

India seeks Britain's response on Rahul's citizenship

J GOPIKRISHNAN ■ New Delhi

The Centre has written to the UK Government seeking details about claims that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had British citizenship, the Allahabad High Court was told on Monday. After the submission, the Lucknow bench of the High Court granted time to the Central Government till May 5 to place before it the outcome of a representation moved against the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, seeking cancellation of his 2024 Lok Sabha election over claims that he had British citizenship.

A bench of Justices A R Masoodi and Rajiv Singh passed the order while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by S Vignesh Shishir, a BJP worker from Karnataka. While hearing the PIL on November 25, the court sought information from the central government regarding its decision on the representation of the petitioner. Deputy Solicitor General SB Pandey informed the court on Monday that acting on the petitioner's representation, the Ministry concerned had written to the UK Government seeking details about Gandhi's alleged British citizenship and hence the government needed more time to take a final

decision on the petitioner's representation. The central government had earlier also sought more time in this regard.

In the PIL, BJP worker Vignesh Shishir, the petitioner has claimed that he has documents and some emails of the British government which prove that Rahul Gandhi is a British citizen, and due to this, he is ineligible to contest elections in India and cannot hold the post of a Lok Sabha member. The petitioner also said that he sent complaints twice to the competent authority regarding Rahul Gandhi's alleged dual citizenship, but no action was taken by them. On March 26, In BJP leader

In the PIL, BJP worker Vignesh Shishir, the petitioner has claimed that he has documents and some emails of the British government which prove that Rahul Gandhi is a British citizen

Subramanian Swamy's petition, Union Home Ministry informed Delhi High Court that probe on Rahul Gandhi's petition is under consideration. In April 2019, MHA had issued show cause notice to Rahul Gandhi on Subramanian Swamy's complaint

showing British company records, where Rahul declared himself as British citizen. Rahul had floated company named as Backops in London in 2002 and till 2009 in company registry he claimed as British Citizen and London resident. The petitioner also said that he sent complaints twice to the competent authority regarding Rahul Gandhi's alleged dual citizenship, but no action was taken by them.

On March 26, In BJP leader Subramanian Swamy's petition, Union Home Ministry informed Delhi High Court that probe on Rahul Gandhi's petition is under consideration. In April 2019, MHA had issued show

cause notice to Rahul Gandhi on Subramanian Swamy's complaint showing British company records, where Rahul declared himself as British citizen. Rahul had floated company named as Backops in London in 2002 and till 2009 in company registry he claimed as British Citizen and London resident.

The petitioner also said that he sent complaints twice to the competent authority regarding Rahul Gandhi's alleged dual citizenship, but no action was taken by them. On March 26, In BJP leader Subramanian Swamy's petition, Union Home Ministry informed Delhi

Modi, Vance discuss BTA, strategic ties

RAHUL DATTA ■ New Delhi

India and the US on Monday discussed the entire gamut of their bilateral ties and ways to further enhance strategic ties during talks here between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vice President J D Vance. They expressed satisfaction at the progress made in the trade pact. Parleys were held in the backdrop of ongoing negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement to address various issues including tariff and market access. Modi also hosted a dinner for the visiting dignitary.

In their talks, Prime Minister Modi and Vice President Vance also exchanged views on various regional and global issues of mutual interest.

A statement by Prime Minister's Office (PMO) after the talks said they welcomed progress in the India-U.S. Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) and efforts towards enhancing cooperation in energy, defence, strategic technologies. The two leaders also exchanged views on various regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Prime Minister Modi fondly recalled his visit to Washington D.C. in January and his fruitful discussions with President Trump, which laid down the roadmap for close cooperation between India and the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with US Vice President JD Vance PTI

U.S., leveraging the strengths of Make America Great Again (MAGA) and Viksit Bharat 2047, the statement said.

Both of them reviewed and positively assessed the progress in various areas

of bilateral cooperation. They welcomed the significant progress in the negotiations for a mutually beneficial India-U.S.

Continued on >> P8

World mourns death of Pope Francis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lyon

Tributes to Pope Francis instantly poured in from around the world from presidents to people of all walks of life on Monday after the Vatican announced the pontiff's death at age 88. President Emmanuel Macron of France, a country that is largely Roman Catholic, focused on the pope's impact on the church, writing on X that "From Buenos Aires to Rome, Pope Francis wanted the Church to bring joy and hope to the poorest. For it to unite humans among themselves, and with nature. May this hope forever outlast him."

US Vice President JD Vance, who on Easter Sunday met with the pope before travelling on to India, wrote on X on Monday that his "heart goes out" to the millions of Christians who loved him, and said: "I was happy to see him yesterday, though he was obviously very ill."

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, who was one of the few official visitors to see Francis during his recent hospitalization, alluded to the pope's personal comfort and advice for her, saying "I had the privilege of enjoying his friendship, his counsel and his teachings, which never failed me, not even in times of trial and suffering."

Francis' death, she said, "deeply saddens us, as we are saying goodbye to a great man and a great shepherd." European

PM CONDONES POPE'S DEATH

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday condoled the passing of Pope Francis and said he would always be remembered as a beacon of compassion, humility and spiritual courage by millions across the world.

"Deeply pained by the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. In this hour of grief and remembrance, my heartfelt condolences to the global Catholic community. Pope Francis will always be remembered as a beacon of compassion, humility and spiritual courage by millions across the world," Modi said in a social media post. "From a young age, he devoted himself towards realising the ideals of Lord Christ. He diligently served the poor and downtrodden. For those who were suffering, he ignited a spirit of hope," he said.

Modi fondly recalled his meetings with the pontiff and said he was greatly inspired by his commitment to inclusive and all-round development. "His affection for the people of India will always be cherished. May his soul find eternal peace in God's embrace," the Prime Minister said. Modi met Pope Francis for the first time when he visited Italy for the G20 summit. The meeting took place at the Vatican when the world was still coping with Covid.

Continued on >> P8

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen recalled the pontiff as an inspiration for the entire world, not just Christians.

"He inspired millions, far beyond the

Catholic Church, with his humility and love so pure for the less fortunate," she tweeted. "My thoughts are with all who feel this profound loss. May they find solace in the idea that Pope Francis' legacy will continue to guide us all toward a more just, peaceful and compassionate world."

As crowds flocked to St. Peter's Square, well-wishers worldwide laid flowers at churches — many of whose bells tolled in honour of Francis, including at the recently reopened Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Israeli President Isaac Herzog, whose role is mostly ceremonial, offered condolences and called Francis a man of "deep faith and boundless compassion."

"I truly hope that his prayers for peace in the Middle East and for the safe return of the hostages will soon be answered," Herzog posted on X, referring to the pope's repeated calls for an end to the war and the release of captives held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Francis had repeatedly criticized Israel's wartime conduct and said allegations of genocide, which Israel has adamantly denied, should be investigated.

On social media, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez hailed Francis for focusing on the world's most vulnerable; Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk posted a photo of himself on X with the pope, both smiling, and called Francis a "kind, warm and compassionate person."

Continued on >> P8

The Bystander



Wife threw chilli powder before DGP murder, say police

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bengaluru

Police probing former Karnataka DGP Om Prakash's murder case have learnt that his wife Pallavi allegedly threw chilli powder on his face before stabbing him to death, police sources said. Police have detained Pallavi as she emerged as a key suspect in the murder case.

Along with her, their daughter Kriti has also been detained. Prakash, a 1981 batch IPS officer hailing from Bihar, was found dead in a pool of blood in the ground floor of his three-storeyed house in the posh HSR Layout in the city on Sunday. "After a heated exchange of words, Pallavi threw chilli powder on Prakash's face," sources claimed. As the hefty former police chief of Karnataka scrambled for relief from the burning sensation, Pallavi stabbed him multiple times with a knife, killing him on

the spot, sources said. She then made a video call to her friend and said, "I have killed the monster," sources claimed.

The murder was the culmination of frequent run-ins between the couple, the sources said. It is learnt that there was a property dispute involved in the crime pertaining to a land in Dandeli in Karnataka. A few months ago, Pallavi had approached the HSR Layout police station to lodge a complaint. When the staff there did not oblige, she staged a 'Dharna' (sit-in demonstration) in front of the police station, sources claimed. It's also learnt that Pallavi was diagnosed with schizophrenia and was under medication too.

The 68-year-old retired IPS officer was a native of Champaran, Bihar, and held a Master's degree in Geology.

Prakash was appointed Director General of Police on March 1, 2015.

Continued on >> P8

Delhi unveils action plan to combat heatwave

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Aimed at combating the adverse effects of rising temperatures, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Monday unveiled the Heat Action Plan 2025 and activated the disaster management machinery. Considering the threat of heatwaves, the Heat Action Plan proposes 3,000 cold water ATMs, cool roof technology to setting up heatwave wards in hospitals and shading public walkways.

In addition to an early warning system for heat waves, green roofs at bus stops and special wards for heatstroke patients at all hospitals, the plan proposes deploying 1,800 National and Delhi Disaster Response volunteers — known as 'Aapda Mitras' — the plan includes the establishment of shaded cooling shelters and the installation of 3,000-4,000 large RO water units attached to the boundary walls of Delhi government schools and office



Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta with Health Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh, Water Minister Parvesh Verma and Rajendra Singh, member & HOD, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) during the launch of the Heat Action Plan 2025 of the Delhi government

buildings. These will dispense cold water round-the-clock, benefiting approximately five lakh citizens. The chief minister also virtually inaugurated three Cool Roof pilot

projects at Kashmere Gate, Anand Vihar and Delhi Secretariat. The number of such projects will be increased soon, she said.

Continued on >> P8

Eight Naxals, including one with ₹1 crore bounty, killed in Jharkhand encounter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Ranchi/ New Delhi

Eight Naxals, including a top rung central committee member of the extremists carrying a bounty of ₹1 crore on his head, were killed in an encounter with CoBRA commandos of the CRPF and police in Bokaro district of Jharkhand on Monday, officials said.

The exchange of fire started around 5.30 am in Lugu Hills of Lalpania area of the district, they said.

The troops of 209 Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) along with state police conducted the operation in which eight Naxals were killed and an AK

series rifle, three INSAS rifles, a self-loading rifle (SLR), eight country-made guns and a pistol were seized, officials said.

Those killed include central committee member of the extremist outfit Prayag Manjhi alias Vivek, special area committee member Arvind Yadav alias Avinash, zonal committee member Sahebram Manjhi alias Rahul Manjhi, Mahesh Manjhi alias Mota, Talu, Ranju Manjhi, Gangaram and Mahesh.

Vivek carried a bounty of ₹1 crore, Arvind Yadav had a reward of ₹25 lakh and Sahebram Majhi ₹10 lakh.

They were booked by the police in various cases of violence, the officials said.

The central committee is the top deci-

Vivek carried a bounty of ₹1 crore, Arvind Yadav had a reward of ₹25 lakh and Sahebram Majhi ₹10 lakh. They were booked by the police in various cases of violence

sion-making body of the Maoist organisation, they said. No injuries have been reported among the security personnel, they said.

Jharkhand DGP Anurag Gupta said, "With this encounter, Maoist squads in North Chotanagpur region have been wiped out." He added, "Maoists have nearly been wiped out from across the state.

They only remain in Chaibasa region. We are going to relocate all our forces, including the CRPF, Jharkhand Jaguar and Jharkhand Armed Police, in the Saranda area. Our target is to eliminate all the Maoist squads in the region in the next 15 to 20 days, or certainly before the rainy season."

"We appeal to the Maoists of Chaibasa to surrender before police. We have a good surrender policy," the DGP said. The CoBRA is the special jungle warfare unit of the CRPF.

The operation is part of the Union government's declaration of eliminating Naxalism from the country by March, 2026.

In another development, Vishnu Deo Sai, the chief minister of neighbouring

Chhattisgarh, is expected to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah at his office in North Block in New Delhi on Monday evening for a comprehensive review of the anti-Naxal operations in his state and related subjects, officials said.

This year, more than 140 Maoists have been gunned down in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh, called by security officials as the "last bastion" for Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in the country.

In the wake of killing of eight Naxals by security forces in Jharkhand, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday asserted that his government's commitment to eliminate Naxalism continues unabated.

"Our march to eliminate Naxalism con-

tinues unabated. Today security forces achieved another significant success in the ongoing operation to uproot Naxalism. In an encounter at Lugu Hills in Bokaro, Jharkhand, 8 Maoists were neutralised, including a top-level naxal leader, Vivek, who carried a reward of Rs 1 crore, and two other notorious Naxalites. The operation is being continued. Applaud our security forces," Shah wrote on X.

The troops of 209 Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) along with state police conducted the operation in which eight Naxals were killed and an AK series rifle, three INSAS rifles, a self-loading rifle (SLR), eight country-made guns and a pistol were seized, officials said.

Delhi man lives stereotype, threatens judge inside courtroom: tu bahar mil

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

A city courtroom in Dwarka was left stunned earlier this month when a 63-year-old retired government school teacher and his lawyer recently threatened and hurled abuses at a woman judge inside a courtroom in Delhi after he was convicted in a six-year-old cheque bounce case.

The accused even attempted to hurl an object at the judge for not delivering an order in his favour. He then instructed his lawyer to do whatever it took to secure a favourable judgment.

