected for a fifth term on February 7 with over 92 per cent of the vote. Aliyev, who succeeded his father, Heydar Aliyev, a former Soviet KGB officer, has strengthened Azerbaijan's ties with Israel. Aliyev amended the constitution in 2009 to permit unlimited presidential terms and, in 2016, extended the presidential term from five to seven years. Azerbaijan can be seen as a family-run State prioritising clan interests, yet Aliyev has skillfully navigated relations with Eastern and Western powers to serve his political aims. It is not hyperbole to say Aliyev is a skilled Machiavellian politician in contemporary politics. An investigation by Israeli media outlet Haaretz published recently detailed the strategic relationship between Israel and Azerbaijan, through which Tel Aviv has supplied Baku with billions of dollars worth of weapons in exchange for "oil and access to Iran."

This extensive military cooperation underscores the depth of the strategic alliance between the two nations. Azerbaijan has reportedly permitted Israel's Mossad intelligence agency to establish a presence in the country to monitor Iran, its southern neighbour. Additionally,

Azerbaijan has facilitated the setup of an airfield for Israel to potentially strike Iranian nuclear facilities from its territory. In exchange, Azerbaijan receives the most advanced weapons, including ballistic missiles, air defence systems and kamikaze drones. However, as Yossi Melman, a noted Israeli writer and journalist who is an expert on intelligence and strategic affairs, affirmed, it is unlikely for Israel, particularly Mossad, to be involved in such an assassination as it never targets such individuals. But one should not forget that it was under President Raisi that Iran launched its first-ever direct attack on Israel, the single largest drone attack ever carried out by any country. President Raisi and his top diplomat left a legacy far greater than what they achieved while in power. Their deaths are more impactful than the assassination of President Mohammad Ali Rajaei and Prime Minister Mohammad Javad Bahonar, who were cut short in an explosion set by the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organisation, in August 1981. Despite expectations of seclusion and controversy, Raisi navigated international relations adeptly, maintaining uranium enrichment and escalating tensions with the West, but also restoring ties with Saudi Arabia, which advanced peace talks in Yemen and prevented military escalation.

This diplomatic success, seen as strategic pragmatism, opened dialogue with other regional powers and reduced tensions. Raisi revived the Chabahar port deal with India, defying US sanctions and facilitated a major prisoner exchange with the US, demonstrating diplomatic flexibility. Though Iran was blamed for supporting Hamas in the October 2023 attacks on Israel, no concrete evidence linked Iran directly, yet its backing of such groups has increased its regional influence and garnered support for Palestinians from other Arab countries. Iran lost two great politicians, but it is hard to assume it will change the Iranian political structure rather it will be strengthened.

(The writer is a Sri Lankan journalist and author. Views are personal)

The crisis in Kerala's State-run hospitals runs deep

The alarming frequency of medical mishaps in Kerala's Government hospitals paints a dire picture of the State's healthcare system

The day is not far off when all the Government-run hospitals in Kerala will spot the hoarding "Patients, enter at your own risk". This is not an exaggerated Statement as botched-up surgeries and wrong diagnoses have become the hallmarks of State-run hospitals.

Recently, a four-year-old girl was admitted to Government Medical College Hospital in Kozhikode for the removal of her sixth finger. However, the doctor who performed the surgery operated on her tongue while leaving the finger untouched. Though her parents alerted the hospital authorities, the initial reaction was denial of the faux pas by the latter. Remember, the Kozhikode Medical College



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

and Hospital is a most sought-after institution by prospective medical students! The police have filed a FIR against Bejohn Johnson, the doctor who performed the surgery and has slapped charges on him under IPC Sections 336 (endangering the life or personal safety of others) and 337 (causing hurt by an act endangering the life or personal safety of others). In all probability, the general public

would forget this incident as more and more cases like this come up daily from the Government hospitals.

Controversies are not new to the GMCH Kozhikode. In 2023 July, it was reported that a woman who underwent a caesarian in the hospital in 2017 developed severe pain in her abdomen. It was found that a pair of forceps was accidentally left in her stomach after the 2017 surgery and she was living with the same till acute pain made her approach the hospital in 2023. The hospital authorities found to their surprise that Harshinia, the patient, had a pair of mosquito to artery forceps in her stomach post the caesarian which was caused by medical negligence. The police as well as the investigating doctors con-

firmed the finding and sent their reports to the minister for health Veena George. The minister, a former newsreader in a private TV channel who made a lateral entry into the CPI(M) is yet to take any action on the incident while Harshinia is staging a sit-in in front of the medical college hospital demanding solatium. The standard reply given by the Department of Health is that it was an isolated incident that is being blown out of proportion by vested interests.

In yet another shocking incident, a patient admitted to the ICU post-surgery was raped and molested by a hospital employee who is a trade union leader affiliated with the CPI(M). The nursing officer who reported the matter to the

higher authorities was shunted out to a far-off hospital while the rapist is walking free in search of his next victim. Even doctors and nurses are not free from attacks by patients and their relations. In May 2023, Vandana Das, a 22-year-old doctor working as an internee in Kottarakkara Government Hospital was stabbed to death by a drug addict suffering from withdrawal paranoia while the police and her colleagues remained mute spectators. Even as this article is written, here comes a report from GMCH Kozhikode about a complaint from a patient. The implant meant for another patient was wrongly inserted into the complainant's hand. These events are sufficient to prove the CPI(M)'s claim that

Kerala is the State with the best healthcare facilities is a blatant lie. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan exhorts people from other States and countries to visit Kerala for world-class health care.

The authenticity of the Kerala Model of Development and Health Care has come down like a pack of cards. According to senior doctors who have been in Government service for more than three decades, the ruling CPI(M) itself is behind the collapse of Kerala's health sector. "The CPI(M) owns super speciality hospitals across the State named after its late leaders. Since the State-run hospitals have collapsed, the party can make a giant kill by forcing the patients to these party-run hospitals which are no different from corporate

hospitals. The CPI(M) is the leader of the hospital mafia in Kerala," said a veteran doctor. There are not enough specialist doctors to meet the requirements of patients. The trust deficit between doctors and the Government has reached a point of no return. Kerala is one of the States that saw maximum casualties during the COVID-19 pandemic though the Government managed to cover up the details with its carrot-and-stick policy. The claims by both the ministers K K Shylaja (2016-2021) and Veena George (2021-till date) were found to be stranger than fiction as nearly one lakh deaths have been reported from the State since the pandemic was detected for the first time in 2020. Though the Kerala

Government declared time and again that the State would develop its vaccine, K-Vaccine, the announcement remains on paper. The State of health in Kerala is such that whenever he is afflicted with a common cold, Pinarayi Vijayan takes the first available flight to the USA where Mayo Clinic is his favourite destination. The same is the case with ministers as well as CPI(M) leaders who have an inherent weakness for anything associated with the imperialists. While the chief minister himself asks people from other countries to come to Kerala for medical treatment, he is not sure about the quality of treatment in the State-run hospitals.

(The writer is a special correspondent with the Pioneer, views are personal)



Religion based reservation will not be allowed till Modi, BJP in power: Nadda

PTI ■ VARANASI (UP)

BJP president J P Nadda on Monday said there will be no reservation based on religion as long as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the party are in power. Accusing the opposition of planning to give reservation based on religion, he said, "It is clearly written in the Constitution that there will be no religion-based reservation. As long as PM Modi and BJP are in power, there will be no such reservation," he told reporters. He was in the city to campaign for Modi who is contesting the Lok Sabha election from Varanasi for the third time. "We will not allow anyone to encroach on the reservation of our Dalit, tribal, backward and extremely backward classes. You will see what will happen to the opposition on June 4 (the vote counting day)," Nadda said while talking to reporters in Varanasi. Addressing an intellectuals' meeting here, he said, "For a long time politics meant 'divide and rule' but now the 'politics of development' is going on." "What was the political situation 10 years ago," Nadda asked and said, India was being counted among the corrupt countries but the biggest problem was that the common man had become indifferent towards politics



and his faith had been broken. "This becomes a threat to democracy but in the last 10 years, PM Modi created trust among the common man about the country's development," the BJP chief said. Earlier, the opposition spreading casteism used 'divide and rule' policy to create divisions on the basis of religion and region, he said. "Prime Minister Modi has also given a jolt to this culture. Today, a politics of development is going on and in this, 'sabka saath sabka prayas aur sabke vishwas' (everyone's support, effort

and trust) is the basis." He said, "On June 1, when you all vote to the BJP, the foundation of development India will be laid." Be it BRICS, G-7 or G-20, no international forum is left where India was not represented. Now, we are special invitees in places where we were not members earlier," he said. Within just nine months, two Covid vaccines were made in the country. During the pandemic, double dose of vaccine was given by the government and after that 140 crore people were protected by giving booster doses, he

said. Nadda said, "When former PM Manmohan Singh used to go to Washington, he used to talk about terrorists saying we have threats from terrorists and Pakistan. PM Modi said that there is no threat. We know how to manage-surgical strikes, air strikes, we will enter their territory and kill." The BJP President also talked about the benefits people are getting from various Central government schemes, including Ayushman Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana. Nadda reached Varanasi for PM Modi's election campaign and offered prayers at the Kaal Bhairav temple. "Whenever I come to Varanasi I pay obeisance to Kal Bhairav temple, Sankat Mochan and Kashi Vishwanath temple. As we all know Kashi is a religious city and the city which takes forward Sanatan Dharma, I get new energy from here," he said. Varanasi, where PM Modi is in the fray, will be going to the polls on June 1. Congress has fielded its state president Ajay Rai from the seat. "I have prayed for the well-being of the society, peace and happiness and to give strength to the development works initiated in the Narendra Modi government. Modi will become PM for the third time with '400 paar' seats," he added.