The outburst took place before Judicial Magistrate (NI Act) Shivangi Mangla, who had on April 2 convicted the accused under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act — the law dealing with

dishonour of cheques. Following the conviction, the judge directed the accused to furnish bail bonds under Section 437A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

"Tu hai kya cheezki tu bahar mil dekhke hai kaise zinda ghar jaati hai.....(Who even are you... just meet me outside and let's see how you make it back home alive)," the accused told the judge as noted in the Court's order dated April 2. "After hearing the judgment not in favor of accused, Accused erupted with anger on the Judge in open court as to how the judgment of conviction can be passed.

Accused started harassing the Judge in open court in unofficial Hindi language with commentary against the mother of the Judge. Accused was also holding some object and he tried to throw it on the

Judge for not passing order in his favor. Then, he ordered his advocate to do anything to get judgment in his favour," the judge wrote in her order.

Then again they both harassed mentally and physically to resign from job and they both again harassed to acquit the accused else they will file complaint against me and forcibly arrange my resignation.

However, following the conviction, the accused and his counsel allegedly harassed the woman judge both mentally and physically, pressuring her to resign from her post, Judge Mangla recorded in her order.

They again subjected her to harassment, demanding that she acquit the accused. They also threatened to file a complaint against her and forcibly secure

her resignation. The judge said that appropriate action shall be initiated against the accused before the National Commission for Women for the threats and harassment.

The judge issued a show cause notice to the convict's lawyer seeking an explanation as to why criminal contempt proceedings should not be initiated against him

"Still the undersigned stand against all the odds and always do needful in favor of justice. The undersigned shall be taking appropriate measures against the accused before National Commission

for Women, Delhi for such threatening and harassment," the Court directed.

The judge also issued a show cause notice to the convict's lawyer, advocate Atul Kumar, seeking an explanation as to why criminal contempt proceedings should not be initiated against him for misbehaving with her.

"Court notice be issued to counsel for accused Sh Atul Kumar to show cause in writing providing relevant explanation for the conduct shown by him today and further to explain as to why he shall not be referred to the Hon'ble High Court for initiating criminal contempt proceedings against him for such misbehavior."

The lawyer was directed to furnish the reply on the next date of hearing on April 5, 2025.

On April 5, the court sentenced the

convict who is retired teacher to 22 months of simple imprisonment and imposed a fine of ₹6.65 lakh.

Kumar appeared before the court on April 5 at around 1400hrs, saying the convict was a retired government teacher, living on pension with three dependent sons. The court then sentenced him to 1.10 years of imprisonment and imposed a ₹6.65 lakh fine in the NI Act case. The convict moved a plea to file an appeal, which the court allowed.

On the misdemeanour of the convict and his counsel, the court said, "Let the matter be referred to the principal district and sessions judge, southwest, Dwarka, for the referral to the Delhi High Court for taking up appropriate proceedings in terms of the order dated April 2."

Another woman kills husband with help of lover in Deoria

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

In yet another chilling incident reminiscent of the recent killings of several men by their wives and their paramours, a man, who returned from Saudi Arabia, was brutally killed by his wife and her lover in Deoria district. The body was stuffed inside a suitcase and dumped nearly 50 kilometres away in a wheat field.

The victim, identified as Naushad (28) of Bhatuli village under Mall police station of Deoria, had returned to India just a week ago after working in Saudi Arabia.

According to police officials, Naushad's murder was orchestrated by his wife and her lover, who also happens to be her nephew. The grim discovery was made when locals of Pakri Chhapar Patkhali vil-

lage, under the Tarkulwa police station, spotted a suspicious suitcase abandoned in a field on Sunday afternoon. Upon opening it, authorities found a body with documents that helped identify the deceased as Naushad. The local police, on suspicion, took Naushad's wife in custody to grill her and extract the truth.

During interrogation, the victim's wife reportedly confessed to the crime. She told police that after Naushad returned from abroad, he began interfering in her illicit relationship, which led her and her lover to plot his murder.

The duo allegedly killed Naushad with a sharp weapon on Saturday night, placed his body in a suitcase, and on Sunday morning, disposed it of far from their home to mislead the investigation.

SP Vikrant Veer, along other senior officials, visited the crime scene.

While the woman is currently in custody, her lover is on the run. A manhunt has been launched to apprehend him.

Speaking to the media, SP Veer said, "Preliminary investigation suggests that the murder was motivated by an illicit relationship. The victim's wife and her lover carried out the crime in a premeditated manner. We are making all efforts to arrest the absconding accused soon."

The case has sparked outrage and concern, especially due to its similarity with the Meerut blue drum murder, where an NRI husband was also killed upon returning home.

Further investigations are on in the matter.

6 of marriage party killed in road mishap

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

In a tragic road accident, half a dozen people were killed and two others seriously injured when a car carrying wedding guests crashed into a tree near Shukla Bhujauli village in Nebua Naurangia police station area of Kushinagar late on Sunday night.

The car was going from Padrauna to Khadda when the driver lost control over the wheel and it rammed into a roadside tree. In a photo shared by Kushinagar police, the vehicle can be seen completely damaged.

Local residents rushed to the scene and began rescue operations. Police and emergency workers used gas cutters and hammers to remove the victims from the wreckage.

Three people were pronounced dead at the accident spot. Three others were taken to the district hospital in critical condition but later died. Two injured victims

were referred to Gorakhpur medical college hospital for treatment.

The deceased were identified as Omprakash Maddheshiya, 33, the car's driver, and Kushinagar residents Harendra Maddheshiya, Ranjit Maddheshiya, Yogesh Maddheshiya, Mukesh, Bhim Yadav and Laxman Yadav. The two injured persons were identified as Raj Kishore and Bajrangi. The doctors at the hospital claimed that the driver must have dozed off or lost control over the wheel due to excessive consumption of alcohol.

The accident reportedly caused a temporary disruption in traffic. Police from three stations rushed to the spot and carried out rescue operations.

Kushinagar's Superintendent of Police Santosh Kumar Mishra said a detailed investigation into the incident was underway.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed condolences to the bereaved families and directed district offi-

cial to ensure prompt and adequate treatment for the injured, an official statement said. The chief minister conveyed his wishes for the speedy recovery of those injured in the accident.

In another tragic accident near Nasirabad village under Phephana police station of Ballia, two youths riding a motorcycle were killed on Monday morning.

Reports said that two youths were returning from a programme on a motorcycle when their two-wheeler collided with a bus. One of the youths died on the spot while the other succumbed to his injuries in the hospital during treatment.

The deceased were identified as Shubham Kumar Singh (22) and Gaurav Kumar Singh (25).

A case was registered and the police are trying to confirm the registration number of the bus involved in the accident to initiate legal proceedings against the driver.

Three labourers arrested held for lynching two men on suspicion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Three labourers were arrested on Monday for lynching two men, both friends, on suspicion that they were thieves, blackening their faces and writing '420' on their bodies to brand them as thieves.

Those arrested were identified as Mohit Kumar (prime accused) and Shivaraj, both of Sitapur, and Ramdev of Jaunpur. The trio lived near the crime scene in Gomti Nagar police station area.

The bodies of the victims, Ram Savor and Rakesh, both of Kaiserganj in Bahraich and presently staying in Gwari in Gomti Nagar area, were found lying near the railway tracks on Sunday morning.

Rakesh was still breathing when passers-by spotted him but he was pronounced dead at the hospital. Deputy

Commissioner of Police (East) Shashank Singh said Ram Savor and Rakesh worked as scaffolders and had recently taken a contract at the construction site of a real estate company.

He said around 12:30 am on Sunday, both barged into the house of prime accused Mohit in an inebriated state and were caught by women members of Mohit's family. The women cried for help and Mohit called his friends Shivraj and Ramdev to teach the suspects a lesson.

"The trio brutally thrashed Ram Savor and Rakesh, painted their faces and then wrote 420 on their bodies to brand them as thieves. The accused dumped the bodies near a garbage heap alongside railway tracks in Gwari. Both Ram Savor and Rakesh were alive when they were dumped near the railway tracks but they succumbed

to their injuries," the DCP said. He added that after the death of Ram Savor and Rakesh, the accused developed cold feet and fled from their houses, apprehending police action.

The DCP said the police worked out the case and nabbed the accused who were hiding in thickets and recovered a bottle filled with black oil/paint, a bat, a stick, a rope and a belt from the accused.

In reply to a query whether the victims were tied to a tree and beaten to death, the DCP said the police were verifying these reports. On Sunday, Ram Savor's widow Vandana Kumari, had lodged an FIR stating that her husband and his friend, Rakesh, were found murdered and their bodies were lying alongside the railway tracks in Gwari and near a heap of garbage.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

IRSHAD ALI S/O NAUSHAD ALI R/O 132/511, MUNSHI PURWA P S BABU PURWA KANPUR Nagar, have changed my name ERSAD ALI To IRSHAD ALI

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Dipak Shukla to Deepak Shukla in future i shall know Deepak Shukla.S/o Sukh Deo Prasad 6E/7 Dabouli Kanpur

NOTICE

I, Animesh Misra, son of Rajendra Misra, residing at C-2/108, Rishita Mulberry Heights, Shushant Golf City, Lucknow - 226030, hereby declare that I have changed the spelling of my surname from Misra to Mishra. Henceforth I shall be known as Animesh Mishra for all official purposes, records and future correspondence.

NOTICE

My son's name is mohammad shaban. By error his name recorded as mohammad shabaan in school documents. His name is correctly mentioned as mohammad shaban in his aadhaar card, which is accurate and authentic. Saesta jabi W/o abdul hamid dubagga Lucknow

NOTICE

House No. I -459 World Bank Barra has really misplaced its original possession Letter. Letter number 207/K.U.D.P.V dated 24/10/2004 approved by KDA. Whose Use will be invalid. Bharti pandey W/o Ravindra Nath Pandey I-459 Barra vishwa Bank Colony, kanpur nagar 208027

NOTICE

Raghunaath Singh S/o Late Balak Ram ,Pipargawan.post-Pipargawan , Kanpur Nagar U.P. 208021 changed my name from Raghunath Singh to Raghunaath Singh vide affidavit dated 21/04/2025 sworn before Notary Balram Yadav at Kanpur.Henceforth I shall be known as Raghunaath Singh for all Purposes.

NOTICE

It is informed to all that my high school mark sheet of the year-1989 roll no-0446632 has been lost. Rajni Chaudhary D/o Shri Lal Bahadur Chaudhary, R/o KH-66, Sanjay Gandhipuram, Indiranagar, Lucknow, U.P.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, POOJA PANT TYAGI W/O ABHISHEK TYAGI R/O House No-66 Phase No-1 Trimurti Nagar Amausi Lucknow Uttar Pradesh-226008 changed my name to BHAVIKA PANT. PD(1879)A

No goal is unreachable: GUV



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel on Monday said that no goal is too far if one is determined to move forward, regardless of how adverse the circumstances may be.

Addressing a function at the Raj Bhavan campus for students being promoted to Class 9, the Governor said, "No matter how difficult the situation is, if there is a desire to learn and a will to progress, no goal is unreachable."

According to a statement issued by the Raj Bhavan, she said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi is continuously working

towards eradicating poverty and educating children. If society actively participates in this mission, we can achieve this goal even faster."

After distributing school bags and study materials to students, she encouraged them to move ahead in life and never give up. She also praised the teachers and said that they play a crucial role in nation-building, the statement read.

The Governor also appealed to parents to ensure their children regularly attend school, emphasising that facilities like mid-day meals, uniforms, books, and other essentials are being provided free of cost to remove any obstacles from a child's path to education.

18 Rly employees honoured for excellence in safety services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Divisional Railway Manager, Lucknow division Northern Railways, SM Sharma, honoured 18 railway employees by giving them awards for their excellence in safety services at a function organised at the divisional office of Northern Railway, in Lucknow on Monday.

Congratulating award winners for their exemplary working style, the Divisional Railway Manager said this should be a matter of encouragement for all of them and added that he expected other employees to work with similar dedication.

Additional Divisional Railway Manager Neelima Singh, Senior Divisional Safety Officer Samarth Gupta, Senior Divisional Operations Manager Rajneesh Srivastava and other officers and employees of the Safety Department were present in the programme.

Those given award are Ashish Kumar Singh (Pointsman / Rae Bareilly), Rahul Yadav (Pointsman / Bharatkund), Suhil Kumar (Gate Man / Jaunpur Jn), Praveesh Kumar Singh (Station Master / Modh), Jitendra Singh (Station Master / Kashi), Kauleshwar Nath (Gate Man / Vyasagar), Hardev Mandal (Gate Man / Zafarabad), Sandeep Kumar

(Pointsman / Baksa), Manoj Kumar (Train Manager / Sultanpur), Shiv Kumar (Pointsman / Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh), Shyam (Senior Divisional Engineer / Railway Track / Lambhua), Ramesh Kumar Gupta (Loco Pilot Passenger / Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh), Ajay Kumar Pal (Senior Assistant Loco Pilot / Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratapgarh), Arun Kumar (Loco Pilot Mail / Varanasi), FD Mishra (Loco Pilot Goods / Lucknow), Ram Ratan (Assistant Loco Pilot / Lucknow), Hari Gopal Yadav (Loco Pilot Mail / Ayodhya Cantt) and Rahul Tiwari (Senior Assistant Loco Pilot / Ayodhya Cantonment).

NER DRM inspects facilities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Divisional Railway Manager of North Eastern Railway, Lucknow Division, Gaurav Agarwal, on Monday, conducted a window trailing inspection of Lucknow Junction-Mailani Junction railway section.