Mukhtar's shadow looms over election discourse in Ghazipur

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ GHAZIPUR

In the run-up to the elections, Samajwadi Party candidate Afzal Ansari has been engaging with voters through nukkad (street corner) meetings, delivering speeches that resonate deeply with local issues and personal emotions. His campaign is markedly devoid of grandiosity, focusing instead on the everyday problems faced by the people. He consistently ends his speeches on an emotional note. "Have you heard the name of my younger brother Mukhtar Ansari?" he asks, drawing affirmative nods from the crowd. Accusing authorities of poisoning Mukhtar to fracture their family, Ansari leaves a poignant pause for his words to resonate deeply. Rasool Bhai, a tea shop owner, lends credence to Afzal's allegations, deeming Mukhtar's demise as "unnatural." He recalls Mukhtar's revelation to a court about being poisoned in jail just days before his death, raising questions about the lack of adequate medical care. This narrative of suspected foul play has become central to the Ghazipur election discourse, with many rally attendees expressing skepticism towards the official version of events surrounding Mukhtar's demise. The Ansari camp is pinning its hopes on a wave of

sympathy, aiming to overshadow Mukhtar's controversial reputation and rally support across diverse voter demographics. "You simply can't overlook Mukhtar in Eastern UP," remarks Ramesh K Singh, a seasoned journalist based in Varanasi. "His prominence reverberates widely, and his demise has only galvanized Muslim communities further." However, the electoral landscape in Ghazipur extends beyond Mukhtar's legacy. The formidable political clout of the Ansari family faces a significant challenge from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), represented by Parasnath Rai. Rai, known more for his association with the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) than for grassroots politics, enjoys backing from Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, a prominent BJP figure. Despite the BJP's emphasis on law and order, attributed to the governance of Yogi Adityanath, many locals acknowledge Sinha's contributions to local development. Ranjeet Singh, a resident, credits the end of the "mafia raj" to Adityanath's tenure, dismissing Mukhtar Ansari's influence as confined to the Muslim community. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), led by Umesh Singh, and the SP-Congress alliance are also vying for electoral

supremacy. The BJP leverages its alliance with the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP), led by Om Prakash Rajbhar, to consolidate support among the OBC Rajbhar community. The election dynamics are further shaped by the "MY" (Muslim-Yadav) factor, historically advantageous for the SP. The alliance with Congress is poised to bolster the minority vote bank, critical in a constituency where Muslims and Yadavs constitute approximately 15% of the electorate. Contentious issues such as the Agnipath recruitment scheme for the armed forces add complexity to the electoral landscape. Rajesh Kumar reports a significant decline in army recruitment applicants, attributing it to the scheme's implementation. As the campaign intensifies, divergent opinions among the youth in market areas highlight a split in support between Afzal Ansari and Parasnath Rai. While development initiatives under Sinha remain uncontested, the pervasive sentiment in Ghazipur underscores Mukhtar Ansari's enduring influence on voter sentiment. "Hindu-Muslim discourse is not a factor here, but Mukhtar is," observes local resident Shailash Yadav, encapsulating the intricate interplay of personal legacy and political strategy in this pivotal election.

Lok Sabha polls: Former CM, three turncoats hot up Jalandhar contest

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab's Jalandhar constituency is likely to witness an interesting political bout as a former chief minister and three turncoats are vying to win the seat reserved for Scheduled Castes. Considered a Congress citadel, the Jalandhar seat was once represented by Inder Kumar Gujral who served as the country's 12th prime minister. To ensure no political rival could breach its fortress, the Congress has placed its bet on Dalit leader and former Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi, who had an MLA from Chamkaur Sahib seat in Rupnagar district. The Aam Aadmi Party has fielded two-time former MLA Pawan Kumar Timu who joined the state's ruling party in April. The BJP has placed its trust on sitting MP Sushil Rinku, who was first announced as the candidate by the AAP. However, Rinku left the AAP and joined the saffron party to fight from the Jalandhar seat. Rinku had last year quit the Congress and joined the AAP. The Sukhbir Singh Badal-led Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) has fielded former Punjab Congress chief and former MP Mohinder Singh Kaypee from the seat. Kaypee jumped the ship from the Congress to the SAD last month.

INDIA Bloc parties intend to implement Talibani rule in country, alleges Yogi

PTI ■ MAU (UP)

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday alleged the INDIA bloc parties have indicated that they intend to implement Talibani rule in the country and confine women to their homes. At a poll rally in the Ghosi Assembly constituency in favour of BJP ally and Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party candidate Arvind Rajbhar, he alleged that the Congress and Samajwadi Party have a negative mindset. "They stand against Lord Ram and the nation, denying Dalits and backward communities their rights. Now, they have set their sights on reservations for OBC castes," Adityanath said. "There is talk of taking away reservations meant for the OBCs and allocating them to Muslims. But we will not allow this to happen. These rights belong to the OBC caste and we will not permit them to be usurped," he said. Bhimrao Ambedkar had asserted that religion cannot be the basis of reservation, he said adding the opposition parties have once again have the objective of dividing the country along the lines of religion but people have discerned their intentions. "We must be wary of the INDI alliance, as they proclaim that if they come to power, they will impose inheritance tax. "This tax is akin to Aurangzeb's 'jizya' tax. Moreover, they declare that if they assume power, they will enforce personal laws, indicating their desire to implement Talibani and Sharia law in the country," the



Uttar Pradesh chief minister said. "However, they fail to recognise that this nation operates under the Constitution of Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. We will not tolerate the revival of the deplorable practice of triple talaq in our country," he said, adding that the INDIA bloc parties intend to confine women to their homes. He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the nation's stature and the dignity of every Indian have risen globally over the past decade. Consequently, the slogan of 'Fir ek bar Modi Sarkar' and 'Abki bar 400 paar' reverberates throughout the country, Adityanath said. The nation now has better security and major development projects are underway. The rights of the poor are being upheld and free ration is being provided to 80 crore people in the country, the Uttar Pradesh chief minister said. "Additionally, 60 crore people are benefiting from health insurance coverage of Rs 5 lakh under Ayushman Bharat. As many as, 12 crore farmers benefit from the Kisan Samman Nidhi, and toilets have been constructed in 12 crore households. All this has been achieved due to Prime Minister Modi's visionary leadership," he said.

High stakes battle in Sujapur Assembly

PTI ■ HAMIRPUR (HP)

The Sujapur assembly by-election in Himachal Pradesh is seeing a repeat of the 2022 election with two old rivals Rajinder Singh Rana and Ranjit Singh up against each other, except that they have swapped their parties this time. While Rana is a Congress rebel who recently switched to the BJP, Singh, a retired captain, joined the Congress after Rana was given a BJP ticket for the Sujapur bypoll. Rana, who contested the 2022 election on a Congress ticket and defeated Singh by a slender margin of 399 votes, had raised the banner of revolt against Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu. He was among the six Congress MLAs who voted in favour of the BJP nominee in the Rajya Sabha polls and had

to face disqualification. Three Independents had also voted for the BJP candidate Harsh Mahajan in the Rajya Sabha polls held on February 27. Of the six assembly constituencies where by-elections are being held due to disqualification of the Congress rebels, Sujapur has become a hot seat as it would decide if the three-month long slander campaign unleashed by the chief minister against Rana and the five ex-MLAs dubbing them as "bikau" (sold out) impacted the electorate or they still trust Rana and other rebels. As both Congress and the BJP are locked in a no holds barred battle to win the Sujapur assembly seat, the victory of Rana would serve as a boost for the Congress rebels while his defeat would be a requiem for the BJP.

Rana, once a confidant of former chief minister Prem Kumar Dhumal, revolted after denial of BJP ticket in 2012. He later joined the Congress and won the assembly polls in 2017, scripting history by defeating Dhumal, BJP's chief ministerial candidate, and retained the seat in 2022 but was disqualified after fifteen months and now is back with the BJP. Sujapur falls under the Hamirpur Lok Sabha seat from where Union Information and Broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur, son of Dhumal, is seeking a fifth term. Under the dramatically changed circumstances, Dhumal family and their supporters have no option other than supporting Rajinder Rana. Sukhu, who is intensively campaigning for BJP turncoat Singh, has accused Rana of

"selling his soul for money" as he has urged voters to defeat "Dhanbal with Janbal" (defeat the power of money with power of people) and punish the rebels for betrayal. During a rally in Himachal's Una district last week, Sukhu had Thursday alleged that the Congress rebels are corrupt and will go behind bars. He even claimed the six Congress rebels and three Independents were sold for Rs 15 crore each. However, former chief minister P K Dhumal and Anurag Thakur are openly canvassing for Rana, sending the right message to party cadres. Confident of victory, Rana said, "the Congress cadre is with me and the BJP is also supporting me" as our fight is for development and meeting the aspiration of the voters. Singh, who was also considered close to Dhumal

and his son joined the Congress party at the eleventh hour and is now banking upon the support and clout of the current chief minister and his team. Before being ousted from the assembly recently, Rana had been causing embarrassment to chief minister Sukhu by indirectly raking up the issues like jobs to youth as promised in the manifesto. In a bid to stir people's sentiments against Rana, Sukhu has been repeating that Rana never wanted anyone to become or remain chief minister from Hamirpur. He said the ex-MLA's first victim was Dhumal and now he was trying to oust him but the gimmick will not work this time. On other hand, Rana has accused Sukhu of ignoring the elected representatives and giving preference to "friends",

saying it compelled the six Congress MLAs to revolt and vote for the BJP candidate in the Rajya Sabha polls. He has claimed that his victory is certain as he enjoys full support of the people of the constituency and the Dhumal family and their supporters. He said that he has already toured most parts of the constituency twice and his third round is on the anvil. His rival Singh, on the other hand, has claimed that he is getting full support of the ex-servicemen and their families and said that Rana had ditched the people of the area, due to which developmental activities were hit in the Sujapur constituency. Ex-servicemen, their families and women voters hold the key in this constituency and majority of women voters have always been supporting the BJP, according to Rana.

Rahul, Priyanka will not be blamed for LS poll defeat: Shah

PTI ■ KUSHINAGAR (UP)

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge will lose his job after the Lok Sabha poll results are announced on June 4 but Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi will not be blamed for the defeat, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Monday. Shah said Rahul Gandhi's people will also do a press conference post polls, saying they lost due to EVMs. "I have the details of the first five phases. In five phases of the Lok Sabha polls, PM Modi has crossed 310 seats. Rahul will not cross 40 and Akhilesh Yadav will not get even 4 seats on June 4," he said at an election rally here.



Shah said Kharge is going to lose his job as 'bhai behen' (Rahul, Priyanka) will not be blamed for the defeat. Slamming the SP and Congress, he said while PM Narendra Modi was born in the house of a backward, both Rahul and Akhilesh were

born with a silver spoon and don't know about the problems being faced by people of Purvanchal (eastern UP). "They did not like the weather of the country. Rahul used to go to Thailand on leave every six months. They did not tolerate the heat of Purvanchal. While PM Modi has not taken a single leave in his tenure," he said. While accusing Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav of being involved in corruption, the senior BJP leader said PM Modi has never faced any such allegation. "As chief minister and prime minister, no allegation of corruption of even 25 paisa was raised against Modi while the two "shehzade" (Rahul-

Akhilesh) were involved in corruption worth Rs 12 lakh crore," he alleged without elaborating. Referring to the Sahara group, Shah claimed "Akhilesh's party used to run from Sahara's fund. The scam was done in their (SP) regime. We have ensured a refund of people's money and the process has started." Sahara group firms were accused of circumventing regulations with Ponzi schemes. The group has denied the charges. Further attacking the Samajwadi Party, he claimed in the previous regime there was "one district one mafia" but now we have "one district one product" scheme to benefit people.