He was accompanied with senior branch officers. During his visit, he inspected station buildings, level crossings, bridges, signals, station yards and passenger amenities at Bakshi Ka Talab, Sidhau, Sitapur, Lakhimpur, Gola Gokarnath and Mailani stations. "The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the progress of safety, cleanliness and redevelopment works," said PRO Mahesh Gupta.

The PRO further said then DRM also inspected passenger facilities (booking office, circulating area, platform, cleanliness, catering stall and drinking water arrangements) at Bakshi Ka Talab, Sidhau, Sitapur and Lakhimpur stations.

"He reviewed the progress of redevelopment work going on under Amrit Bharat Station Yojana on platform number 1 and 3 at Sitapur station," the spokesman informed the newsmen. Apart from this, the DRM did safety counselling by testing the safety of level crossing in Sitapur-Hargaon section and efficiency of the gateman. He also inspected redevelopment works being done under Amrit Bharat Station Yojana at Lakhimpur and Gola Gokarnath stations. During this, the DRM observed the arrangements of public amenities and women waiting room at the station and gave necessary guidelines to further improve passenger facilities at these stations.

In the last leg of the inspection, the DRM reached Mailani Junction station and inspected the works of Amrit Bharat Station Yojana and also inspected the safety of Railway Diesel Installation, MG Coaching Depot, accident relief vehicle and medical relief vehicle.

LMC removes encroachments

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Lucknow Municipal Corporation's Zone-2, launched an anti-encroachment drive on Monday in the presence of local police to remove huts constructed over drain from Gopinath Rastogi Inter College to Goonga Bahra School in Aishbagh. The operation continued for 3 and a half hours.

Under this drive, 35 illegal huts were removed by the municipal corporation. These huts had been encroaching upon the drain for years, obstructing its cleaning and water flow, which led to unsanitary conditions and water logging in the area. Additionally, the encroachment posed a serious risk to public safety in case of fire or other emergencies.

The operation was led by Zonal Officer Shilpa Kumari and was executed systematical-

ly. Junior Engineer Umesh Pal Singh from the LMC Zone-2 engineering department, and the entire team of ward 296 played a crucial role in the successful execution.

Sub-Inspector Jai Kishan Dwivedi and his police team were also present throughout the action to maintain law and order.

Prior notices were issued to all hut dwellers by the LMC, instructing them to vacate the area within a stipulated time frame.

No untoward incident occurred during the action.

The LMC has stated that such anti-encroachment drives will continue regularly and that no illegal construction on public property will be tolerated. Citizens have been urged to refrain from encroaching upon drains, roads and other public places and to cooperate in keeping the city clean and safe.

3 held for beautician's death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Three days after the death of a beautician in Banthra, the police arrested three accused for molestation and for unintentional murder late on Monday night. A spokesman said the accused were arrested after the investigators found corroborating evidence against them. Those arrested were identified as Vikas, of Banthra and Ajay and Rajnish, both of Unnao. Police said both confessed to their crime. A police investigation revealed that car driver Ajay lost control when the vehicle they were travelling in overturned after it hit against the ramp built outside a house on the

roadside. The deceased got trapped under the car and all the accused fled from the spo. The victim's cousin was also fleeing the scene but the villagers asked her to stop. With the help of the villagers, the car was lifted and the deceased was taken out. The police also reached the spot immediately and she was sent to CHC Sarojininar in an ambulance for treatment where the doctors declared her dead.

The post-mortem examination of the deceased was conducted by a team of four doctors. According to the report, there was no injury caused by any sharp object. The police said death was caused due to spinal cord injury.

IN THE COURT OF MS. NEHA PALIWAL SHARMA, LD. DJ-03, ROOM NO. 337 TIS HAZARI COURTS, DELHI
PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT (U/o 5 Rule 20 CPC)
CSJ/J/6287/2018
 Ramesh Chandra GroverPlaintiff
 Vs
 Glass Outdoor Media Pvt. Ltd. & Ors.Defendant
 To
 1. Glass Outdoor Media Pvt. Ltd Through Its Authorised Signatory Mohd. Zohaib
 2. Khensa Advertising Through Its Authorised Signatory Mohd. Zohaib
 3. Frison Media Works A Division Of Alcovia Metals Ltd. Through Its Business Director Mohd. Zohaib
 All At: 43/118, First Floor, Avadh Plaza, Naval Kishore Road, Hazratganj, Lucknow-226001 Uttar Pradesh
 Whereas you are intentionally evading service of summons, it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on the **20.05.2025 AT 10 AM**, the day fixed for the final disposal, it will be heard and determined ex-parte.
 Given under my hand and the seal of the Court on **02.04.2025**.
DJ-03, (Central)
Seal Tis Hazari Court, Delhi

FORM NO. 5 DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL 600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow-226007 (Area of Jurisdiction- Part of Uttar Pradesh)
Summons for Filing & Appearance by Publication
 Date: 02/04/2025
 [Summons to defendant under section 19(3) of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993]
 Original Application No. 1161 of 2024
ICICI BANK LTD.Applicant
POONAM MISHRA & OTHERSDefendants
 To,
 1. POONAM MISHRA W/o AMARJEET MISHRA (Adult) R/o H. No. 124, Geetapuri, Colony, Kharagpur, Gomti Nagar Extension, Malessemau, Lucknow, U.P.-226010.
 2. AMARJEET MISHRA S/O CHAMPA DEVI (Adult), R/o H. No. 124, Geetapuri, Colony, Kharagpur, Gomti Nagar Extension, Malessemau, Lucknow, U.P.-226010.
 In the above noted application, you are required to file in Paper Book form in two sets along with documents and affidavits (if any), personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel/duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal on 09.07.2025 at 10.30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decide in your absence.
 Registrar Debts Recovery Tribunal, Lucknow

No caste-based postings in UP Police, says DGP

Refutes Akhilesh Yadav's allegation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh's Director General of Police Prashant Kumar, on Monday, termed Samajwadi Party national president Akhilesh Yadav's claims of caste-based postings in the police as completely false.

The DGP has advised people in responsible positions to avoid such misleading comments. He said that such information being spread on social media was baseless and the police of the districts concerned had already released data to refute it.

DGP Prashant Kumar clarified that if any such false information is spread in the future, they will bring out the truth. People in responsible positions should avoid making such comments, he added. He stressed that the deployment of

policemen has been done in all the districts of the state as per the standards set. In response to Akhilesh Yadav's claims, the Agra police commissionerate released data and said that 39 per cent of Other Backward Classes and 18 per cent Scheduled Caste category policemen were deployed there, while the standard for OBC was only 27 per cent.

Mainpuri police also revealed that 31 per cent of the police personnel in their district are from OBC and 19 per cent from SC category. Chitrakoot police said that out of their 12 police stations, three were headed by OBC, two by SC/ST and seven by other categories.

Similarly, Prayagraj police also responded to Akhilesh Yadav's post and called it false. Prayagraj police said that for the appointment of police station in-charge,

qualified employees were selected on the basis of dedication, integrity, social harmony and sensitivity towards public complaints. About 40 per cent of the police station in-charges posted in Prayagraj are from OBC and SC/ST category and appointment to these posts is done through a fair process, it added.

The DGP said that it was the duty of UP Police to refute false information and bring the truth in front of the public. He appealed to everyone to avoid spreading misleading information and not to raise unnecessary questions on the police system.

The controversy started when Akhilesh Yadav alleged caste discrimination in police postings, to which the UP Police responded by exposing his misrepresentation with facts.

AKY slams Dubey remarks on Quraishi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Monday slammed BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for his remarks against former Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi, saying he should refrain from commenting on a former constitutional authority who has served the nation with distinction.

In a post on X, Yadav wrote, "One who has already been discredited by his own party for making a 'personal opinion' that is not worthy of endorsement should maintain silence on a retired constitutional officer. That would be more respectful."

Dubey had said on Sunday, "You (SY Quraishi) were not an election commissioner, you were a Muslim commissioner. The maximum number of Bangladeshi infiltrators were made voters in Santal Pargana in Jharkhand during your tenure."

SP chief targeted the BJP over alleged electoral malpractices and cited multiple instances that, according to him, raise questions on the party's democratic conduct.

"Before making any statements, BJP leaders should revisit their own long list of electoral misconducts," he said, listing out incidents like alleged manipulation in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections. He also cited alleged intimidation of voters in the by poll to Mirapur assembly seat Uttar Pradesh, using armed policemen, an incident that went viral, coercion and forced withdrawal of nominations in Madhya Pradesh to ensure unopposed wins for BJP candidates and cash-for-votes allegations in Maharashtra involving a senior BJP leader.

Yadav also highlighted "unexplained spikes" in voter turnout in Haryana and Maharashtra during the last hours of vot-

ing, use of fake voters in the Milkipur bypoll in UP, where a man claimed on television that he cast six votes in favour of BJP and allegations of bribing a police officer with ₹10 lakh in Maharashtra to ignore EVM tampering.

"BJP's moral compass was never intact, and never will be. Yet, reminders are necessary," Yadav said adding those sidelined in the BJP should not attempt a comeback into the limelight with inflammatory remarks. "BJP leaders are not loyal even to their own. Now they are targeting each other on social media. The BJP's internal factionalism is at its peak. The corruption syndicate within the party is exposing each other's secrets. The mask has fallen, and the people will bring down their arrogance," Yadav said. "History is witness — the seeds of downfall lie within the unchecked growth of negative regimes," he added.

8-yr-old falls into STP tank in park, dies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

In an unfortunate incident, an eight-year-old child died after falling into a sewage treatment plant (STP) tank in a park in the Shakarpur ward on Monday evening. The tragic incident occurred in the Gudamba police station.

The incident took place on Monday evening as the child was playing near a corner of the park with his brother. The family originally belonged to Bihar and his parents work as daily-wage labourers. Just a day earlier, the family had taken shelter in the park following a dispute with their landlord. On Sunday night, due to an argument with the

landlord, the family decided to leave their rented accommodation and spend the night in the park. On Monday morning, the parents left for work, leaving their two children in the park.

While playing, one of the child climbed the 4-feet-high iron railing surrounding the STP and accidentally fell into it.

As soon as people nearby noticed the incident, they informed the police, municipal authorities and the fire department. The fire brigade team reached the site promptly, pulled the child out of the tank, and rushed him to the nearby Community Health Center (CHC).

Given his critical condition, he was

referred to King George's Medical University (KGMU), where doctors declared him dead.

Following the incident, the municipal corporation reached out to the bereaved family and assured financial assistance under the provisions of disaster relief.

Municipal Commissioner Inderjit Singh said that it was an unfortunate loss of life. "The family, being homeless, will be provided shelter at the municipal night shelter. All possible help will be given to the affected family. Additionally, an inquiry committee will be formed to investigate the cause of the incident thoroughly to ensure that such accidents do not recur in the future. The matter will be taken up with all seriousness," he said.

Tourist centres to come up at Ayodhya gates

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Aiming to position Uttar Pradesh as a leading state, the Yogi government is upgrading religious tourism hubs with world-class facilities.

In line with this vision, Ayodhya — revered as Lord Ram's capital and one of Sanatan Dharma's seven sacred cities — will soon feature enhanced amenities, with six major entry gates being developed into full-fledged tourist service centers.

Gate complexes will be developed at Shri Ram, Lakshman, Bharat, Hanuman, Garuda, and Jatayu gates. Tourist facilitation centres will be constructed near each of these gates. Alongside this, budget hotels, guest houses, tourist centers, and tourism offices will also be developed.