Voters first, then party: Himachal Congress former MLAs contesting Assembly bypolls on BJP ticket

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Facing a barrage of criticism, dubbed "bike hue (sold out) mafia" by Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, the six disqualified Congress MLAs contesting the assembly bypolls on a BJP ticket have resolved to fight fire with fire. Not apologetic and in a mood to retaliate, they say it is the public who voted for them that comes first and not the party they belong to. Rajinder Rana (Sujanpur), Sudhir Sharma (Dharamshala), Ravi Thakur (Lahaul & Spiti), Inder Dutt Lakhnpal (Barsar), Chaitanya Sharma (Gagret) and Devinder Kumar Bhutto (Kutlehar), along with three Independent

lawmakers, voted for Harsh Mahajan — the BJP's nominee in the Rajya Sabha election on February 27. Two days later, the six Congress MLAs were disqualified from the assembly for defying a party whip to be present in the House and vote in favour of the government. They later joined the BJP and were fielded from their respective constituencies on a saffron party ticket. Ever since the cross-voting incident, the former Congress lawmakers have faced a barrage of criticism from Sukhu — from being called "kale naag (black snakes)" who tried to destabilise the Congress to allegations that they were hungry for "briefcases" and not "samman (respect)".

412 crorepati candidates contesting Odisha Assembly polls

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

As many as 412 'crorepati' candidates are contesting the Odisha Assembly elections which are being held from May 13 to June 1. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Odisha Election Watch have analysed the self-sworn affidavits of 1,283 out of 1,285 candidates, who are contesting for the 147 MLA seats in Odisha. Assembly elections in Odisha are being held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections. Out of the 1,283 candidates

analysed, 412 (32 per cent) are crorepatris. In the 2019 Odisha Assembly elections, out of 1,121 candidates, 304 (27 per cent) were crorepatris, the ADR said in its report. "... 128 BJD candidates, 96 BJP nominees, 88 Congress candidates and 11 AAP candidates have declared assets valued more than Rs 1 crore," it said. The average assets per candidate contesting in the Odisha Assembly elections 2024 is Rs 2.89 crore. In 2019, the average assets per MLA candidate were Rs 1.69 crore. Former Coal Minister Dilip



Ray has emerged as the richest candidate in the fray for the Assembly election in Odisha.

As per a report, Ray, a BJP nominee from the Rourkela Assembly segment is the richest nominee with a total

asset of Rs 313.53 crore, followed by BJD candidate from Champua segment Sanatan Mahakud (Rs 227.67 crore). The third palace is occupied by the BJD candidate from Basta Assembly segment, Subasini Jena, who declared both movable and immovable assets of Rs 135.17 crore. Similarly, five candidates in the fray for the Assembly elections in Odisha have declared zero or nil assets in their affidavits, as per a report. The zero asset candidates are— independent candidates

Ramesh Kumar Mahanand (Bhawanipatna), Sohan Sipka (Kantabanji) and Sanjay Kumar Das (Dhamnagar), BSP candidate from Rayagada Purna Chandra Majhi, and Ambedkarite Party of India's Gopal Krishna Mohanty, who is contesting from Korei. A total of 103 MLAs are re-contesting in 2024 Assembly polls, of which 74 are from BJD, 21 from BJP, five from Congress, two independents and one from CPI (M). Out of the 1,283 candidates analysed, 348 (27 per cent) candidates have declared criminal cases against

themselves. In the 2019 Odisha Assembly elections, out of 1,121 candidates analysed, 332 (30 per cent) had declared criminal cases against themselves. In this Assembly election, 292 candidates are facing serious criminal cases. Similarly, 566 MLA candidates have declared their educational qualifications to be between class 5 and 12 while 652 candidates have an educational qualification of graduate or above. Besides, 51 candidates are diploma holders, 12 candidates are just literate and two candidates

are illiterates, the report said. Among the total candidates in the fray for the assembly polls, the highest 760 candidates are of the 41 to 60 years age group, 333 candidates are of the 25-40 age group, 188 candidates in the age between 61 to 80 years and 2 candidates have declared their age as more than 80 years old. Only 178 (14 per cent) women candidates are contesting in the Assembly elections in the state in 2024 while 112 (10 per cent) women candidates have contested in 2019 polls.

Israeli airstrikes kill 45 in Gaza's Rafah

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Israel faced new condemnation on Monday for strikes on the southern Gaza city of Rafah that local health officials said killed at least 45 Palestinians, including displaced people living in tents that were engulfed by fire. Israel has faced surging international criticism over its war with Hamas, with even some of its closest allies, particularly the United States, expressing outrage at civilian deaths. Israel asserts that it adheres to international law even as it faces scrutiny in the world's top courts, one of which last week demanded that it halt its offensive in Rafah. Israel said it was looking into the civilian deaths, saying it struck a Hamas installation and killed two senior Hamas militants. Sunday night's attack, which appeared to be one of the war's deadliest, helped push the overall Palestinian death toll in the war above 36,000, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between fighters and

noncombatants in its tally. "We pulled out people who were in an unbearable state," said Mohammed Abuassa, who rushed to the scene in the northwestern neighborhood of Tel al-Sultan. "We pulled out children who were in pieces. We pulled out young and elderly people. The fire in the camp was unreal." The Gaza Health Ministry said around half of the dead were women, children and older adults. On Monday, barefoot children poked at the blackened debris as searches continued. France, a close European ally of Israel, said it was "outraged" by the violence. "These operations must stop. There are no safe areas in Rafah for Palestinian civilians. I call for full respect for international law and an immediate ceasefire," President Emmanuel Macron posted on X. Rafah, the southernmost Gaza city on the border with Egypt, had been housing more than a million people — about half of Gaza's population — displaced from other parts of the territo-

ry. Most have fled once again since Israel launched what it called a limited incursion there earlier this month. Hundreds of thousands are packed into squalid tent camps in and around the city. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel must destroy what he calls Hamas' last remaining battalions in Rafah. The militant group on Sunday launched a barrage of rockets from the city toward heavily populated central Israel, setting off air raid sirens but causing no injuries. Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto said that bombings like the one in Rafah will have long-standing repercussions for Israel. "Israel with this choice is spreading hatred, rooting hatred that will involve their children and grandchildren. I would have preferred another decision," he told SKY TG24. Qatar, a key mediator between Israel and Hamas in attempts to secure a cease-fire and the release of hostages held by Hamas, said the strikes could "complicate" talks,

Negotiations, which appear to be restarting, have faltered repeatedly over Hamas' demand for a lasting truce and the withdrawal of Israeli forces, terms Israeli leaders have publicly rejected. Neighbouring Egypt and Jordan, which made peace with Israel decades ago, also condemned the Rafah strikes. Egypt's Foreign Ministry described the strike on Tel al-Sultan as a "new and blatant violation of the rules of humanitarian international law." Jordan's Foreign Ministry called it a "war crime". The Israeli military's top legal official said authorities were examining the strikes and that the military regrets the loss of civilian life. Military Advocate General Maj Gen Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi said such incidents occur "in a war of such scope and intensity". Speaking to an Israeli lawyers' conference, Tomer-Yerushalmi said Israel has launched 70 criminal investigations into incidents that aroused suspicions of international law violations, including the deaths of

civilians, the conditions at a detention facility holding suspected Palestinian militants and the deaths of some inmates in Israeli custody. She said incidents of "violence, property crimes and looting" were also being examined. Israel has long maintained it has an independent judiciary capable of investigating and prosecuting abuses. But rights groups say Israeli authorities routinely fail to fully investigate violence against Palestinians and that even when soldiers are held accountable the punishment is usually light. Israel has adamantly denied allegations of genocide brought against it by South Africa at the International Court of Justice. Last week, the court ordered Israel to halt its offensive in Rafah, a ruling that it has no power to enforce. Israel says it does its best to adhere to the laws of war and says it faces an enemy that makes no such commitment, embeds itself in civilian areas and refuses to release Israeli hostages unconditionally.



South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol (centre) speaks as Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (left) and Chinese Premier Li Qiang listen during a joint news conference in Seoul, South Korea on Monday. AP/PTI

Keir Starmer woos undecided voters with vow to safeguard national security

AP ■ LONDON

British opposition leader Keir Starmer made his first major speech of the UK election campaign Monday, telling undecided voters that they can trust his Labour Party to safeguard the country's economy, borders and security. Starmer is the favourite to win the July 4 election, with polls giving Labour a double-digit lead over the governing Conservatives under Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. But many electors remain undecided, and Starmer sought to address a perception that the left-of-centre Labour Party is weaker on defence and security than the centre-right Conservatives. "The very foundation of any good government is economic security, border security, national security," Starmer said during a speech in the seaside town of Lancing on England's south coast. "This is the foundation, the bedrock that our manifesto and our first steps, will be built upon." Starmer accused the Conservatives of presiding over "desperate chaos." Britain's first

election since 2019 follows several turbulent years that saw a global pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Those international crises were exacerbated by problems of the Conservatives' own making: a slew of ethics scandals that topped Prime Minister Boris Johnson in 2022, and the disastrous economic policies of his successor Liz Truss, who lasted only 49 days in office. Sunak had until December to call an election and took most people — including those in his own party — by surprise when he announced last week that the vote would be held on July 4. Voters will elect lawmakers to fill all 650 seats in the House of Commons. The leader of the party that can command a Commons majority — either alone or in coalition — will become prime minister. The Conservatives, who have been in office for 14 years, are trying to overcome a wide-

spread sense that voters want change, and Sunak's campaign got off to a faltering start. His announcement outside 10 Downing Street saw him drenched with rain and drowned out by protesters blasting a Labour campaign song. Sunak grabbed weekend headlines with an announcement that all 18-year-olds in Britain will have to perform a year of mandatory military or civilian national service if the Conservatives are reelected. The prime minister said the program would help "create a shared sense of purpose among our young people and a renewed sense of pride in our country." The party faced questions about how the program would work and whether it could be made compulsory. Starmer said the announcement reflected the Conservatives' "desperation" to shore up its vote. Labour has lost four consecu-

tive elections, in 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019, and party leaders are wary of taking their poll lead for granted. Starmer, a lawyer and former chief prosecutor for England and Wales, remains an unknown quantity to many voters. In his speech he stressed his working-class roots as the son of a toolmaker and a nurse who was the first in his family to go to university. He said he had transformed Labour, moving it to the centre ground after taking over as leader in 2020 from staunch socialist Jeremy Corbyn. "Whatever the polls say, I know there are countless people who haven't decided how they'll vote in this election," Starmer said. "They're fed up with the failure, chaos and division of the Tories, but they still have questions about us: has Labour changed enough? Do I trust them with my money, our borders, our security? "My answer is yes you can, because I have changed this party, permanently," he added. "This is my vision: a Britain once more in the service of working people. Country first, party second."