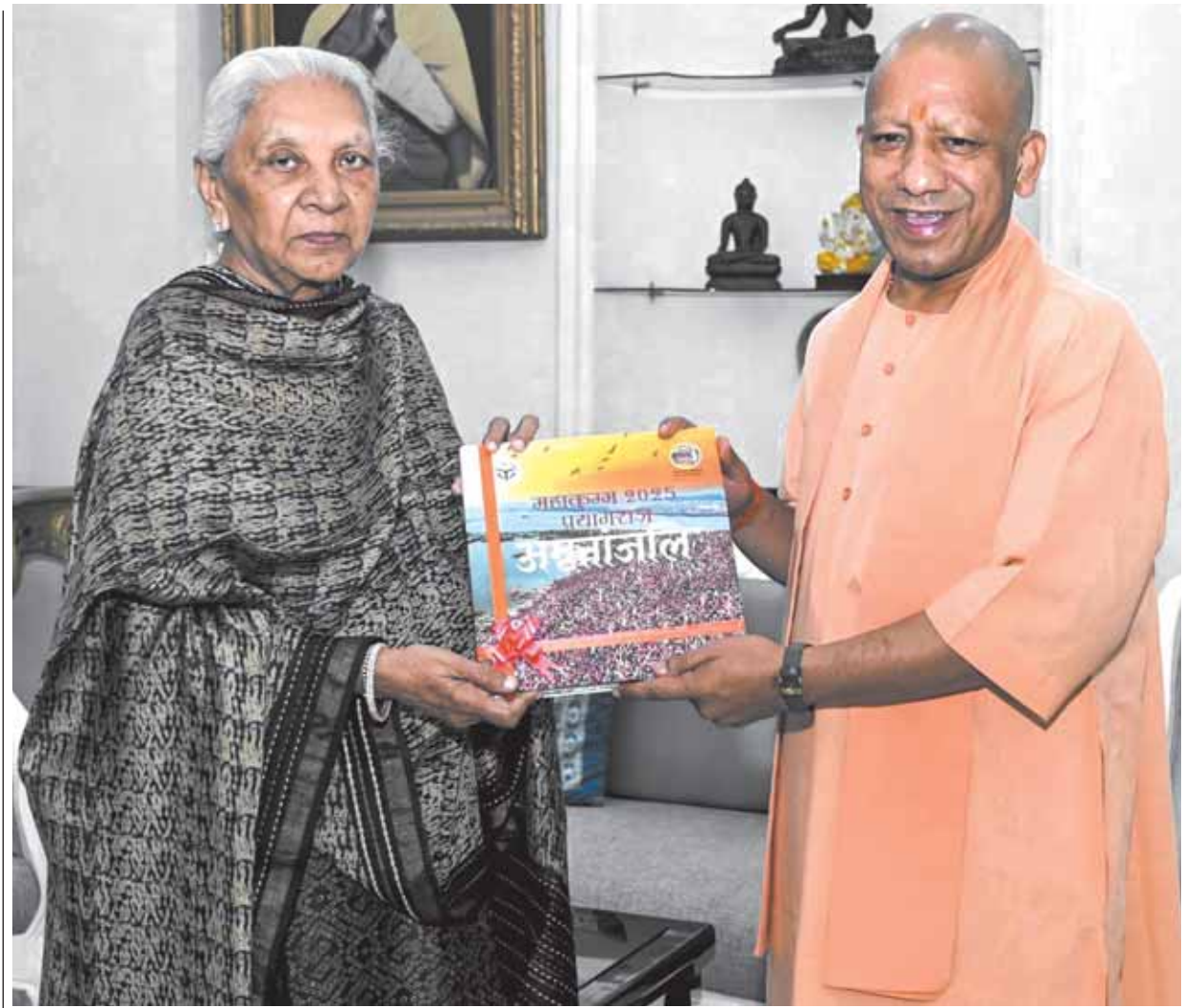
Moreover, the complexes will include art and craft galleries, food courts, cafeterias,

restaurants, amphitheatres, multi-level parking facilities, green areas, and EV charging stations — offering world-class facilities to visitors. The Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department has finalised the blueprint and work on the outlined construction and development projects will be carried out swiftly.

Jatayu Gate to feature the largest Tourist Facilitation Centre: According to the blueprint prepared by the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department, among the six tourist facilitation centers (TFCs) planned in Ayodhya, the one at Jatayu Gate will be the largest. Located on Ambedkar Nagar Road, the tourist center at Jatayu Gate will cover an area of 5.76 hectares. Meanwhile, the centre at Shri Ram Gate on Lucknow Road will span 4.91 hectares. The centre at Lakshman Gate on Gonda Road will cover 4.5 hectares; Bharat Gate on

Sultanpur Road, 2.04 hectares; Hanuman Gate on Gorakhpur Road, 3.59 hectares; and Garuda Gate on Rae Bareilly Road, 4.98 hectares. Wide range of amenities including budget hotels to benefit tourists: As per the plan, the construction of tourist facilitation centers near the gate complexes will provide world-class amenities to those visiting Ayodhya.

These centres will offer 3-star, 2-star, and budget hotels, guest houses, tourist centers, tourism offices, art and craft galleries, food courts, cafeterias, restaurants, amphitheatres, multi-level parking, green zones, and EV charging stations. In addition to this, the development will include toilet blocks, WSTPs and STPs, petrol and CNG pumps, MLCs (multi-level car parks), boundary walls, open pavilions, and modern food courts — ensuring a comprehensive and comfortable experience for tourists.



Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel being presented a book titled Mahakumbh-2025 Prayagraj Amritanjali by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a meeting at Raj Bhavan in Lucknow

FSDA seizes cottage cheese worth ₹10L

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Food Safety and Drug Administration (FSDA) officials, on Monday, seized cottage cheese (paneer) worth ₹10.5 lakh coming from the western side on UP.

Assistant Food Commissioner Vijay Pratap Singh said that on the basis of information received on Sunday night that the paneer could be sub-standard and adulterated, a team of food safety officers conducted a thorough search of the vehicles coming from Agra at the toll plaza located at the milestone 10 km of Agra- Lucknow Expressway.

"During the searches, three vehicles (UP 85 ET 8223, UP 85 ET 4378 and UP 81 ET 2903) were found carrying 2,000 kg, 1,800 kg and 1,010 kg of paneer

respectively," he said.

The official said that paneer was destroyed after its samples sent for testing confirmed that it was substandard and not fit for human consumption.

The total value of the seized paneer is ₹10,50,000.

Food safety officers Ratnakar Pandey, Dr Rakesh Kumar Singh, Satyavir Singh, Devsh Singh and Avnish Kumar Singh were involved in the above action.

Incidentally this is the second incident of adulterated paneer being brought to Lucknow.

On April 19, the FSDA had collected two samples of paneer weighing 850 kg that was being brought for sale from Shri Banke Bihari Dairy, Mathura to Lucknow in a vehicle (UP 32 XN 8243)

at Chauhan market, on doubts about its quality. The samples were sent to the lab at Aliganj here and the results declared the paneer as substandard and unsafe. In view of public interest and public health, the 850 kg of seized paneer was destroyed. An official from the FSDA said that because of the wedding season, the demand for cottage cheese had increased. He said that substandard paneer had a lesser amount of fat.

"If cream is taken out from the milk and then it is used to make paneer, the product will be hard in texture. If paneer is made from skimmed milk then also it will be hard in texture," he said.

He said that paneer was adulterated when vegetable fat was used to substitute animal fat or substandard milk powder was mixed during the preparation.

One more arrested for cheating exam aspirants

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

A serving assistant professor of a college in Lucknow was arrested on Monday for cheating aspirants of the assistant professor exam conducted by Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission.

The accused, identified as Vipin Kumar Yadav of Jaunpur and presently living in Gomti Enclave at Avadh Vihar Yojana here, faked his identity as a member of Uttar Pradesh Education Commission. He was arrested by the Special Task Force from Chinhaat on Monday afternoon.

Earlier, on Sunday, the STF had arrested three miscreants, including a serving assistant professor of a college in Gonda, on charges of selling fake examination papers of assistant professor exam to examinees.

A police spokesman said ₹1 lakh in cash, 41 admit cards, a fake Aadhaar card and two mobile phones were recovered from Vipin.

In his confession before the STF sleuths, Vipin Kumar Yadav disclosed that he was appointed as

A police spokesman said ₹1 lakh in cash, 41 admit cards, a fake Aadhaar card and two mobile phones were recovered from Vipin.

assistant professor in 2022 and was currently posted in a college in Lucknow. He revealed that he had taken money and admit cards from the aspirants by promising to get them selected in the assistant professor examination held April 16 and April 17.

The accused further disclosed that he had made a fake Aadhaar card in the name of an official of Uttar Pradesh Education Commission and used to tell people that he was serving in the Education Commission by showing the card bearing the name of the said official.

He said people easily believed him due to this. "Investigation is being done in the case that police are finding out the names of his other associates involved in the crime," the spokesman said.

FORM No. 5
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
600/1 University Road Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow - 226007
(Area of Jurisdiction-Part of Uttar Pradesh)
Summons for filing Reply & Appearance by Publication
O.A. No. 1202 of 2024 Date: 04.04.2025
(Summons to Defendant Under Section 19(3), of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules, 1993)
Original Application No. 1202 of 2024

Indian Bank	VersusApplicant Bank
M/s Abhishek Traders & Ors.	Defendants

1. Mr. Abhishek Traders
through its Proprietor Shri Abhishek Gupta, Situated at 416/82, Allibagh, Dilaram Baradari, Choupatiyar, Lucknow 226003
Second Address: Shop No. 16, Laxmi Bazar, Naka Hindola, Charbagh, Lucknow 226004

2. Shri Abhishek Gupta
Proprietor of M/s Abhishek Traders Son of Shri Ram Asrey Prasad Gupta, R/o 416/76, Dilaram Baradari, Choupatiyar, Lucknow 226003

3. Smt. Rambha Gupta,
Wife of Late Shri Gauri Shanker Gupta, R/o 416/76, Dilaram Baradari, Choupatiyar, Lucknow 226003.

.....Defendants

In the above noted Application, you are required to file reply in Paper Book form in Two sets alongwith documents and affidavits (if any), personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the Applicant or his counsel/duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal on **15.07.2025 at 10.30 A.M.** failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.

Registrar
Debts Recovery Tribunal, Lucknow

4 lion cubs born at Etawah Safari Park

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Lioness Rupa has given birth to 4 cubs for the third time in Etawah Safari Park on Monday. "Lioness Rupa and the four newborn cubs are healthy and she is taking complete care of the cubs," said a forest official.

In 2023, lioness Rupa gave birth to a cub, who was hand fed by the safari keeper is currently 1.5 years old. "Twenty cubs have been born in the safari park so far, including the four newborn cubs. At present, the number of lions in Etawah Safari Park has increased to 22," said the official.

The health and behaviour of lioness Rupa and the newborn cubs are being constantly monitored through CCTV cameras by Dr RK Singh of Animal Husbandry Department, Uttar Pradesh, Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer, Wildlife Veterinarian of Safari Park, Dr Robin Singh Yadav and Dr Shailendra Singh.

YEIDA launches new residential scheme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Yogi Adityanath government has taken a significant step forward in its commitment to developing world-class residential and non-residential infrastructure along the Yamuna Expressway.

The Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) has introduced a new residential scheme near the expressway. As part of this scheme, 276 plots measuring 200 square metres each will be allocated in Sector 18 (Pocket 9B). Special preference has been given to two reserved categories. Notably, 17.5 per cent of the plots (48 plots) have been reserved for farmers whose land was acquired to construct YEIDA and Jewar airport. Additionally, 5 per cent of the plots (14 plots) are earmarked for applicants under the Functional Industrial Unit category. The remaining 77.5 per cent (214 plots) are available for the general public. The application process for this

scheme began on Monday and will continue until May 21. Interested applicants can submit their applications through the official website of YEIDA.

Under this scheme, the registration fee has been set at ₹3.50 lakh for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and ₹7 lakh for general category applicants. The cost of each plot is fixed at ₹35,000 per square metre.

It is worth mentioning that YEIDA received formal approval from the Uttar Pradesh Real Estate Regulatory Authority (UP RERA) to launch this scheme just a few days ago. Applicants will be selected for allotment through a draw on September 11. All plots will be leased for 90 years.

Applicants are advised to visit the official YEIDA website for complete details regarding registration and application procedures. ICICI Bank and the State Bank of India have been designated as the scheme's official banking partners.

'River Yoga' campaign inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

In a unique initiative that bridges environmental responsibility with holistic well-being, the 'River Yoga' campaign was inaugurated at Kudiya Ghat on Monday. The campaign will run till June 21 culminating on International Yoga Day and aims to foster a deeper connection between individuals and Gomti river.

Organised by the 137 Composite Ecological Task Force Battalion (Territorial Army) 39 Gorkha Rifles, in collaboration with Nagar Nigam Lucknow, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (BBAU) and the State Mission for Clean Ganga (SMCG-UP), the campaign is set to cover all major ghats of the Gomti river in the city.

Department of Environmental Science, BBAU, Prof Venkatesh Dutta, remarked, "The 'River Yoga' campaign presents a rare opportunity where spiritual, social and ecological dimensions are aligned. It's a movement that connects people back to the river, not only physically but emotionally and ethically."

इंडियन बैंक
(भारत सरकार का उपक्रम)
इलाहाबाद

Indian Bank
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)
ALLAHABAD

POSSESSION NOTICE (for Immovable Property)
[Under Rule-8 (1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002]

Whereas, the undersigned being the authorised officer of the Indian Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002, (Act 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3, 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice as detailed here in below calling upon the borrower to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrowers/Guarantors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/ Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him / her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 and 9 of the said Rules.

The Borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charges of the Indian Bank.

The Borrower's / Guarantor's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

This Possession Notice is being served to the Borrower (s), Guarantor (s) & Mortgage (s) to deposit the said dues. Details as under:

S. N.	Name & Address of the Borrower (s)/Guarantor (s)/ Proprietor / Mortgagees	Description of the Immovable Property	Dt. of Demand Notice Dt. of Possession Outstanding Amount
Branch : Jankipuram Branch (L559/ 5993)			
1.	Mr. Shahabuddin s/o Mohamad Siddique (Borrower and Mortgagee), 264/14, Billochpura, Ward Kundri Rakabganj, Near Sunni Inter College, Lucknow	All part and parcel of the property consisting of Land and building at house at 264/14, Billochpura Ward Kundri, Rakabganj, Near Sunni Inter college, Lucknow in the name of Sri. Shahabuddin S/o Shri Mohammad Siddique (Guarantor and Mortgagee)	31.01.2025 19.04.2025 Rs. 5,54,594.71 and interest thereon.
2.	Mrs. Uzma W/o Shahabuddin (Co-Borrower), 264/14, Billochpura, Ward Kundri Rakabganj, Near Sunni Inter College, Lucknow	Sale deed Registered in Book No. 1, Khand No.: 4654 on Pages No. 295/326 at serial no. 4360, dated 12/07/2004 with SR-IV, Lucknow.	
3.	Mr. Ilham Hussain alias Ikham Hussain S/o Amitaj Hussain alias Mirza Imtiyaz Hussain (Guarantor), R/o 446/126, Musahib Ganj, Lucknow	Boundaries: East: Party House and Party 10 feet Wide Road, West: House Zina-ul and then almost 75 meter away is Sunni Inter College, North: Main Billochpura market's metalised road at entrance, South: House Idris	
4.	Mr. Aleemuddin S/o Kamaluddin (Guarantor), R/o 11, Villachupura, Lucknow 264 Billochpura Lucknow		

Date : 22.04.2025 Place: Lucknow Authorised Officer Indian Bank

Preparations on for PM's Knp visit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

In view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed visit to Kanpur on April 24 the Special Protection Group (SPG) has already arrived here and has begun inspecting the event venues.

The stage for the public rally is being constructed under the supervision of the SPG and strict instructions have been issued by the security officials.

Earlier on Sunday Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inspected the rally venue. The prime minister will land at the CSA helipad and address the public at the rally and inaugurate as well as lay foundation stones for several development projects. Modi will inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of 11 projects worth



The stage is being prepared at the CSA ground for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's public meeting.

Rs.20,656 crore at the rally venue. Of these, 10 projects worth ₹20,515 crore will be inaugurated and the foundation stone of one project worth ₹140 crore will be laid.

The three major projects include: An underground metro project with a budget of ₹2,120 crore, the Panki Power House project worth ₹8,305 crore and the Neyveli Power Plant project worth ₹9,337 crore. A parking facility for around 500 vehicles is being constructed near the rally site. For the event, five helipads are being constructed within the CSA University campus — three in front of Vice-Chancellor's office and two in the playground near the rally site. Additionally, parking is being arranged for 1,000 cars and 500 buses within the CSA campus. More parking spaces are also being set up at HBTU and the Medical College campus.

Patel: Oppn's agenda is to confuse people

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Regional president Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Dilip Patel said the party will expose the propaganda of the opposition through contact and dialogue as Waqf Amendment Act-2025 will prove to be helpful in strengthening the minority weaker sections and women economically and socially. After returning from the workshop organised regarding the Waqf Amendment Act at the BJP state headquarters in Lucknow recently, Patel said party plans to take the Waqf Amendment Act among the public through contact and dialogue and for this it has decided the programmes in a phased manner.

He said the agenda of the opposition is to confuse people with negative propaganda. Regional BJP chief further said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve is 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Vishwas'. "We have to reach out to the public with the answer to every negative propaganda of the opposition. Through public awareness, contact and communication will be established between different groups regarding the works to be done in the interest of the minority community

through the Waqf Amendment Act-2025", he said.

He said that the party has decided the phased manner under which training will be given by organising workshops at the regional level on April 21 and 22 and at district centres on April 23 and 24.

Patel said under the 'Waqf Sudhar Jan Jagran Abhiyan', a town hall programme will be organised at the state level on April 25 in which the need for the Waqf Amendment Act 2025 will be discussed among Muslim scholars, Maulanas etc. He said town hall programmes will also be organised at the city and district level on April 28 and 29. Patel said under the campaign, programmes of civil dialogue will be organised on May 2 and 3.

He added that women's contact and conference programmes will be organised on April 30 and May 1. The Mahila Morcha will organise conferences and communicate at the city and district level. After the 'Mann Ki Baat' programme on April 27, contact is also to be made among the minority community. The Yuva Morcha will reach out to the minority community with the Waqf Amendment Act-2025 by organising public dialogue programmes on May 4 and 5.

'One Nation One Election need of the hour for better governance'



A seminar on 'One Nation, One election' being organised at CSJMU on Monday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

A seminar on the topic 'One Nation, One Election' was organised at the Veerangana Rani Lakshmbai Auditorium of Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU) on Monday under the chairmanship of Vice-Chancellor Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak. The programme was inaugurated with the ceremonial lighting of lamp by the chief guest National General Secretary, Bharatiya Janata Party, Sunil Bansal, along with State President, BJP Uttar Pradesh, Bhupendra Singh, Uttar Pradesh Higher Education Minister, Yogendra Upadhyay and MLC Arun Pathak.

Sunil Bansal said due to frequent elections, developmental activities in the country are often hindered. He said in the past 30 years, not a single year has passed without an election. On average, about one year of a five-year government term is lost due to the model code of conduct. He emphasised that One Nation, One Election

is not a new concept — it was followed in the early years post-independence but was disrupted due to the premature dissolution of some state assemblies.

He highlighted the financial burden of repeated elections, stating that around ₹5-7 lakh crore are spent on elections every five years. This amount could be redirected to critical sectors like employment generation and technology. He said frequent elections keep governments in a constant campaign mode and divert focus from good governance.

Uttar Pradesh Higher Education Minister Yogendra Upadhyay praised the university's rapid progress. He also commended Sunil Bansal for his skill in identifying and mentoring dedicated workers.

State BJP president Bhupendra Singh said frequent elections occupy the attention of representatives, government and administration alike. With the federal structure of India, the entire government machinery remains tied up in electoral processes. He emphasised that One Nation,

One Election is the need of the hour to ensure efficient use of resources and better governance. Prof Pathak urged the youth to raise awareness about One Nation, One Election through social media and AI tools. He noted that funds saved from synchronised elections could be invested in job creation and advanced technology sectors like semiconductor manufacturing. An AI-generated video of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee addressing the topic was showcased. Created by IIT Kanpur researcher Vinayak Pathak, an alumnus of Duke University (USA), the video captivated the audience and was met with resounding applause. In the video, Atalji emphasised that frequent elections hinder development and disrupt national progress. He said One Nation, One Election will reflect the unity of the nation. The event was attended by local MLAs, MPs, public representatives and a large number of students.

AWARD CEREMONY

After the three-day filmmaking workshop, a grand screening and award ceremony was organised at the Taty Top Senate Hall, CSJM University. In a challenge that tested the limits of imagination and time, students crafted short films within 24 hours, culminating in an emotional and energetic closing event. The short film "Dear Future AI" emerged as the winner of the challenge, receiving the first prize of ₹5000 and certificates for its team members.

Diamond Jubilee celebrations inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

The Department of Paediatrics, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU), marked a historic milestone with the grand inauguration of its Diamond Jubilee celebrations here on Monday. The event was started with a lamp lighting ceremony by the Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Prof Shampa Anupurba, Dean Research, Prof Gopal Nath, Medical Superintendent of Sir Sunderlal Hospital, Prof Kailash Kumar and HoD (Paediatrics) Prof Ankur Singh. Besides, floral tributes were offered to bust of Mahamana and the occasion was graced by dignitaries, faculty, alumni and students, who gathered to commemorate 60 years of dedicated service of the department to child health and academic excellence.

A special highlight of the occasion was the felicitation of distinguished former teachers and non-teaching staff, alumni of the department. A commemorative souvenir was also released, capturing the department's journey, achievements and cherished memories over the past six decades. Dr Priyanka Agarwal anchored/hosted the event. Dr Anu Sharma ended the event with a formal vote of thanks. "As we celebrate this significant milestone, the department looks forward to further advancements, continued collaboration, and a renewed commitment to paediatric care, research, and education excellence", said head, Prof Ankur Singh.

Theft at foam trader's house

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

The locked house of a foam trader was burgled in Chandra Vihar Society, Nawabganj. The miscreants broke into the house and stole cash and valuables worth around Rs.50 lakh from there. The incident came to light when his grandson returned from Delhi on Monday morning. On being informed the Nawabganj police rushed to the spot and carried out investigation. The grandson suspects the involvement of car driver in the incident. ACP Colonelganj said a probe was on in the matter and claimed that the thieves will be arrested soon. Sriram Agarwal of Chandra Vihar, Nawabganj, is a foam trader in Anwarganj. His grandson, Prakhar Agarwal, looks after the shop.

According to Prakhar, his grandfather Sriram Agarwal's bypass surgery was held in Delhi on April 14 and all family members were in Delhi in that connection. On April 18, when his sister had visited the house to water the pots, there was no theft. He said when he reached house from Delhi on Monday morning after overnight bus journey for taking some clothes and other essential items he came to know about the incident. He said cash and jewellery of

mother and grandmother worth around ₹50 lakh were stolen. ACP Colonelganj TB Singh said CCTV cameras were being examined. The matter was being investigated and separate teams had been deputed for working out the case, he said.

TABLE TENNIS TOURNAMENT

A three-day district-level STAG Global Kanpur District Table Tennis Tournament under the aegis of the Kanpur Table Tennis Association (KTTA) will be organised from April 22 to 24 at the Multipurpose Hall, Green Park Stadium. Around 200 players are expected to participate and showcase their skills in the tournament. Giving details KTTA secretary Sanjay Tandon said the tournament will be formally inaugurated at 11:30 am on April 22 by the Member of Parliament Ramesh Awasthi.

On the occasion, President of Uttar Pradesh Table Tennis Association, Sanjeev Pathak, along with KTTA officials and sports enthusiasts, will also be present. The opening ceremony will also feature felicitation of senior table tennis players from the city in recognition of their contribution to the sport.

DRM conducts inspection



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

Divisional Railway Manager (DRM), Prayagraj Division, Rajneesh Aggarwal, conducted a comprehensive inspection of the Tundla-Farrukhabad and Mainpuri-Etawah sections on Monday. Key officials, including Deputy Chief Traffic Manager/Tundla, Amit Sudarshan and Senior Divisional Engineer, Ankit, were present during the inspection.

Aggarwal reviewed the ongoing construction works at Firozabad, Shikohabad, Mainpuri and Etawah stations, which are being developed under the Amrit Station Yojana. He

emphasised the importance of timely completion and maintaining high-quality standards. Notably, 15 stations in the Prayagraj Division are being modernised under this initiative.

The divisional railway manager also inspected the Running Rooms at Mainpuri, Farrukhabad and Etawah, assessing their functionality and amenities.

At Mainpuri station, Aggarwal interacted with employees, taking stock of the station's operations and enquiring about their well-being. Impressed with the exemplary management of Mainpuri station,

Aggarwal announced a reward of ₹5,000 for Station Superintendent, HS Meena. PRO Amit Singh of Prayagraj division said this inspection underscores the railway administration's commitment to enhancing infrastructure and services, ensuring a better travel experience for passengers.

CRICKET CHAMPIONSHIP

The 34th All India Inter-Railway Women's Cricket Championship concluded in thrilling manner at Railgaon Stadium, Prayagraj. In the final match the North Central Railway defeated Northern Railway by 71 runs and became the champion.

PLACEMENT DRIVE

The Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Science (SHUATS), Prayagraj, hosted a successful placement drive, organised by two nationalised companies.

Eight students secured positions in the drive, showcasing the university's commitment to industry-academia collaboration.

Director, Career Counselling and Placement, Prof Ashok Tripathi, attributed the success to the university's strong industry connections. "We are in talks with several nationalised companies, and more campus interviews are expected soon," he added. Vice-Chancellor Prof Rajendra B Lal, congratulated the selected students and wished them a bright future.

Two honoured for outstanding contribution



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Public Relations Officer (PRO) of Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) Rajesh Kumar and Assistant Director (Information and Public Relations Department) Surendranath Pal were honoured for their outstanding contribution in the field of public relations on the National Public Relations Day at a programme organised under the auspices of Public Relations Society of India (PRSI), Varanasi Chapter, at Dharendra Mahila PG College, Sundarpur, here on Monday. The programme began with lighting of lamps.

On the occasion a seminar on the topic 'Role of Public Relations in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)' was also organ-

ised. Chief guest was national vice-president of PRSI Narendra Mehta who shared his insightful comments on the use of AI in organisations and ethical challenges. Expert lectures were delivered on the topic of inclusive and effective use of AI by former Head of Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) Prof Anil Dave, APRO BHU Dr Chandrashekhar and COO, Sunbeam Group of Educational Institutions Sandeep Mukherjee.

Earlier, the guests were welcomed by secretary of PRSI Varanasi Pradeep Kumar Upadhyay. The programme was coordinated by Dr Mamta Pandey, Head of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of the college and joint secretary, PRSI

Varanasi Harsh Agarwal. On the occasion, Dr Bala Lakshendra of BHU, Manohar Lal, Gyanendra Upadhyay and Dr Anshuman Rana, along with all others, presented their views.

EMPHASIS ON MORE INCLUSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF DISABILITY

A thought-provoking session titled 'Disability: Reframing Limitations into Opportunities' was organised under the aegis of the Dean of Students Wellbeing Services Cell (SWSC), in collaboration with the Student Leadership and Lifeskills Development Initiative. The event aimed to challenge stereotypes and encourage a more inclusive understanding of disability by focusing on abilities and potential rather than limitations.

The event was graced by esteemed guest speakers, Dr Naval Pant, founder of PYS-SUM (Psychological Support and Understanding for Mental Health) and Dr Rani Uniyal from the Department of English, University of Lucknow.

The session commenced with a warm welcome address by Dr Rahul Chaturvedi, followed by an introduction of the guests by Dr Madhvi Lata. The successful organisation of the event were made possible through the dedicated efforts of Dr Nishat Afroz, Associate Dean of Students (Student Development), Dr Banibrata Mahanta, Coordinator, Student Leadership and Lifeskills, Dr Anita Singh, Head of the Department of English, and Shweta Singh, a counsellor. The audience comprised about 60 people. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks being proposed by Dr Madhavi Lata.