China premier agrees on cooperation with Seoul, Tokyo; rebukes US ties

AP ■ SEOUL

China's premier agreed Monday to revive three-way cooperation with South Korea and Japan in the face of shared challenges, but issued a veiled rebuke against the two countries' expanding security cooperation with the United States. Chinese Premier Li Qiang met South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Seoul in what was their countries' first such trilateral meeting in more than four years. Many experts say just restarting the countries' highest-level annual meeting and agreeing on the need to improve ties is a positive sign for cooperation among the three Northeast Asian neighbours, as they all face economic uncertainties caused by wars and instability around the world. But how drastically their cooperation will be promoted is unknown as the three countries have a range of long-running complex issues. In a joint news conference after the meeting, Li said China wants to cooperate with South

Korea and Japan on economic issues, especially on supply chains and the restart of talks on a three-way free trade deal. Yoon said the three leaders agreed to promote people-to-people and cultural exchanges, establish safe supply chain networks and work together to tackle shared environmental, health and other issues. Kishida said the three countries share a big responsibility for regional peace and that Japan will chair the next round of the trilateral leaders' meeting. Despite the seemingly amicable mood of the meeting, however, Li at one point expressed Chinese uneasiness about Japan and South Korea's moves to beef up their security partnership with the US, which Beijing views as an attempt to form a bloc to contain China. "We need to have honest dialogues to better enhance trust and resolve doubts. We must uphold the spirit of strategic autonomy and maintain our bilateral relations," Li said in comments at the start of the meeting with Yoon and Kishida. "We need to promote multipolarity in the world and oppose the formation of blocs

or camps." China is wary of Japan's plan to purchase 400 US Tomahawk long-range cruise missiles and allow repair and maintenance of US warships in Japan to support their operations in the western Pacific. The expansion of military drills among South Korea, the US and Japan have also drawn protests from China. The trilateral meeting was also briefly overshadowed by North Korea's abrupt notification of Japan of its plan to launch a satellite by early next week, an apparent bid to place its second spy satellite into orbit. The UN bans any satellite launches by North Korea, viewing them as disguised tests of the country's long-range missile technology. North Korea has said it needs spy satellites to better monitor South Korea and the US and enhance the precision-attack capabilities of its missiles. Yoon called for stern international action if North Korea goes ahead with the launch. Kishida urged North Korea to withdraw its satellite launch. But Li didn't mention the launch plan as he offered gen-

eral comments about promoting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula through a political resolution. South Korea, Japan and the US have long urged China — North Korea's major ally and economic pipeline — to use its leverage to persuade the North to abandon its nuclear ambitions. But China is suspected of avoiding fully implementing UN sanctions on North Korea and sending clandestine aid shipments to its impoverished, socialist neighbour to stay afloat and continue to serve as a bulwark against US influence on the Korean Peninsula. In a bilateral meeting with Li on Sunday, Yoon asked China to contribute to promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula, while speaking about North Korea's nuclear program and its deepening military ties with Russia. After meeting with Li on Sunday, Kishida also told reporters that he expressed serious concerns about the situations in the South China Sea, Hong Kong and China's northwestern Xinjiang region. He said Japan was closely monitoring developments on self-governed Taiwan as well.

PNG landslide toll 2000, says govt; seeks help

AP ■ MELBOURNE

The Papua New Guinea government said a landslide on Friday buried more than 2,000 people and has formally asked for international help. The government figure is around three times more than a United Nations estimate of 670. In a letter seen by The Associated Press to the United Nations resident coordinator dated Sunday, the acting director of the South Pacific island nation's National Disaster Center said the landslide "buried more than 2000 people alive" and caused "major destruction". Estimates of the casualties have varied widely since the disaster occurred, and it was not immediately clear how officials arrived the number of people affected. Australia prepared on Monday to send aircraft and other equipment to help at the site of a deadly landslide in Papua New Guinea as overnight rains in the South Pacific nation's mountainous interior raised fears that the tons of rubble that buried hundreds of villagers could become dangerously unstable. Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles said his officials have been talking with their Papua New Guinea counterparts since Friday, when a mountainside collapsed on Yambali village in Enga province, which the United Nations estimates killed 670 people. The remains of only six people had been recovered so far. "The exact nature of the support that we do provide will play out over the coming days," Marles told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "We've got obviously airlift capacity to get people there. There may be other equipment

that we can bring to bear in terms of the search and rescue and all of that we are talking through with PNG right now," Marles added. Papua New Guinea is Australia's nearest neighbour and the countries are developing closer defence ties as part of an Australian effort to counter China's growing influence in the region. Australia is also the most generous provider of foreign aid to its former colony, which became independent in 1975. Heavy rain fell for two hours overnight in the provincial capital of Wabag, 60 kilometers (35 miles) from the devastated village. A weather report was not immediately available from Yambali, where communications are limited. But emergency responders were concerned about the impact of rain on the already unstable mass of debris lying 6 to 8 metres (20 to 26 feet) deep over an area the size of three to four football fields. An excavator donated by a local builder Sunday became the first piece of heavy earth-moving machinery brought in to help villagers who have been digging with shovels and farming tools to find bodies. Working around the still-shifting debris is treacherous. Serhan Aktoprak, the chief of the International Organisation for Migration's mission in Papua New Guinea, said water was seeping between the debris and the earth below, increasing the risk of a further landslide. He did not expect to learn the weather conditions at Yambali until Monday afternoon. "What really worries me personally very much is the weather, weather, weather," Aktoprak said. "Because the land is still sliding. Rocks are falling," he added.

Zelenskyy visits Spain in pursuit of more weapons

AP ■ MADRID

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived in Madrid on Monday where he was expected to sign a bilateral security agreement with Spain that will help his country fight its more than two-year war with Russia amid a recent offensive by the Kremlin's forces. Spain's King Felipe VI met Zelenskyy at the capital's Barajas airport. The Ukrainian leader was due to hold talks with Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez about what local media reported is a planned 1.1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion) agreement for Spain to supply Ukraine with more weapons. Zelenskyy had been due to visit Spain earlier this month but he postponed all his foreign trips after the Kremlin's forces launched a cross-border offensive in the northeastern Kharkiv region and left Ukrainian troops reeling. That push has further strained



Ukraine's already depleted army, which in recent months has been fighting Russia's intense drive deeper into the partially occupied eastern Donetsk region. Zelenskyy said on Sunday that the Kremlin's army is mustering at another point in Russia, farther north but close to the approximately

1,000-km (600-mile) front line, presumably to try and crack Ukrainian resistance in the area. A Western intelligence assessment suggested that Russia's Kharkiv offensive has subsided. "The northern Kharkiv front has likely stabilised with Russian territorial control fragmented and not joined up," the UK defence ministry said Sunday. "Russia's gains in this axis will be limited in the coming week, as Russia's initial momentum has been contained by Ukrainian resistance." That is in line with Zelenskyy's claim last Friday that Ukrainian forces have secured "combat control" of areas where Russian troops entered the Kharkiv region.

Poland plans to fortify border with Russia and Belarus

AP ■ SEOUL

Defence officials in NATO member Poland on Monday presented a plan to strengthen anti-drone surveillance and on-ground military defence through a system of fortifications and barriers along about 700 kilometres (430 miles) of its eastern border with Russia and Belarus. The government says Poland, which supports neighbouring Ukraine in its defence against Russia's aggression, is being targeted by hostile actions from Russia and Belarus. They include cyberattacks, attempted arson and migrants being pushed illegally across the border, which officials describe as intended to destabilise the European Union, of which Poland is a member. The government is also making preparations in the case of a military attack, while stressing the primary role of deterrence. The government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk has planned a range of security

measures including in cyberspace, as well as a more than USD 2.5 billion investment in strengthening surveillance, deterrence and defence along the eastern border, a system known as Shield-East that is to be completed in 2028. Work on it has started, officials said. "The goal of the shield is to protect the territory of Poland, hamper the mobility of our adversary's troops while making such mobility easier for our own troops and to protect civilians," Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz said at a news conference, adding that local communities understand the need for such steps. The shield will include "all kinds of fortifications, barriers, monitoring of the air space on every level and upgrading the existing systems," and will be integrated with the defence system across the country, Kosiniak-Kamysz said. He stressed it was the biggest program to strengthen NATO's eastern flank since 1945, when World War II ended. Chief of Staff Gen. Wieslaw

Kukula said it will include a network of state-of-the-art anti-drone monitoring and defence towers, anti-tank barriers and ditches, bunkers and shelters, as well as space for potential mine fields. He stressed their primary role is to deter any potential aggressor. The officials said the system will be part of a regional defence infrastructure built jointly with the Baltic states — Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia — that are also on NATO's eastern flank. The funding will come from the government, as Poland spends over 4 per cent of its GDP on defence, but help will also be sought from the EU because the system will also strengthen the eastern border of the 27-member bloc, they said. Some observers noted that the much-publicised presentation came two weeks ahead of elections to the European Parliament, where Poland, a nation of some 38 million, holds 52 seats, and could be partly seen as a campaign element for the government that took office in December.

Pak ruling coalition seeks meaningful talks with Imran

PTI ■ LAHORE

The ruling coalition of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has invited jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to abandon its street protests and engage in "meaningful" dialogue with the government, a media report said on Monday. Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani and Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal emphasised the government's openness to talks but stressed that the beleaguered party of Khan must decide with whom it wants to negotiate. The Express Tribune

newspaper reported. Gilani, speaking to the media in Lahore, reiterated the government's willingness to negotiate. However, the former prime minister said Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) "seems intent on negotiating with someone else". The 71-year-old veteran PPP politician said Imran Khan's party wants to carve its path by confronting the establishment and the government in court. "Our doors are open for meaningful talks but the PTI will have to decide with whom they want to negotiate," Gilani said. The acting president of Pakistan said the country currently suffers from instability

and therefore all political leaders must come on the same page. Gilani said during their time in opposition under the PTI-led government, they were willing to engage in political talks, despite the PTI's reluctance to do so, the newspaper quoted him as saying. Replying to another question, Gilani emphasised that the PPP remains committed to supporting the current government. "The PPP has never indicated that it is not part of the government; we are aligned with the government in all matters," Gilani said. The former prime minister said consultations within the party are underway regarding

joining the cabinet at both the Centre and in Punjab. Meanwhile, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that the government's doors were open to all parties for purposeful and meaningful negotiations. Iqbal said the PTI was the ruling party in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province and they should serve the people there. "I advise the PTI leadership to shun streets (protests) and enter the (parliamentary) houses to play a positive role as opposition," he added. The minister criticised the PTI, saying the party wanted to use the courts after being defeated in politics. "The PTI wants to

make its way by fighting the establishment and the government in the court," he said. He claimed that there was uncertainty in the country because of a court decision. "Our doors are open to all parties for purposeful and meaningful negotiations but purposeful and meaningful negotiations can only happen when the parties negotiate with a positive agenda," he added. Iqbal said that the nation could never forgive the events of May 9 when Khan's supporters went on an unprecedented rampage, attacking key military installations for the first time. He expressed the hope that the next five years would save the

economy from political confrontation. He stressed that there should not be the game of rallies anymore rather "we should compete for public service". Recently, Pakistan's Punjab government approved the registration of more cases against jailed former prime minister Khan and his party men for inciting hate against the state institutions, especially the powerful Pakistan Army. The 71-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician has been in jail since August last year after being convicted in some of the nearly 200 cases slapped on him since his ouster in April 2022.

Sensex scales 76,000 peak

Nifty hits new high before closing lower; RIL, ITC biggest drag

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Sensex scaled the 76,000 level for the first time while Nifty hit a new lifetime peak before closing marginally down in highly volatile trade on Monday as investors booked profits in the last 30 minutes of trade.

The 30-share BSE Sensex closed lower by 19.89 points or 0.03 per cent lower at 75,390.50. Intra-day, the barometer climbed 599.29 points or 0.79 per cent to an all-time peak of 76,009.68 following gains in select banking, financial and IT shares. However, investors preferred to book profits at record levels and the index declined around 835 points from the day's high to hit a low of 75,175.27.

Broader Nifty of the NSE declined by 24.65 points or 0.11 per cent, to end at 22,932.45. The 50-issue barometer rose by 153.7 points or 0.66 per cent to hit a new lifetime high of 23,110.80 during the day. However, it tanked around 240 points at the day-end due to selling in oil, energy and FMCG shares. Index heavyweight Reliance Industries declined nearly 1 per cent, dragging the benchmark indices into the negative. Selling in FMCG giant ITC also eroded gains. Equity benchmarks were on a record-breaking rally for the



third straight day ahead of the results of Lok Sabha polls and a rally in global markers. The results of the ongoing general elections will be declared on June 4. Sensex breached the historic 75,000-mark for the first time on April 9. It took 31 trading sessions for the benchmark to climb 1,000 points to reach the 76,000-mark on Monday. The BSE benchmark took 21 trading sessions to reach 75,000-mark on April 9 after hitting the 74,000-level on March 6. From the Sensex firms,

Wipro, NTPC, Sun Pharma, Mahindra & Mahindra, ITC and Reliance Industries were among the biggest laggards. IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro and State Bank of India were among the major gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory. European markets were also quoting in the green. Wall Street ended with gains on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent

crude climbed 0.38 per cent to USD 82.44 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 944.83 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. On Friday, the BSE benchmark dipped 7.65 points or 0.01 per cent to settle at 75,410.39. The Nifty breached the 23,000 mark for the first time on Friday. It, however, pared all the gains and ended with a marginal decline of 10.55 points or 0.05 per cent at 22,957.10.

Record RBI dividend at 0.6 per cent of GDP may not be sustained: Fitch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Monday said the record-high dividend transfer by the RBI to the government is equivalent to 0.6 per cent of GDP, and such high level of dividends as a percentage of GDP is unlikely to be maintained.

The board of India's central bank last week decided to transfer a record Rs 2.1 lakh crore dividend to the government out of the profits earned in fiscal 2023-24. This is more than double of Rs 1.02 lakh crore that was budgeted by the government.

Fitch said an important driver of higher RBI profits appears to be higher interest revenue on foreign assets, though the central bank has not yet provided a detailed breakdown.

"The RBI recently announced a record-high dividend transfer to the government equivalent to 0.6 per cent of GDP (Rs 2.1 trillion) from its operations in FY24. This is above the 0.3 per cent of GDP expected in the FY25 budget from February, so will aid the authorities in meeting near-term deficit reduction goals," the rating agency said in a statement.

Fitch said transfers from the Reserve Bank of India to the government can be significant at the margin for fiscal performance but depend on various factors, including the size and performance of assets held on the central bank's balance sheet and India's exchange rate.

Transfers may also be influenced by the RBI's views on what level of a buffer is appropriate to be maintained in balance sheet, it said.

"The potential volatility of transfers means there is significant uncertainty about their medium-term path, and we do not anticipate that dividends as a share of GDP will be sustained at such a



high level," Fitch said.

However, such windfall dividend transfer should help to ensure the 5.1 per cent of GDP deficit target for the fiscal year ending March 2025 (FY25) will be met and could be used to lower the deficit beyond the current target. The new government's budget, following the release of election results in June, is likely to be presented in July and will determine how the dividend will be used.

The government has signalled it aims to narrow the deficit gradually to 4.5 per cent of GDP by FY26.

Sustained deficit reduction, particularly if underpinned by durable revenue-raising reforms, would be positive for

India's sovereign rating fundamentals over the medium term, Fitch said.

In its post-election budget, the new government will have two alternatives. First, the government could opt to keep the current deficit target for FY25, and the windfall could allow the authorities to further boost spending on infrastructure, or to offset upside spending surprises or lower-than-budgeted revenue, for example from divestment.

Alternatively, all or part of the windfall could be saved, pushing the deficit to below 5.1 per cent of GDP.

"The government's choice could give greater clarity around its medium-term fiscal priorities," Fitch said.

Indya raises ₹50 crore from Sangita Jindal, others

PTI ■ MUMBAI

High Street Essentials, the makers of fashion brand Indya, on Monday announced a Rs 50-crore fundraise from JSW Group chairman Sajjan Jindal's wife Sangita Jindal and other investors.

Three fourths of the funding is equity infusion for a minority stake, while the rest is debt, Indya's co-founder Shivani Poddar said. Other investors who have participated include family offices of SRF Group, Krishna Bodanapu of Cyient Technologies and Timmy Sarna from Pure Home + Living. Poddar said, while there are a lot of opportunities to benefit from the industrial or capital goods-focused JSW Group's businesses, the immediate driver is the synergies that are made possible courtesy the work done with village artisans by Sangita Jindal-headed JSW Foundation.

Anurag Murali, also a co-founder of the company, said Indya can benefit from JSW's expertise in celebrity-led marketing and supply chain management in the future. It can be noted that a majority of big conglomerates have investments in fashion brands but nearly all such groups have retail ventures. The 2012-founded Indya, which delivered operational profit in April this year, will be utilising the newly raised



funds for business expansion, and plans to invest up to USD 3 million in FY25, which will include opening ten offline stores in the country, Murali said.

At present, it has 12 exclusive brand outlets in eight cities, and 150 large-format retail outlets, including Lifestyle, Shoppers Stop, Centro and Ethnicity. Having been active in selling its wares online in the US, the brand is also aiming to open a physical presence either in the US or South Africa in FY25, he added.

In a statement, Sangita Jindal said along with the global expansion, the investment will also help the brand widen its market share in the Indian wedding-wear opportunity. The company's core strength is in its unique designs, she said, appreciating the back-end capabilities created by the founders.

NSE reduces tick size for select stocks to boost liquidity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has decided to introduce one paisa tick size for all stocks priced below Rs 250 from June 10, in a bid to enhance liquidity and improve price discovery by allowing for more precise price adjustments.

Presently, the tick size for these stocks is five paise, which will

be reduced to one paisa. "All securities (excluding exchange-traded funds) available in EQ, BE, BZ, BO, RL and AF series with security price below Rs 250 will have a tick size of Rs 0.01 as against the current tick size Rs 0.05. The tick size determined for securities in T+1 settlement will also be applicable for T+0 settlement (series TO)," NSE said in a circular.

Tick size is the minimum price increment between consecutive bid (buy) and offer (sell) prices. A smaller tick size allows for finer price adjustments and potentially more precise price discovery.

For instance, if a stock has a tick size of Rs 0.10 and the last traded price (LTP) was Rs 50, the next possible bid prices would be Rs 49.90, Rs 49.80, Rs 49.70 and so on. In this



case, bid prices like Rs 49.85 or Rs 49.92 are not allowed, as

they don't meet the Rs 0.10 tick size requirement. The exchange said that tick sizes will be subject to review and adjustments every month, based on the closing price of the last trading day of the month.

In addition to changes in the Capital Market (CM) segment, the NSE has announced revisions in the Futures & Options (F&O) segment.

The exchange said that the stock futures will have the same tick size as applicable for securities in the cash market segment from July 8. Further, revisions in tick size will be applicable for all expiries — Near-Month, Middle Month and Far-Month.

Last year, rival bourse BSE lowered the tick size for scrips trading below Rs 100 to 1 paisa from 5 paise.

Technology promises to enhance incomes of rice farmers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A groundbreaking technology promises to enhance the incomes of millions of rice farmers using Direct Seeded Rice (DSR), while significantly reducing labor costs and greenhouse gas emissions by about 25 per cent. This innovation will also conserve water, promote sustainable agriculture, enhance yields, and support the Government of India's vision for Net Zero Emission and the National Food Security Mission.

Ajai Rana, Chairman of the Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII), emphasized the need for climate-smart agricultural practices due to the growing demand for rice and limited land and water resources. "By 2035, an extra 114 million tons of milled rice will be needed to ensure food security," Rana stated.

At present, it has 12 exclusive brand outlets in eight cities, and 150 large-format retail outlets, including Lifestyle, Shoppers Stop, Centro and Ethnicity. Having been active in selling its wares online in the US, the brand is also aiming to open a physical presence either in the US or South Africa in FY25, he added. In a statement, Sangita Jindal said along with the global expansion, the investment will also help the brand widen its market share in the Indian wedding-wear opportunity. The company's core strength is in its unique designs, she said, appreciating the back-end capabilities created by the founders.

Rupee falls 4 paise to close at 83.14 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared its initial gains and settled for the day lower by 4 paise at 83.14 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, mirroring the benchmark indices that erased their gains and ended the day off their record-high levels.

Forex traders said the rupee settled in a narrow range as the weakness of the American currency in the overseas market supported the rupee, while elevated crude oil prices in the international market restricted the upmove.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 83.08, then touched an intra-day high of 83.05 but soon pared the gains and settled for the day lower by 4 paise at 83.14 (provisional) against the American currency. On Friday, the rupee rallied for the fourth consecutive

Gold, silver prices rebound on strong global cues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold and silver prices rebounded sharply on Monday after falling for three straight sessions, with the precious metal jumping Rs 220 to Rs 72,820 per 10 grams in the national capital, tracking a strong trend in the overseas market due to escalating tensions in the Middle East.

Gold had closed at Rs 72,600 per 10 grams in the previous session on Friday, according to HDFC Securities. Silver prices also bounced Rs 1,050 to Rs 92,850 per kg. In the previous session, it had finished at Rs 91,800 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 72,820 per 10 grams, up by Rs 220 against the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

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Rs 82.80 to Rs 83.30, Choudhary added. On the domestic macroeconomic front, India's forex reserves jumped USD 4.549 billion to a new all-time high of USD 648.7 billion for the week ended May 17, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. This is the third consecutive week of increase in the overall kitty, which had increased by USD 2.561 billion to USD 644.151 billion in the previous reporting week ended May 17.

On the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 19.89 points, or 0.03 per cent, to close at 75,390.50 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 24.65 points or 0.11 per cent lower at 22,932.45 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Friday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 944.83 crore, according to exchange data.