Kathak dancer Nayanika Ghosh captivates audience

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Eminent kathak dancer from Delhi Nayanika Ghosh mesmerised the audience on the fifth day of internationally famous six-day Sankat Mochan Sangeet Samaroh at Sankat Mochan Temple here on Sunday night. She started her presentation with Sita-Hanuman dialogue. After the traditional dance style of Kathak, she danced on a Thumri. Her dance was quite impressive. She was accompanied by Ustad Akran Khan on tabla, Mahavir Gangani on pakhawaj, Samiullah Khan on pakhawaj, Rais Khan on sitar and Mayukh Bhattacharya on 'Bol Padhant' (vocal support).

The day's programme began with singing by Kishi Mishra from Prayagraj. He presented singing two compositions in



Raga Shuddh Kalyan in Ektaal and Teentaal respectively. He was accompanied by Anshul Pratap Singh on tabla, Mohit Sahni on samvadhini and Vinayak Sahay on sarangi. He also sang a bhajan in the end. Then after Nayanika Ghosh's dance, Abhishek Lahiri from Kolkata, mesmerised the audience by playing sarod. He played Alaap in Raag Jhinjhoti, Jod, Jhala and then ended the performance by playing Vilambit Madhyalaya, Drut in Teen Taal. After this, the elegance of the Raag was heard. Famous tabla player Pt Sanju Sahay accompanied him as per his fame.

The fourth performance of the day was of Arman Khan, son of Ustad Rashid Khan. After singing Gorakh Kalyan, Sohini in Teentaal and Rupak respectively, he concluded the recital

by singing Rangdari Gulabi Dadra. Surjit Singh played the tabla while Lalit Sisodia supported him on samvadhini and Vinayak Sahay on sarangi.

Then famous santoor player Pt Tarun Bhattacharya from Kolkata presented the rendition of Raga Charukeshi, after Alaap, Jod Jhala. He also played Gatkari in Jhaptal and Teentaal and ended the performance with a tune. His playing was shruti-filled. Mayukh Bhowmik accompanied him on the tabla in a befitting manner.

In the sixth performance, famous singer Pt Jaytirth Methandi from Hubli enthralled the audience with his performance. After singing two compositions in Raga Lalit in Ek Taal and Teen Taal respectively, he ended his singing

with Tumri 'Piya Milan Ki Aas in Jogiya'. Pt Ramkumar Mishra on tabla and Dr Vinay Mishra on samvadhini accompanied him.

Then renowned sitar player Sahana Banerjee from Pune infused a different energy among the audience. After Alaap, Jod, Jhala in Raga Bhatiyar, she ended her performance by singing Gatkari in Teen Taal.

The sweetness of Raga Bhatiyar touched the heart. Ustaq Akram Khan on accompanied on the tabla and made the performance memorable.

In the last presentation in the wee hours on Monday, Panchvi Nisha presented solo tabla performance. The way he highlighted all the qualities of Banaras Baaj while playing in Teen Taal, gave a new height to Banaras Gharana.

Youth meets tragic end

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

A 20-year-old youth lost his life in a tragic accident while returning from a wedding procession in Karchana police station area late on Sunday night.

According to a report, Shubham Singh, a resident of Chandpur village, was riding a bike with two friends when they suddenly fell down from the Bhirpur railway over bridge.

Shubham succumbed to his injuries on the spot, while his two companions were seriously injured. Shubham used to drive a vehicle to support his family. His family members are inconsolable.

Policies today will shape India's next 1,000 years: PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Asserting that India's bureaucracy and policymaking cannot operate on outdated frameworks, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the policies that his government is working on are going to shape the future of the next 1,000 years and asked everyone to work tirelessly towards this shared vision.

Reflecting on the past role of bureaucracy as a regulator that controlled the pace of industrialisation and entrepreneurship, he emphasised that the nation has moved beyond this mindset and is now fostering an environment that promotes enterprise among citizens and helps them overcome barriers.

"Civil services must transform into an enabler, expanding its role from merely being the keeper of rule books to becoming a facilitator of growth," Modi said, addressing the Civil Services Day function at Vigyan Bhawan here.

During his nearly 40-minute pep talk to the bureaucrats, he highlighted the aspirations of India's society, youth, farmers and women, stating that their dreams have reached unprecedented heights and stressed the need for extraordinary speed to fulfil these extraordinary aspirations.

"The policies we are working on today, the decisions we are making, are going to

shape the future of the next thousand years", Modi said.

Underscoring the importance of collective effort and determination in achieving the goal of a developed India, the prime minister urged everyone to work tirelessly, every day and every moment, towards this shared vision.

Mentioning the rapid changes occurring globally, noting how even within families, interactions with younger generations can make one feel outdated due to the fast pace of change, Modi highlighted the swift evolution of gadgets every two to three years and how children are growing up amidst these transformations.

"India's bureaucracy, work processes, and policymaking cannot operate on outdated frameworks," he said, during the function being attended by a large number of civil services officers.

Modi said the aspirations of India's society, youth, farmers and women, and their dreams have reached unprecedented heights and stressed the need for extraordinary speed to fulfil these extraordinary aspirations.

The prime minister outlined India's ambitious goals for the coming years, including energy security, clean energy, advancements in sports, and achievements in space exploration, emphasising the importance of raising India's flag high



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the 17th Civil Services Day programme in New Delhi

in every sector. Underscoring the immense responsibility on civil servants to ensure that India becomes the world's third-largest economy at the earliest, he urged them to prevent any delays in achieving this critical objective.

Modi said this year's theme of Civil Services Day — Holistic Development of India — is a commitment and a promise

to the people of the nation.

"Holistic development of India means ensuring that no village, no family, and no citizen is left behind," the prime minister said, adding that true progress is not about small changes but about achieving a full-scale impact. He said the vision of holistic development, which includes clean water for every household, quality educa-

tion for every child, financial access for every entrepreneur, and the benefits of the digital economy for every village.

Modi said that quality in governance is not determined by the mere launch of schemes but by how deeply these schemes reach the people and their real impact.

Highlighting that over the past 10 years, India has progressed from incremen-

tal change to impactful transformation, the prime minister emphasised that the country's governance model is now focused on next-generation reforms, leveraging technology and innovative practices to bridge the gap between the government and citizens. "India is now recognised not merely for its growth but for setting new benchmarks in governance, transparency, and innovation," he said.

Modi cited India's G20 Presidency as a significant example of these advancements, noting that, for the first time in G20's history, over 200 meetings were held across more than 60 cities, creating a broad and inclusive footprint.

He underscored how the approach of public participation transformed the G20 into a people's movement. "The world has acknowledged India's leadership; India is not just participating, it is leading," the prime minister said. Modi highlighted the growing discussions around government efficiency and said that India is 10-11 years ahead of other nations in this regard.

Mentioning efforts made over the past 11 years to eliminate delays, introduce new processes, and reduce turnaround time through technology, he said that over 40,000 compliances have been removed, and more than 3,400 legal provisions have been decriminalised to promote ease of business.

BJP slams Rahul Gandhi, calls him traitor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Monday called Congress leader Rahul Gandhi a "traitor" for his remarks against the Election Commission and accused him of venting his frustration over ED action in the National Herald case on the poll body.

The former Congress chief, who is on a visit to the US, raised questions on the BJP-led coalition's victory in the Maharashtra polls and alleged the Election Commission (EC) was compromised.

Flaying Rahul Gandhi for his remarks, BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said, "You are venting the ire over the Enforcement Directorate (action in the National Herald case) on the Election Commission. Nothing will happen by doing so."

"The ED will not spare you because agencies work on the basis of facts and the National Herald matter is an open-and-shut case. You will not be spared. You and your mother will be caught with the proceeds of crime and sent to jail," he said at a press conference at the BJP headquarters.

Both Rahul Gandhi and his mother Sonia Gandhi will go behind bars in connection with the case, he asserted.

"You are a traitor, not just because you insult Indian institutions and Indian democracy on foreign soil but also because

you and your mother embezzled crores of rupees of the country in the National Herald case. You and your mother will not be able to get away with this," Patra said.

The BJP spokesperson also lashed out at the Congress over its decision to hold press conferences across the country on the National Herald case, accusing it of attempting to create an "atmosphere of unrest" to save Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

Though Rahul Gandhi is the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, he is actually a 'leader with no position' in his own party and in the eyes of the country's people

— SAMBIT PATRA, BJP NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) recently filed a chargesheet against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi and others before a special court in New Delhi in the National Herald case, accusing them of allegedly laundering Rs 988 crore.

Patra alleged that money was generated through "bogus donations, bogus advertisement and bogus rent" in the case.

"The ED says the proceeds of crime in the case was worth Rs 988 crore," he said and added, "They are not going to be

excused, the long arm of the law will catch them."

The BJP spokesperson also slammed Rahul Gandhi for raising questions on the conduct of the assembly polls in Maharashtra and asked him if the Congress and its ally, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), had any agreement with the EC that enabled the coalition to win last year's assembly polls in Jharkhand.

He also asked Rahul Gandhi if the EC was compromised when Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, his sister, was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Wayanad seat in Kerala.

"In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP won 240 seats and the Congress 99. The Congress was then calling the results its victory and the BJP's defeat. Was the EC compromised then?" he asked.

Though Rahul Gandhi is the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, he is actually a "leader with no position" in his own party and in the eyes of the country's people, Patra said.

"With their votes, people are saying that he is a leader with no position. He is incapable and politically unfit, who always takes the crutches of false allegations to prove that he is a leader. What has been doing in the US and other countries are the result of his frustration with his failures," he said.

Vance's kids dress up in traditional Indian attire

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Dressed in traditional Indian attire chosen especially for their visit to India, US Vice-President JD Vance's three children won hearts, with their photographs going viral on social media shortly after they landed in Delhi on Monday.

Eight-year-old Ewan wore a grey kurta while his five-year-old brother Vivek was dressed in yellow, with both pairing their kurtas with white pyjamas.

Vance's three-year-old daughter Mirabel was dressed in a teal green anarkali suit and a jacket.

The trio became a hit among the photographers covering the visit as soon as they deplaned, with their photographs trending on social media during the day.

Vance and his Indian-origin wife Usha arrived in Delhi to a warm welcome early on Monday.

They were received at the airport by Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. While Vance wore a navy blue business suit paired with a white shirt and a red tie, his wife chose a red long dress with a white blazer.

The Vance family visited the Akshardham temple where they posed for camera crews outside the shrine's imposing facade. Vance and his family will travel to Jaipur and Agra during their four-



US Vice President JD Vance with Second Lady Usha Vance and their children visits Akshardham temple in New Delhi

day trip. Later on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will host a dinner for the Vances after holding talks with the US vice-president. Vance's first visit to India comes weeks after US President Donald Trump imposed and then paused a sweeping tariff regime against around 60 countries, including India.

Vance is being accompanied by a del-

egation of senior US government officials. The Vances will reach Jaipur in a special plane and stay at the Rambagh Palace hotel.

The US vice-president will reach Amber Fort at 9 am on Tuesday and address an event at the RIC at 3 pm. The family is scheduled to leave for Agra in a special plane early on Wednesday.

SC judge flags concerns over attacks on judiciary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

As it is, we are alleged of encroaching upon the parliamentary and executive functions," Supreme Court's judge B R Gavai said on Monday in an apparent reference to recent attacks on the judiciary.

Justice Gavai's comment came while the apex court bench, also comprising Justice Augustine George Masih, was considering a fresh plea seeking an inquiry into the recent violence in West Bengal during anti-Waqf law protests.

Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, who had filed a PIL in 2021 on behalf of two petitioners seeking President's Rule in West Bengal in the wake of violence following assembly polls, urged the bench to take up a fresh plea for hearing on Tuesday. Jain said the 2021 plea was listed for hearing and the fresh application bringing out more incidents of violence in West Bengal also be heard. "In tomorrow's list item 42 pertains to imposition of President Rule in the state of West Bengal. That petition is filed by me. In that petition, I have filed

an IA (application) for directions and impleadment bringing out certain more incidents of violence which have happened in the state of West Bengal," he said.

Jain said deployment of paramilitary force and immediate action was required. He referred to Article 355 of the Constitution, which pertains to duty of the Union to protect states against external aggression and internal disturbance, and said the Supreme Court can call for a report as to what was happening in the state. Jain said the top court had earlier issued notice on the 2021 petition.

"When the matter will come up, I will demonstrate how the violence happened," he said. In July 2021, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the PIL, which also sought a direction to the Centre to deploy armed or paramilitary forces in the state. It then issued notice to the Centre, West Bengal and the Election Commission on the plea.

Recently, two separate petitions were filed in the Supreme Court seeking a court-monitored probe into the violence in West Bengal over the newly-enacted Waqf (Amendment) Act.

Chidambaram slams ED case against Gandhis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The "political assault" on the integrity and reputation of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi is an "abuse of power", former Union minister P Chidambaram said on Monday as he questioned the ED chargesheet against the Congress leaders in the National Herald case.

Addressing a press conference at the Delhi Congress office, Chidambaram alleged that the facts of the case made it clear that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) at the behest of its "political masters is carrying on a vendetta against" the opposition party leaders.

There were no proceeds of the crime in the case and hence there could not be a money laundering case and as such the ED has no jurisdiction in it, the senior Congress leader claimed and asserted that the party will "prevail over the assault". "The entire Congress party will resist and fight back this political assault on its leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. Truth will prevail, justice will prevail, we will prevail," he said.

Defending the Gandhis, Chidambaram said in the conversion of

loan to equity that happened in the case of Associated Journals Limited (AJL) and Young Indian (YI), the Congress loaned Rs 90 crore to AJL over a period of 10-12 years.