KAL Airways, Kalanithi Maran to seek ₹1,323 crore in damages from SpiceJet

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

KAL Airways and Kalanithi Maran on Monday said they will seek more than Rs 1,323 crore in damages from SpiceJet and its chief Ajay Singh as well as challenge the recent Delhi High Court order in the ongoing dispute between the two sides.

On May 17, a division bench of the court set aside a single judge bench order that had upheld an arbitral award asking SpiceJet and its promoter Ajay Singh to refund Rs 579 crore plus interest to Maran.

The bench allowed the appeals filed by Singh and SpiceJet challenging the single judge's order, passed on July 31, 2023, and remanded the matter back to the court

concerned to consider the petitions challenging the arbitral award afresh. Against this backdrop, Maran and his firm KAL Airways have decided to challenge the ruling after consultation with their legal counsel.

The decree holders — KAL Airways and Maran — "believe that the aforesaid judgement is deeply flawed and warrants further scrutiny". "In parallel, they are also seeking damages in excess of Rs 1,323 crore, as determined by FTI Consulting LLP, United Kingdom, a globally renowned firm that specialises in estimation of losses arising out of breach of contractual commitments," KAL Airways said in a statement on Monday. Further, it said the claim for



damages had originally been presented by KAL Airways and Maran before the arbitral tribunal and "has always remained an integral part of

their quest for justice". By pursuing both the challenge to the Delhi High Court judgement and the claim for damages, the decree

holders hope to secure a just and equitable resolution to the contentious dispute, the statement said. The dispute arose due to a breach of trust by SpiceJet and has caused "enormous hardship to both KAL Airways and Kalanithi Maran for more than a decade," it added. According to the statement, they will pursue the execution of the arbitral award, seeking a refund of the pending dues amounting to Rs 353.50 crore. "This action is also in full compliance with, and supported by, the orders dated February 13, 2023, and July 7, 2023, passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court directing that the award in favour of the decree holders is executed in its entirety," it said. On May 22, SpiceJet said

it will seek a refund of Rs 450 crore out of the total Rs 730 crore paid to the airline's former promoter Maran and KAL Airways following the Delhi High Court ruling. The case dates back to early 2015, when Singh, who owned the airline earlier, bought it back from Maran after it was grounded for months due to resource crunch.

As part of the agreement, Maran and KAL Airways had claimed to have paid SpiceJet Rs 679 crore for issuing warrants and preference shares. However, Maran approached the Delhi High Court in 2017, alleging SpiceJet had not issued convertible warrants and preference shares nor returned the money.

Hyundai sets up EV charging station in Chennai, plans 100 facilities across Tamil Nadu

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Automaker Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL) on Monday announced the inauguration of its fast electric-powered vehicles (EV) charging station here, and said this was first of the company's target of installing 100 such facilities across Tamil Nadu. The 180 kW DC fast charging station, comprising of 150 kW and 30 kW connectors, has been set at Spencer Plaza here, and would cater to compatible four-wheelers irrespective of brand and model, a company release said. "As we celebrate 28 years of

HMIL in India, we are delighted to inaugurate our first ever 180 kW fast public charging station in Chennai. In line with Hyundai's vision of 'Progress for Humanity,' we aim to enhance convenience of all EV users, and hence our charging stations can be utilised by any four-wheeler EV user. HMIL envisages to install 100 charging stations across Tamil Nadu, to enhance the EV ecosystem and motivate more customers towards EV adoption across the state," Jae Wan Ryu, Executive Director — Corporate Planning, HMIL, was quoted as saying in the release.

Harmanpreet's hat-trick guides India to 5-4 win over Argentina

PTI ■ ANTWERP (BELGIUM)

Captain Harmanpreet Singh led from the front with a sensational hat-trick as the Indian men's hockey team recorded a thrilling 5-4 win over Argentina in the FIH Hockey Pro League here.

Besides Harmanpreet (29', 50' and 52'), Arajjeet Singh Hundal (7') and Gurjant Singh (18') also scored for India, while Federico Monja (3'), Nicolas Keenan (24'), Tadeo Marucci (54') and Lucas Martinez (57') were on target for Argentina on Sunday.

India made a good start, keeping the ball for most of the first quarter and came up with accurate passes to make their way into the Argentina striking circle. However, Argentina drew first blood when Federico found the back of the net from a close range to give them a 1-0 lead.

In response, India equalized quickly as Arajjeet scored a brilliant field goal. India also earned a penalty corner but failed to capitalize on it as the first quarter ended 1-1.

India started the second quarter on a high note. The fast counter-attacking aggressive approach helped India extend their lead after Gurjant scored an excellent field goal.

India were slightly dodgy the next few minutes after scoring the goal as they gave up possession and were punished when Argentina broke into a quick counter, making their way through the left flank. It was Nicolas Keenan who



drove into the Indian circle, beating the defenders to strike the ball into India's goal levelling the score at 2-2. However, India earned a PC with a minute remaining in the quarter and Harmanpreet made it 3-2 in India's favour.

The third quarter was entertaining with both teams displaying quick-fire hockey. India secured a penalty corner but couldn't convert it as Harmanpreet's shot was blocked well by the Argentina goalkeeper. With both teams

defence standing tall, the third quarter remained goalless. India came out in top gear in the fourth quarter as they pushed Argentina to make errors, leading to a PC being awarded with 10 minutes remaining. The decision was

changed to a penalty stroke and Harmanpreet's low powerful shot found the back of the net as India took a 4-2 lead. Two minutes later, India were awarded another penalty stroke, which was again successfully converted by

Harmanpreet. Argentina pulled two goals back in quick succession as Tadeo and Lucas found the back of the net to set up an exciting finish to the game. The match ended with India winning 5-4.



Indian shuttlers eye productive outing at Singapore Open

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Top Indian shuttlers, including PV Sindhu, HS Prannoy and Lakshya Sen, will look to hit top gear at the USD 850,000 Singapore Open, beginning here on Tuesday, with an additional objective of fine-tuning their preparations for the Paris Olympics.

The Summer Games are just two months away and the Olympic-bound shuttlers will have three more tournaments -- Australian Open super 500, Indonesia Super 1000, Canada Open super 500 -- to hone their skills and shake off any cobwebs ahead of the quadrennial mega event.

Recently-crowned Thailand Open champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have looked in the best shape for the Olympics, while Sindhu too has geared up with a runner-up finish at the Malaysia Masters on Sunday. Lakshya and Prannoy will also hope for a deep run into the event to receive the ideal boost in the build-up to the Paris Games.

However, it will be a tough test of their temperament as some big guns stand in their way in the Super 750 tournament. Sindhu's first final appearance in a BWF World Tour event in more than a year will serve her well but the meltdown in the decider after leading 11-3 to eventually lose the final against China's Wang Zhi Yi is something which will worry her camp.

The two-time Olympic medalist will have to quickly recover from the gut-wrenching loss as bigger battles lie ahead for her this week. She opens her campaign against Denmark's Line Hojmark Kjaersfeldt. A win is likely to pit her against Rio Olympic champion Carolina Marin of Spain.

Satwik and Chirag regained their world no. 1 status after

sailing through in Bangkok without dropping a game but the duo is likely to be tested this week.

The Indian pair have been in the form of their lives with four final appearances so far this season and they will look to continue the good run when they open against Denmark's Daniel Lundgaard and Mads Vestergaard in men's doubles competition.

In men's singles, Lakshya had sneaked into the Olympic qualification with two back-to-back semifinal finishes at French Open and All England Championships.

The youngster is coming off a break and will face the tall task of taming world no. 1 Viktor Axelsen, who won the Malaysia Masters on Sunday. Eighth seed Prannoy, who is recovering from a health issues, had a forgettable outing in his last tournament when he was ousted by compatriot Meiraba Luwang Maisnam in the opening round of Thailand Open.

Prannoy, a world championships and Asian Games bronze medalist, will have to find his best footing when he opens against Belgium's Julien Carraggi.

Among others in fray, Kidambi Srikanth will square off against Japan's fifth seed Kodai Naraoka, while Priyanshu Rajawat will meet Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu in men's singles.

In women's singles, Aakarshi Kashyap will face Thailand's Pornpicha Choeikeewong in the opening round. Olympic-bound Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto also will hope for a good outing as they take on Polina Buhrova and Yevheniia Kamentnyr of Ukraine in their opener.

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand will clash with Chinese Taipei's Cheng Yu-Pei and Sun Yu-Hsing.

Xavi wins his last game as Barcelona coach in final round of Spanish league

AP ■ MADRID

Xavi Hernández ended his stint as Barcelona coach with a 2-1 win at Sevilla in the final round of the Spanish league.

Robert Lewandowski and Fermin López scored for Barcelona, which announced Friday it was parting ways with the former midfielder with a year left on his contract.

"We didn't want this to end, but these are decisions made by the club," Xavi said. "We didn't win titles but we were on the right track. But soccer is like this, the directors will make their decisions. The response by the players was wonderful."

Barcelona players bid farewell to Xavi after the match.

"We will always wish Xavi the best," goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen said. "He's been a friend for many years and it's not easy to let him go ... He deserves the best."

Barcelona had already clinched second place and a spot in the

lucrative Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia next season. It finished with four consecutive victories.

Youssef En-Nesyri scored for Sevilla, which ended 14th place after four straight losses.

En-Nesyri's goal came in the 31st minute, after Lewandowski had put Barcelona ahead in the 15th. López netted the winner for the Catalan club in the 59th.

Xavi's departure came a month after he had walked back a previous decision he made in January to leave the club this summer. In April, he said that he had changed his mind because the team was playing better and he believed it could bounce back from a trophy-less season.

Barcelona president Joan Laporta had publicly celebrated Xavi's commitment to stay at that time. But last week the president was reportedly unhappy when the head coach spoke openly about how the club's poor finances would impede it from competing with fierce rival Real



Madrid. "Those who made the decision need to explain it," said the 44-year-old Xavi, who plans to take a break from

coaching. There was little to be decided in the league's final round on Sunday. Champion Madrid, focused on the

upcoming Champions League final against Borussia Dortmund at Wembley, drew 0-0 with Real Betis on Saturday.

Barcelona, Girona and Atletico Madrid were the other three teams that qualified for the Champions League next season, while Basque Country rivals Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad will play in the Europa League. Betis earned the Conference League berth.

The three relegated clubs were Cadiz, Almeria and Granada.

In other results Sunday, Mallorca won 2-1 at Getafe, Celta Vigo drew 2-2 with Valencia, and Alaves drew 1-1 at Las Palmas.

Girona striker Artem Dovbych ended as the league's top scorer this season with 24 goals, one more than Villarreal's Alexander Sorloth. Lewandowski and Madrid's Jude Bellingham were third with 19 goals.

Madrid finished with the best attack with 87 goals scored, and the best defense with 26 goals conceded.

Stan Wawrinka, who is 39, beats Andy Murray, who is 37, at French Open

AP ■ PARIS

After Stan Wawrinka ended Andy Murray's stay at the French Open yet again - and this time, it was perhaps Murray's last singles appearance at Roland Garros - the two long-time opponents, both in their late 30s, met at the net for a handshake, an embrace and a lengthy chat. Wawrinka, whose trademark one-handed backhand helped him put together a 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 victory in the first-round contest Sunday night, then joined fans in applauding for Murray as he headed toward the locker room.

"It was emotional, for sure. We're getting closer to the end," said Wawrinka, who has won 10 of their 23 meetings since the first in 2005. "We have a lot of respect for each other."

Wawrinka, at 39, is just the third man of at least that age to win a match at the clay-court Grand Slam tournament since 1980. Murray just turned 37, and this contest had the second-oldest combined age for two men in Paris since 2000.

"Obviously disappointed. ... He gave me very few opportunities," said Murray, who was broken early in each set while going 0 for 2 on his break chances. "Physically, tennis is not easy for me nowadays."

By the end, his movement was not what it usually is, even after having hip replacement surgery several years ago. Murray recently returned after tearing ankle ligaments at the Miami Open in March and is 1-3 since coming back. "My body isn't what it was 10 years ago. I'm fully aware of that," he said.



Theirs was by far the most eagerly anticipated match of Day 1 at the clay-court Grand Slam tournament, featuring a pair of guys who each own a trio of major trophies.

It was not quite on the level of the Day 2 showcase — Rafael Nadal vs. Alexander Zverev — but it earned the high-profile spot in the night session at Court Philippe Chatrier and drew a crowd that loudly cheered when they stepped out under the lights.

Before play began Sunday, tournament director Amélie Mauresmo said she was putting off a planned farewell ceremony for Nadal, who most everyone figured would be competing at the French Open for the final time but said this weekend he didn't want to close the door on a return. Similarly, Mauresmo said there wouldn't be that sort of adieu to Murray, who has indicated he might retire after this summer. As it is, he is not done in Paris, because he and Dan Evans received a wild-card entry for doubles. This was his fourth

consecutive appearance at the French Open that included a match against Wawrinka, who is 6-1 head-to-head on 2015. Wawrinka won their 2015 semifinal in Paris, Murray won a five-set semifinal the next year, and Wawrinka won their first-round contest in 2020. Murray missed the event in 2021-23. Both men drew gasps with hard-hit groundstrokes and both tossed in a bit of guile, too, including an early serve-and-volley from Wawrinka and a half-dozen drop shots from Murray in the second set alone.

Wawrinka, who has dealt with his own series of health issues over the years, goes on to meet No. 32 Cam Norrie or Pavel Kotov in the second round. Other major titles champions who won Sunday included Carlos Alcaraz, Naomi Osaka, Sofia Kenin and Jelena Ostapenko. But 2021 French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková lost 7-6 (3), 6-4 to Viktorija Golubic - making the 24th-seeded Krejčíková 0-3 in Paris since going 7-0 three years ago to take the title.

Ancelotti has really difficult decision to make in goal for Madrid ahead of Champions League final

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti knows he will have a tough decision to make in goal for the Champions League final against Borussia Dortmund on Saturday.

"It's really difficult," Ancelotti said Monday. "Of course it's really difficult, because both of them deserve to play this final. Lunin because he did a fantastic season, and Courtois because he is back from his injury and everyone knows the quality of Courtois. It's a difficult decision but I think I'm going to take into the game this decision, no doubt."

Lunin was nursing a fever and was the only Madrid player who didn't train on Monday as Madrid began its final week of preparations. But Ancelotti said the 25-year-old Ukrainian was expected to be



available for Saturday's final in London. The illness surely doesn't help Lunin's chances, though, and many had already expected Ancelotti to go with the more experienced Courtois despite his lack of minutes this season. Courtois ruptured a left-knee ligament in August, just two days before the start of the season. The 32-year-old Belgian then also ruptured the meniscus in his right knee in March, when he was close to making a comeback. He was sidelined until the beginning of this month, when he started in a 3-0 win

over Cadiz, a victory that secured Madrid's 36th Spanish league title.

Lunin was back in goal as Madrid beat Bayern Munich in the Champions League semifinals. He had saved two penalties in the decisive shootout win over Manchester City in the quarterfinals.

Lunin had earned the starting position over Kepa Arrizabalaga, the former Chelsea player who is Madrid's other reserve goalkeeper. Ancelotti said Lunin was the best goalkeeper in the world right now.

Courtois has proven experience in finals, though, having won the 2022 Champions League with Madrid, the FA Cup with Chelsea, the Europa League with Atletico Madrid, and two Copa del Rey titles (one for Madrid, one for Atletico), among several other titles.

"Both deserve to play for various reasons," Ancelotti said. Ancelotti joked that he will wait as long as possible to announce the starting goalkeeper because otherwise the debate would be over, and "I like the debate."

Boxing World Qualifiers: Boro wins opening round bout, Laura loses

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Former world youth champion Ankushita Boro defeated Namuun Monkhor of Mongolia in 60kg category but Abhimanyu Laura lost against Ireland's Kelyn Cassidy in 80kg division in the second Boxing World qualifiers for Paris Olympics here on Monday. Boro started strongly against her young Mongolian opponent. She effectively blunted Monkhor's speedy movements by tactically shifting gears to carve out a 4-1 win after three keenly-

contested rounds. However, it was an opposite result for Laura. The National Championships bronze medalist came into the second-round clash high on confidence after beating Bulgaria's 10-time national champion Kristiyan Nikolov in a thrilling bout. But Cassidy was well prepared for the long reach of his opponent and went on to win 0-5 despite Laura giving his all in the final round. On Tuesday, Sachin Siwach (57kg), Abhinash Jamwal (63.5kg) and Nishant Dev

Jose Manuel Vafara Fory and Nishant Dev will be up against Otonbaatar Byamba-Erdene of Mongolia. India has already secured three quotas for the Paris Games. Nikhat Zareen (women's 50kg), Preeti (54kg) and Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) have confirmed their Paris berths by winning bronze medals at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year. India fielded seven men and three women boxers in the second World Qualifiers and five of them received opening round byes.

(71kg) will look to continue their march towards securing an Olympic quota place. This tournament is the final chance for the boxers to book a Paris Games berth. Sachin will face Frederik Jensen of Denmark. Jamwal will take on Colombia's



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India name squad for women friendly matches against Uzbekistan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Monday announced a 23-member senior women's squad for the two international friendly matches against Uzbekistan to be played in Tashkent on May 31 and June 4. Starting off with 30 probables, the Blue Tigresses trained at Sreenidi Deccan FC's home ground in Hyderabad for two weeks, before head coach Langam Chaoba Devi pruned down the squad to 23.

The Indian squad will travel to the Uzbek capital on Wednesday. Earlier this year, India had finished runners-up in the Turkish Women's Cup, behind Kosovo, in a quadrangular tournament that also featured Estonia and Hong Kong.

INDIA WOMEN'S SQUAD: Goalkeepers: Shreya Hooda, Maibam Linthoingambi Devi, Moirangthem Monalisha Devi. Defenders: Loitongbam Ashalata Devi, Sanju, Hemam Shilky Devi, Juli Kishan, Astam Oraon, Aruna Bag, Sorokhaibam Ranjana Chanu, Wangkhem Linthoingambi Devi. Midfielders: Karthika Angamuthu, Kaviya, Naorem Priyangka Devi, Neha, Sandhiya Ranganathan, Sangita Basfore, Soumya Guguloth, Anju Tamang. Forwards: Kajol D'Souza, Karishma Shirvoikar, Pyari Xaxa, Serto Lynda Kom.

FROM SETBACKS TO SUCCESS: SHREYAS IYER'S JOURNEY TO IPL VICTORY

PTI ■ KOLKATA

When Shreyas Iyer recreated Lionel Messi's famous World Cup celebration after lifting the IPL Trophy as Kolkata Knight Riders captain in Chennai, it was nothing short of an Argentina moment for the embattled Indian cricketer at an individual level. His central contract torn up a few weeks before the IPL besides a recurring back injury threatening to derail him, Iyer faced numerous challenges at the start of the year. He finally found a deep sense of triumph and vindication in this victory, much like Messi did after exorcising the ghosts of losing the 2014 final and winning the trophy for his country after a 36-year wait. For the two-time IPL champions, the wait lasted 10 years as Iyer sang a redemption song following a topsy-turvy start to the year. Little wonder then that he chose to imitate the man who knows all about rising from setbacks. So, Iyer, with the trophy in his hands, took a playful walk towards his teammates, quite

similar to what Messi did after the final against France in Doha, and handed the big prize to them. "I am hearing a lot about Gautam Gambhir, who has created a magnificent culture in the KKR team. But this guy (Iyer), I don't think he is getting enough credit," said the legendary Ian Bishop on Sunday as KKR defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad by eight wickets in a completely one-sided final to win their third IPL title. KKR may have got most of their runs from openers Sunil Narine and Phil Salt, but they played as a team and managed to come out winners in a dominant season, topping the table with two rounds to spare, and enduring just three losses in between. "It is hard to express how we are feeling right now. The wait was so long. We played like invincibles throughout the season. There is so much to cherish right now," said Iyer. It was a special feeling for his childhood and Mumbai coach Pravin Amre, who first tested his character by promoting Iyer to No.3 from No.7 in his



maiden Ranji season in 2014-15. Iyer returned with 153, his maiden first-class hundred in their match against Bengal at Eden Gardens in December 2014. "I challenged him in his entire

career (in Mumbai)...I knew how strong-willed he's and it was my job as a coach to challenge him. He always liked to take the challenge in a good stride. He is a good team man. In the last world cup, he scored 530 runs," Amre said.

"I always told him you just do whatever is in your hands, let the other people do their job, you just remain focus on what's in your hands," added Amre who first took him under his wings at the Shivaji Park Gymkhana.

By leading KKR into final, Iyer achieved the rare feat of playing the summit clash as captain of two different franchises in the IPL. The KKR skipper missed the last season because of a back injury that required a surgery

in London last year. He made a comeback in the Asia Cup and went on to become India's third leading run-getter after Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the last year's ODI World Cup. The year didn't start well for him though as he had a difficult outing in the home Test series against England and looked patchy scoring 140 runs in the first two matches before being left out for the final three Tests. It was learnt that he developed the recurring back problem, even though he was cleared by the Board medical staff. Iyer then became the centre of a controversy when he missed the Ranji Trophy for his home state Mumbai and went on to attend KKR's pre-season camp. Iyer, however, returned to play for Mumbai in the semifinal and final against Vidarbha where he scored a resolute 95 in the second innings of their 42nd Ranji triumph. The Board omitted him from the Grade B contract and BCCI secretary Jay Shah issued a stern warning asking players not to prioritise IPL over domestic cricket.