That loan was bought by Young Indian which is irrecoverable, he said. "Therefore the loan was converted into equity," he said and added it is a well-known instrument employed by the banks. Recently, Chidambaram said, the Government of India (GOI) converted the liability of Rs 36,000 crore owned by Vodafone India to it, into equity. Now, the Government of India equity in Vodafone India is 48.99 per cent, he said.

"That loan cannot be recovered by the Government of India so two months ago that loan was converted into equity. Why does not the ED file a money laundering case against GOI," he asked.

The Congress leader said the IT department has valued the assets of AJL to Rs 413 crore and questioned from where the Rs 2000 crore figure came as was being alleged. "That Rs 413 crore is still there. Who has taken it away. If somebody has taken it away, you tell me and I will go and catch him," he said. Chidambaram said the AJL owned six

immovable properties including one in Lucknow that was the only free-hold property while the remaining in Patna, Indore, Mumbai, Panchkula and Delhi are leasehold.

He said there were no money transactions involved as there was no money to be distributed or taken away by anyone. "Not a single rupee has been taken by YI shareholders or directors since the inception of the company," he claimed. All the four shareholders of Young Indian which is a non-profit company, are senior Congress office bearers, he said.

Chidambaram that the statements being given against the Congress leaders in media were either out of "ignorance or malice". The ED had recently filed a chargesheet against Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others before a special court in New Delhi in the National Herald case accusing them of allegedly laundering Rs 988 crore.

The prosecution complaint filed on April 9, under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), named former Congress presidents Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi as accused no 1 and 2 respectively.

Pope Francis passes away before his India visit could happen

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Pope Francis was likely to visit India next year but his sojourn could not materialise after he breathed his last on Monday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Pope Francis twice — in 2021 and 2024 — and extended an invitation for him to visit India that the pontiff had accepted.

Union minister George Kurian, who visited Vatican City last December, said the much-awaited visit was expected to take place after the celebrations of the jubilee year of Jesus Christ's birth by the Catholic Church in 2025.

The last papal visit to India was in 1999 when Pope John Paul II came to New Delhi to preside over the concluding celebrations of the Special Assembly of Synod of Bishops of Asia.

Pope Francis, who was battling complications arising out of a complex lung infection, breathed his last on Monday at the age of 88

He had met the then vice-president Krishan Kant and prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Pope John Paul II also visited India in February 1986 and toured different parts of the country, including the Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata and met the Indian leadership.

The first pontiff to visit India was Paul IV, who visited Mumbai in 1964 to attend the International Eucharistic Congress.

Modi, along with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar first met Pope Francis in Vatican City in October 2021 on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rome.

The prime minister had extended an invitation to Pope Francis to visit India at an early date.

Modi also met Pope Francis on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Apulia, Italy, in June last year and renewed the invitation for him to visit India.

Nadda slams states over unused health funds, urges to improve infrastructure

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Union Health Minister J P Nadda on Monday expressed strong concern over the underutilisation of allocated health funds by states and asked them to focus on improving healthcare infrastructure.

Chairing a session at the 17th Civil Services Day celebrations here, Nadda said, "I will not allow this narrative to continue that there's no money or capacity to spend it. Utilisation certificates are not even submitted for funds already given."

He recounted a recent visit to a state where allocated funds remained unspent for three years due to repeated tendering and delay in equipment procurement.

"Models have changed, new versions have come, but the tender process hasn't even begun," he said.

Calling implementation the crux of the problem, Nadda said, "We can aim for the world's largest health coverage program, we will not let it go down the drain."

He stressed that accountability and coordination across all administrative



Union Health Minister JP Nadda leads the 'Liver Health Pledge Ceremony' at the Health Camp organised by Ministry of Health in observance of World Liver Day 2025 in New Delhi

levels are essential, especially when out-of-pocket expenditure for health has reduced from 62 per cent to 39 per cent — calling it a clear sign of the benefit to common citizens.

Highlighting the need for administrative reform within the health sector,

Nadda said that many officials, including state health directors and chief medical officers, lack proper training and are hesitant to make decisions.

"They are administratively incapacitated. We must support them through capacity building and handholding," he

said. He pointed out that many district-level administrators are unaware of the Program Implementation Plan (PIP) under the National Health Mission (NHM), which is central to planning and executing healthcare initiatives.

"How can they plan if they don't even know the year's implementation plan?" Nadda questioned, and urged IAS officers to take ownership of the PIP and involve district officials in planning before forwarding it to Delhi.

Praising India's COVID-19 vaccination campaign, the health minister said, "We were able to deliver over 220 crore doses including boosters...It's proof of how robust our health system is." He also emphasised the need to invest in grassroots workers.

He called for increased reliance on and incentivisation of ASHA workers and for strengthening telemedicine services.

Nadda criticized the disconnect between government offerings and public awareness, noting that despite 157 medicines being offered free at Primary Health Centres, patients often report

shortages. He asked district magistrates and sub-divisional magistrates to conduct impact assessments to ensure the availability of diagnostics and medicines.

He also reiterated the government's long-term vision for Ayushman Bharat, which includes the PM-JAY insurance scheme and Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. These, he said, stemmed from extensive consultation since 2015, unlike earlier fragmented health policies.

"This is India's first holistic and inclusive health policy," he said, noting its emphasis on geriatric care and early screening for non-communicable diseases.

"By the age of 30, everyone should be visiting Arogya Mandirs for screening hypertension, diabetes, oral and cervical cancer, and mental and dental health," he said, underlining the shift from treatment to preventive healthcare.

India has already extended health coverage to 61 crore citizens under PM-JAY, Nadda said, adding that public health expenditure has increased from 29 per cent in 2014 to 48 per cent today.

Editor's TAKE

Visa shock for Indian students

US revokes hundreds of student visas: 50 per cent affected are Indian students

In a move that has sparked concern across academic and diplomatic circles, the Trump administration has revoked student visas for hundreds of international students, with a staggering 50 per cent of the affected individuals hailing from India. The American Immigration Lawyers' Association (AILA) has revealed this information. AILA collected 327 reports of visa revocations and Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) terminations from students, attorneys, and university personnel. What is of concern to India is that this move disproportionately affects Indian nationals, followed by students from China (14 per cent), South Korea, Nepal, and Bangladesh. There are serious concerns about the transparency and consistency of the process, as the actions lack proper oversight and are leaving students with little to no recourse. The revocations are not only a personal and academic setback for the students involved but also reflect a growing unease in the international student community. Many have described the process as abrupt and arbitrary, with limited opportunities to appeal SEVIS terminations or clarify misunderstandings. For Indian students, who comprise one of the largest populations of international students in the United States, this development is deeply unsettling. These students invest heavily — both financially and emotionally — in pursuing higher education in the US. The visa revocations interrupt academic progress, affect employment opportunities tied to their studies, and, in many cases, may force them to leave the country abruptly. The psychological toll is equally significant. Students face uncertainty, fear of deportation, and the potential stigma of visa termination, which could affect future travel and academic prospects.

The ramifications of this policy move extend beyond individual students to American educational institutions. International students are a vital source of revenue for US universities, contributing billions of dollars annually through tuition and living expenses. Many graduate programmes in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) — areas critical to US innovation — rely heavily on international talent, particularly from India and China. With increasing visa uncertainties, universities may find it harder to attract top global students. This could result in lower enrolment numbers, loss of funding, and a diminished reputation for academic inclusiveness and excellence. Moreover, such measures may deter future applicants, who may opt for more welcoming countries such as Canada, Australia, or Germany. While the Trump administration has not offered detailed justifications for these specific revocations, the actions are consistent with its broader immigration stance.

Throughout his presidency, Donald Trump emphasised tightening immigration controls and "putting Americans first," often casting a sceptical eye on visa programmes — even those meant for students and skilled workers. One reason for these revocations may be tied to concerns about misuse of visa programmes, fraudulent enrolment, or security vetting. However, critics argue that such justifications are being applied too broadly, punishing legitimate students and tarnishing the US's image as a global education hub.

The Trump administration's decision to revoke a significant number of student visas, disproportionately affecting Indian nationals, marks a troubling development in US immigration policy. If left unchecked, such policies could shift global student mobility away from the US, undermining the nation's historical status as the premier destination for higher education.

India's expanding maritime vision

As India reimagines its role in the Indo-Pacific, this quiet yet profound pivot signals not only a strategic response to China's growing presence, but also a deeper civilisational reawakening rooted in partnership, not patronage

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi first outlined India's SAGAR vision — Security and Growth for All in the Region — in 2015 during a visit to Mauritius, few could have predicted how it would evolve into a sweeping geopolitical doctrine encompassing not only the Indian Ocean but the western coasts of Africa and beyond. Nearly a decade later, India's maritime strategy is undergoing a quiet yet profound transformation. From SAGAR, the nation is now navigating toward Mahasagar — literally, the "Great Ocean" — signalling a decisive pivot in India's foreign and security policy with Africa in clear sight. The SAGAR initiative, initially conceived to promote maritime security and economic cooperation among Indian Ocean nations, has served as a foundation for India's role as a "net security provider" in the region. But today's reality demands more than regional stewardship. The increasing footprint of China in the Indian Ocean, from Gwadar to Djibouti, and the growing strategic relevance of the western Indian Ocean island states, have prompted India to recalibrate. The shift to Mahasagar (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security And Growth Across Regions) represents not just a change in terminology but a fundamental reimagining of India's role in the Indo-Pacific.

At the heart of this transformation lies Mauritius, a small island nation with outsized significance. More than a maritime partner, Mauritius shares a cultural and civilisational bond with India that predates diplomatic relations. Home to a large Indian-origin population, Mauritius has become a trusted partner in India's security calculus. Over the years, India has extended grants, built infrastructure, supplied patrol vessels and aircraft, and helped set up coastal surveillance radar systems across the Mauritian archipelago. But it is the development of the Agalega Islands — with an airstrip and jetty capable of supporting military-grade assets — that best symbolises the quiet assertiveness of the Mahasagar vision.

Critics argue that India's investment in Agalega mimics the Chinese playbook of dual-use port development seen in Hambantota and Gwadar. However, the crucial difference lies in the nature of India's partnerships. Unlike China's debt-driven port diplomacy, India's maritime engagement rests on mutual respect, development cooperation, and the principle of shared security. The Indo-Mauritian relationship is one of kinship diplomacy — one that grows not just from strategic needs but from shared history and people-to-people ties.



But the Mahasagar doctrine does not stop at Mauritius. It casts a wider net — one that spans from Seychelles and Madagascar to Kenya, Mozambique, and Tanzania. India is increasing its naval engagements, signing logistics and defence agreements, and offering capacity-building assistance across the African coast. The logic is strategic: the western Indian Ocean is not just a transit zone but a critical maritime highway for global trade, energy routes, and naval mobility. With China making aggressive inroads through the Belt and Road Initiative and military bases like the one in Djibouti, India is asserting its own footprint — not by coercion, but through collaboration. The pivot to Mahasagar also highlights India's ambition to become a blue-water navy with global reach. Indian naval ships are now a common sight in African ports. Naval exercises, hydrographic surveys, humanitarian missions, and training programmes have become regular features of India-Africa maritime relations. The Indian Navy is no longer a regional patrol force; it is fast becoming a symbol of India's strategic confidence, capable of shaping the security architecture of the



entire Indo-Pacific. Importantly, this transformation is not purely militaristic. The Mahasagar vision also embraces the idea of the blue economy — a sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and ecosystem health. India's support for maritime infrastructure, fisheries development, and coastal tourism in partner countries underscores its commitment to holistic maritime growth. It is a model that seeks not just security but shared prosperity. The messaging is also clear. As China intensifies its presence through military bases and commercial ports, India is building friendships. Where Beijing offers loans, India offers trust. Where China sets up surveillance posts, India establishes radar stations with shared access. Where China builds harbours that could dock submarines, India helps build coast guard stations to fight piracy, smuggling, and maritime crime. This contrast is not lost on African nations seeking partners who respect sovereignty and sustainability. Domestically, the Mahasagar strategy aligns with India's broader geopolitical identity. As a civilisational power with ancient maritime traditions — from Chola expeditions to trade with East Africa and the Gulf — India is reclaiming its historical place in the oceanic realm. The Indian Ocean is not a frontier — it is India's historical highway, linking cultures, religions, and com-

merce. By integrating Africa into this vision, India is not expanding its reach; it is reawakening a dormant maritime consciousness. In geopolitical terms, this shift could not come at a more crucial time. As the global order becomes increasingly multipolar and the Indo-Pacific emerges as the new theatre of strategic competition, India's Mahasagar doctrine provides a distinct alternative. It blends hard power with soft diplomacy, regional ambition with global responsibility, and tradition with modern strategy. It positions India not just as a counterweight to China, but as a civilisational ally to Africa — one whose rise is guided by partnership, not patronage. What began in 2015 as a regional security initiative has now matured into a grand ocean dream. The journey from SAGAR to Mahasagar is more than a maritime shift — it is a statement of intent.

It tells the world that India is ready to lead not by dominance, but by example. And in doing so, it has found a natural partner in Africa and a reliable anchor in Mauritius. "An ocean for all, free and open, where every nation may sail in peace and security," aptly said Woodrow Wilson.

The author is Professor, Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies and Social Sciences, Pondicherry Central University, India. Views are personal.

Views are personal.

Views are personal.

Views are personal.