Under intense scrutiny, Iyer looked rusty at the start of the IPL and got out for a two-ball duck in their opener against SRH. He had some significant contributions later on but his efforts were all overshadowed by Narine and Salt's explosive batting. **CAPTAIN COOL:** However, Iyer personified "Captain Cool" and held the team's cause ahead of his individual milestones. He went on to become the fourth leading run-getter for KKR this season with 351 runs and two fifties. His best came against the crucial first qualifier against SRH when he anchored their tricky chase of 160 with an unbeaten 58. "The way he handled the team as a player is commendable. More than that, he is improving as a leader and the experts in the game are also appreciating his leadership qualities," Amre said. "I personally believe success is not an accident he has worked hard for this, handling the team. Yes, he had a good team under him but bringing the best out of everyone is important," he added.

Starc produced ball of the IPL, Narine best player for KKR: Hayden

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Former Australia batter Matthew Hayden has termed Mitchell Starc's outstanding away-swing to Abhishek Sharma in the IPL final as the "ball of the IPL" while describing Sunil Narine as the "best player" for triumphant Kolkata Knight Riders. Shreyas Iyer's rampant KKR, who were unstoppable throughout the 17th edition of the IPL, crushed Sunrisers Hyderabad in the summit clash by eight wickets to add a third trophy to their cabinet on Sunday. "The moment that ball bowled to Abhishek Sharma came out of Mitchell Starc's hands, it was game over. It was destined to be the best ball of the IPL - an absolute peach at a time when it was so important," Hayden told Star Sports Cricket Live.



Former England batter Kevin Pietersen said Starc's ability to get his wrist position right towards the end of IPL and cranking up extra pace along with Narine's all-round ability bolstered KKR. "Mitchell Starc was averaging around 136-137 kph during the majority of the season. But in the last two weeks he has gone above 140 kph and that is his average. He is bowling fast," Pietersen said. "We never saw him swing the ball for the first seven, (or) maybe even eight weeks of this tournament. (But) in the last few weeks, he has got his wrist in a good place and started to swing the ball back," he added. Pietersen was lavish in praise of Narine, saying that the KKR veteran gave his critics a perfect reply. "I was one of the most vocal

critics at the start of the tournament saying I didn't like Sunil Narine at the top of the order, due to his inconsistency. He would typically hit a six and then get out, disrupting the momentum," Pietersen said. "However, this season he has been consistent. He has thought like a batter, batted like a batter and got the runs of a batter. He has averaged more than many batters and his strike rate has been phenomenal. He has played both sides of the wicket exceptionally well." "We don't need to say much about his bowling - he is an out-and-out superstar. His ability to change his action and still produce such impressive numbers is quite something. He is the heart and soul of this outfit," Pietersen said. Former India batter Ambati Rayudu, meanwhile, credited KKR captain Iyer, coaching staff as well as the team's domestic talent for coming together. "Shreyas Iyer has been tremendous in terms of leading KKR, and we should give him a lot of credit. He was not in the best of forms with the bat, but still, the way he has used his resources, is commendable," Rayudu said. Rayudu said a huge tally of runs from an individual is not as crucial as the others contributing collectively. "That is exactly how teams win the IPL. We have seen this over the years; it is not the orange cap that wins you the IPL, but it is the contributions from 4-5 batters with 300-400 runs each - that is what gets you to the finals," he added.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

After resisting the lure of lucrative private leagues for almost a decade because of his commitment towards the "Baggy Green", Australian pacer Mitchell Starc has hinted that he might quit one format to make room for more franchise cricket in his schedule. While the 34-year-old didn't specify the format he intends to give up, it is likely to be ODIs considering that the next 50-over World Cup is in 2027. Starc, who was bought for a record 24.75 crore by Kolkata Knight Riders, was magnificent in the business end of the tournament. He ended up with 17 wickets, including five in the two knock-out games, to engineer a dominant title triumph for the Shah Rukh Khan-owned team. To a query from PTI as to how he would take it up from here after his best year in franchise cricket, Starc hinted that T20s could gain prominence in his roster. "For the last nine years, I

Starc hints at quitting one format to open doors for more franchise cricket

certainly prioritised Australian cricket. I have pulled out often to have a chance to give my body a break and spend some time away from cricket with my wife as well, so that's certainly been where my head has been for last nine years," Starc said after his match-winning 2/14 in the IPL final against Sunrisers Hyderabad. "Moving forward, I am certainly close to the end of my career than the start. One format may be dropped off as there is long time till next World Cup and whether that format drops off or not, that will open doors for a lot of franchise cricket," the "King of Swing" said. He mentioned that this year's IPL will help him in preparing for the T20 World Cup in West Indies starting June 1. "...That's the other side of



benefit of being here, some amazing players in an amazing tournament and great lead up to WT20 and success has been fantastic. It is great that a lot of players are in good position heading into the World Cup," he said. He is hopeful of turning up for KKR even next year. "I don't know the schedule exactly but I have thoroughly

out tracks. "T20 is not as physically demanding as Test cricket and it's been warm, humid, so that plays a part but that's fine. It would be cooler here in the West Indies than here," he said when asked how his body is holding up after two months of IPL. "There's the Impact Player Rule here and that's not the case in the World Cup and after that you have to put a team that's more balanced and you rely more on all-rounders. You can't have your batting all-rounder coming in at No. 9, like they do in IPL. "I don't think the runs would be that much, I don't think 270 can be scored... Wickets may play a part as we have seen high-scoring matches here and wickets won't be same in West Indies.

Australia facing player shortage for T20 World Cup Warm up games: Marsh

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia is facing shortage of players and might be forced to use support staff as substitute fielders in the warm-up games of next month's T20 World Cup due to the low turnaround time between the IPL and the global showpiece. Australia are set to play two warm-up games against Namibia on Wednesday and the West Indies on Friday in Trinidad but they might have as few as eight players available for the two matches since most of them will take a break following their stint in the IPL playoffs. "We're going to be undermanned. But it

is a practice game. The guys who need to play will play as much as they can and we'll figure it out from there," captain Mitchell Marsh, who himself is not certain to play against Namibia as he is recovering from a hamstring injury, told cricket.com.au. The IPL finals between Kolkata Knight Riders and Sunrisers Hyderabad concluded on Sunday night and three players - Travis Head, Pat Cummins and player of the match Mitchell Starc - were part of the two teams. Besides the trio, Cameron Green and Glenn Maxwell, who were part of the Royal Challengers Bengaluru, will only link up with the World Cup squad by the end of the week in Barbados, while



Marcus Stoinis, who played for Lucknow Super Giants, is expected to arrive in Trinidad only after the Namibia practice match. Travelling reserves Jake Fraser-McGurk and Matt Short too are set to join after

Australia's first match of the tournament proper which is against Oman on June 5. "It's important to be flexible. Guys who have been at the IPL have been playing a lot of cricket. We prioritised giving them a couple of days at home to see their families, refresh, and play the long game for this tournament," Marsh said. "We will get our 15 (all together) eventually, but really important that we give them a break, even if it's just a couple of days at home, that's really important." According to ICC rules, players taking to the field in the warm-up games must be from the country they are representing.

Can cricket make inroads in baseball loving America?

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Cricket, a popular pastime in the United States in the mid 1800s, makes a big-ticket return to North American shores through the T20 World Cup but will it be able to leave an impression on the local audience that knows little to nothing about the gentleman's game? Cricket globally is driven by India but the International Cricket Council sees huge potential in the American market and claims there are already 30 million fans that follow the game in the massive country. The T20 showpiece is also seen as a major stepping stone to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, where cricket will make a comeback after 128 years when the big event kicks off on June 1. A total of 16 games will be played across three venues - New York, Dallas and LA - with a majority of 55 matches scheduled in the Caribbean including the knock-outs.

Day three of the competition will have South Africa and Sri Lanka battling it out in New York, where the first ever international cricket game was held between USA and Canada back in 1844. It was a phase when the sport was played widely across America before a much faster alternative in Baseball gained prominence during the Civil War in the 1860s. "... (T20) it's entertainment and that's what people look for. That's what Americans look for, you know, they want entertainment," says legendary West Indian Brian Lara, one of the most recognisable cricketers in the world but someone who admits that he could walk around Miami without getting a second look. "You know, you speak to an American and I've done that many times and they'd say 'you play a game for five days and then you end up in a draw? What's that all about?' So it's, it is difficult," he explains the challenge of selling Test cricket to an American, who might just warm up to the shortest

format though. A couple of weeks of international cricket in an alien land will not be enough to evoke long-lasting interest from the local audience and to ensure the game grows beyond the South Asian and Caribbean expat community, the stakeholders will need more time. For a beginner, cricket can be rather complex to understand especially when one is introduced to "third man", "fine leg" or "deep mid-wicket", some of the terms used for the many field placements in the game. The ICC is pulling out all stops to engage with the American audience, whether it is getting eight-time Olympic gold-winning sprinter Usain Bolt on board as the World Cup ambassador or promoting the event at the recent Formula 1 race in Miami. To distract the average American household from the world of baseball, NFL and NBA, cricket will need to grow at the grassroots level. "I surely think the game can grow

in the USA. When you have presence in a country people start gravitating towards it and want to know more about," Bolt, who belongs to the cricket-loving Caribbean, told PTI in a recent interview. The Americans have surely one reason to follow the event. Their team, mainly made up of players from South Asian and Caribbean heritage, will be making its World Cup debut. Venu Pisike, head of USA Cricket, reckons the ICC event will bring much-needed awareness around

the game but eventually, it is the lure of taking part in the 2028 Olympics that will draw masses to the sport. "So far, cricket is predominantly an expats' game, but with the marketing and promotion activities during the World Cup, there is some momentum and the World Cup will definitely boost the opportunities to expand the game in the USA," said Pisike. "Definitely, the World Cup is bringing a lot of awareness and then the opportunity for cricket to be in the Olympics, that will definitely attract the community because the US is a huge sports country. "Olympics is the prime area where all the sports bodies are focusing on since cricket is going to Olympics, that will actually give more opportunities to expand the sport between the World Cup and the Olympics," added Pisike. The USA squad picked for the tournament makes up for a bunch of semi-professionals who rely on

full-time jobs to run their families. That will have to change if the sport is to appeal to a broader audience in America, believes India-born USA squad member Nisarg Patel. "Ultimately what needs to change in the USA is that an American kid in a high school needs to see a future in the game. There are so many sports in America, the country is built on Olympic medals. "For cricket to succeed, we need to show them there is a career out of playing cricket," said the spinner, who works full-time with a medical research company in Los Angeles. The start of Major League Cricket last year, the sport's first professional league in the country, was a big step in that direction. However, to capture the imagination of people in a country with an already crowded and developed sporting landscape, would be a gargantuan challenge for the ICC and other stakeholders.