India's demographic dividend at risk

SECOND Opinion

BY KAJLEEN KAUR

India boasts a demographic dividend, with a working-age population (15–64 years) of around 67 per cent, which can propel economic growth. This momentous opportunity, however, necessitates optimising the potential of the available labour force by ensuring a reduction in unemployment and underemployment and building human capital.

The macroeconomic growth models explain long-term sustainable progress as a function of labour force growth and technology build over time with human capital.

India faces no dearth in population and therefore labour force, but it lacks education, which is necessary to develop individuals' productivity and foster technological advancements. Besides, the economy languishes with high unemployment, which fails to realise the so-called "demographic dividend".

The India Employment Report 2024 shows the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) at 52 per cent, compared to 76 per cent in China. This indicates that nearly half of the possible dividend is forfeited.

To further add to the woes, the female LFPR stands at 37 per cent in India, compared to an average of 70 per cent in China. This places India as the 13th lowest female LFPR.

The report also highlights that India's youth grapples with soaring unemployment rates. Shockingly, they account for 83 per cent of the unemployed workforce. Even more disappointing is the share of youngsters with higher education in the total unemployed, which has almost doubled from 35.2 per cent in 2010 to 65 per cent in 2022.

This brings to the surface the grave reality that a large portion of the potential labour force capable of contributing to growth is dissipated.

More particularly, India adds 3 million graduates annually, but 33 per cent of them are unemployed or underemployed (CMIE, 2024). There exists a wide gap between industry requirements and the education system.

Only 15 per cent of our workforce has formal vocational training, compared to 70 per cent in South Korea (UNESCO). However, the Government's initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme, and Skill India Digital Hub are trying to bridge this divide. The Economic Survey 2023–24 notes that the Indian economy needs to generate an average of nearly 78.5 lakh jobs annually until 2030, in the non-farm sector, to cater to the rising workforce. This is further distressed as around 90 per cent of the workforce is engaged in informal work, facing irregular work and income, absence of social security benefits, and sub-standard working conditions.

The manufacturing sector, which has huge untapped potential to absorb unskilled and semi-skilled labour that

moves away from agriculture, contributes only 14 per cent to the GDP in India as compared to 27 per cent in China.

While the agrarian sector employs 43 per cent of the workforce, it contributes only 16 per cent to GDP. India's economic growth has been primarily driven by the services sector, which lacks employment absorption because of skill intensity.

Additionally, the advent of artificial intelligence is undeniably a threat to the already dismal employment situation, further aggravating the population-to-opportunities mismatch. There is an ardent need to prioritise labour-intensive manufacturing to engage unskilled labour, along with concentrated efforts to support MSMEs.

Moreover, the transforming nature of employment, such as the gig workforce, is expected to form 6.7 per cent of the non-agricultural workforce or 4.1 per cent of the total livelihood in India by 2029–30; the labour policy must ensure a robust minimum level of employment quality.

Most importantly, for India to harness its demographic dividend and not make it a missed opportunity, investment in skilled education is needed to nurture a workforce equipped with employable skills.

India's demographic dividend offers immense potential, but without addressing unemployment, skill gaps, and informal employment, it risks becoming a lost opportunity.

The writer is Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, SGGSC, University of Delhi. Views are personal.

Leaderspeak



Very sad news on the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. On behalf of the people of Latvia I express my deep condolences to all the Catholics and the Church. Pope Francis was compassionate and kind human being and he will be greatly missed.

EDGARŠ RINKEVICS, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

SC reins in overreaching Governor

Madam — The Supreme Court has issued a timely and firm reminder to Governors across various states that they are not political gatekeepers or watchdogs, but constitutional functionaries. They are duty-bound to act within the framework of the Constitution, and failure to do so will invite judicial intervention — as seen recently in Tamil Nadu. The case involving Governor R N Ravi is a stark example. His tenure has been marred by political friction, constitutional brinkmanship, and disregard for democratic norms. The Supreme Court made it unequivocally clear: Governors cannot stall the legislative process or undermine the will of elected Governments. Under the Constitution, a Governor may return a bill once for reconsideration or reserve it for the President. Prolonged delays — stretching into years — are unacceptable. Such actions are not only unconstitutional but also a dereliction of duty.

This ruling brings much-needed clarity and alignment between state and central governance. Just as the President must assent to a re-passed bill by Parliament, Governors must do the same at the state level. They have no veto powers based on political preference. By reaffirming that legislatures, not unelected officials, are the cornerstone of democracy, the Supreme Court has upheld the spirit of federalism. Its directive is both appropriate and timely.

RK JAIN | BARWANI

UNESCO recognises Bhagavad Gita

Madam — This refers to the recent news, "Manuscripts of Bhagavad Gita, Natyashastra added to UNESCO register" (April 19). It is a matter of immense pride for the spiritual and cultural communities in India and abroad that manuscripts of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita and Bharat Muni's Natyashastra have been included in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

The Bhagavad Gita holds a timeless place in the spiritual consciousness of India. The guidance imparted by Lord Krishna to Arjuna, through 700 verses across 18 chapters, offers eternal wisdom and remains relevant to this day.

Its teachings continue to illuminate the path for followers of Sanatan Dharma and inspire philosophical discourse worldwide. Similarly, the Natyashastra — an ancient treatise on performing arts — underscores India's deep-rooted cultural traditions.

This international recognition reinforces the richness of India's intellectual and spiritual legacy. The inclusion of the Bhagavad Gita and Natyashastra manuscripts in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register is a proud moment for India.

This global recognition highlights the enduring spiritual, philosophical, and cultural significance of these ancient texts, reaffirming India's profound contributions to the world's intellectual and artistic heritage.

YUGAL KISHORE SHARMA | FARIDABAD

Made in India gets global traction

Madam — India's "Made in India" initiative is gaining strong traction, positioning the country as a rising global manufacturing hub. Several developments signal this shift: India now produces 20 per cent of the world's iPhones, there's a notable rise in exports of Indian-manufactured weapons, and countries such as Canada are exploring collaboration on Vande Bharat Express trains.

The ongoing trade conflict between the United States and China is likely to accelerate this trend. With China threatening to withhold rare earth materials crucial for the manufacturing of weapons and electronics, the U.S. defence and tech sectors could face significant disruption.

This presents a unique opportunity for India to step up and fill the gap. Now is the opportune moment for India to aggressively promote its manufacturing sector.

With the right policies and strategic investments, this shift could lead to a substantial economic boost and elevate India's position in the global supply chain.

India's growing manufacturing capabilities, from iPhones to defence exports, signal its emergence as a global industrial hub.

Amid US-China trade tensions, India has a unique chance to fill critical supply chain gaps. Strategic investments now can propel economic growth and cement India's role in global manufacturing leadership.

AMARJEET KUMAR | HAZARIBAGH

Letters to the Editor

BANGLADESH MUST END TARGETED VIOLENCE AGAINST HINDUS

Proposes "Protect minorities without excuses: India tells Bangladesh" (The Pioneer, April 20), the recent brutal killing of Bhabesh Chandra Roy — vice-president of the Biral unit of the Bangladesh Puja Ujjapan Parishad and a respected Hindu community leader — has shocked and saddened many. In just the past two months, there have been 76 attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh, leading to 23 deaths.

These attacks have intensified following the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina amid student-led protests. Since then, the Hindu minority has faced relentless violence, property destruction, and severe harassment. Under the interim Government led by Muhammad Yunus, the situation has deteriorated further, with perpetrators enjoying impunity.

This pattern points to a systemic targeting of Hindus and an alarming disregard for basic human rights. The atroci-

ties against minorities not only weaken the secular fabric of Bangladesh but also strain its ties with India. Despite repeated diplomatic appeals and condemnations from India, the persecution continues unabated. It is imperative that Bangladesh acts swiftly to protect its minorities and uphold justice.

In light of ongoing violence against Hindus in Bangladesh, including the recent killing of Bhabesh Chandra Roy, India has rightly urged Dhaka to act without excuses.

Since Sheikh Hasina's ouster, attacks on minorities have surged under the interim Muhammad Yunus-led Government. With over 70 incidents in just two months, the impunity of perpetrators is deeply troubling.

Bangladesh must urgently uphold minority rights, restore law and order, and prevent further erosion of its secular and diplomatic standing — else it runs the risk of total breakdown.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY | BENGALURU

The Supreme Court roars for the forests

The Supreme Court has once again stepped in with unprecedented urgency and resolve. In a suo motu intervention, the Court expressed outrage at the illegal felling of over 100 acres of forest land in Telangana

FIRST Column

The Supreme Court of India, on December 12, 1996, in its epoch-making order on *TN Godavarman Thirumullapad vs Union of India and Others*, had set into motion a marvellous judicial intervention on forest conservation in the country — and the rest is the history of an innumerable number of orders in correcting the several wrong decisions affecting forest and wildlife conservation in the country.

After 29 years of experience of judicial intervention, in yet another suo motu intervention on April 3, 2025 — thanks to the students of Hyderabad University and the media — the Supreme Court Bench headed by Justice B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih, helped by Senior Advocate K Parmeshwar (the amicus curiae in the Godavarman forest cases, who alerted the Court to media reports about the deforestation), acted.

The Bench acted swiftly, expressing shock at the scale of the tree felling and the use of heavy machinery to clear approximately 100 acres in just a few days — directing the Registrar General of Andhra High Court to visit the site of the felling and submit the report the same day in the afternoon of April 3 itself.

The Registrar General, after visiting the site in the afternoon, sent the report; and then the Bench, in a very forthright, acerbic tone, warned the state Chief Secretary and senior bureaucrats of putting them in jail in the same location by constructing a temporary jail.

The Court comments are scathing for the Telangana Government but in favour of trees, wildlife and the natural environment, which are part of our ecosystem but cannot speak and protest, yet they are the resource base for human survival.

The Court heard the case again on 16 April and again warned the Chief Secretary and other officers of sending them to imprisonment for felling trees over 100 acres if the damage was not addressed through a restoration plan and directed the Telangana government to submit the same in the next four weeks.

While hearing the case, the Bench reiterated that the 1996 Supreme Court order is sacrosanct in defining what constitutes forests — irrespective of the status of the land.

The Bench, while reiterating its warning to the officers of state, directed the state Chief Wildlife Warden to ensure protection to wildlife and asked for a restoration plan for the 100-acre felled forests, while also stating that high-rise buildings cannot be made in the company of wildlife. It made it clear that the State Government had to take permission for felling of all kinds of trees — be it recorded forests or otherwise — if it comes under the purview of deemed forests as outlined in the 1996 order of the Supreme Court.

So, the die has been cast so far as the definition of forest is concerned, coming as it did after



the Forest Conservation (Amendment) Act was passed by Parliament in 2023. The amendment primarily clarifies the scope of forest land and simplifies procedures for certain activities.

The amendment clarifies that forest land includes areas notified under the Indian Forest Act, 1927, or recorded in Government records as forest land as on the 1980 Act's enforcement date.

The Act exempts certain types of land from its purview, such as land within 100 km of India's border needed for national security projects, small roadside amenities, and public roads leading to a habitation.

Now, the observations of the Supreme Court Bench have restored the 1996 order of the Supreme Court, and hence all states are duty-bound to obtain permission for non-forest use of



VK BAHUGUNA

THE BENCH, WHILE REITERATING ITS WARNING TO THE OFFICERS OF STATE, DIRECTED THE STATE CHIEF WILDLIFE WARDEN TO ENSURE PROTECTION TO WILDLIFE AND ASKED FOR A RESTORATION PLAN FOR THE 100-ACRE FELLED FORESTS, WHILE ALSO STATING THAT HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS CANNOT BE MADE IN THE COMPANY OF WILDLIFE

deemed forest land.

Now let us examine the context of such virulent observations of sending state officers to jail by the Apex Court on April 3, as well as reiterating it on April 16, 2025. After this, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has also sought a report from the Telangana Government.

It is a stark fact that the forests of the country are not in good shape — and the most important reason is the public apathy for conservation of forests at all levels, be it the public at large, administrative or political leaders of all hues, though they keep tom-tomming on solemn occasions and provide lip service to the forests, biodiversity and river systems.

This is quite revealed from the way our Governments function at both the Centre and state level. We need to look at the State of Forest Report 2023, which clearly brought out that more than 37 per cent of tree cover out of the 82 million ha of forest and tree cover is created by the farmers of the country — and it is worth pondering the fate of forest-related biodiversity on these

farmers' land.

Another grim reminder is the lack of adequate regeneration in recorded forests, as only 48 per cent of the forest areas have adequate regeneration. The degradation is also increasing, as 46,000 ha of recorded forests have nearly completely lost their tree cover.

There is a need that the IAS and IFS officers sitting in the Ministry decide to change this matrix of degradation and work sincerely to ensure a policy framework for better forest and biodiversity management.

This writer is very forthright in asking the forest service mandarins to get over the clique syndrome and speak in a single voice for the trees, wild animals and our rivers and rivulets. The professionalism these days is seen more in acquiescence and lobbying than in standing for the real cause.

It is because of this that the Supreme Court Bench made these sarcastic comments — and it is time now that the officers work honestly and balance the need for development with conservation. Once they stand firm and truthful, then the political masters shall follow.

There is a need for increasing the budget of the forestry sector and empowerment of communities under the Joint Forest Management Programme.

But one of the biggest causes of deforestation is the lopsided and open-ended implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, who — along with foreign-funded NGOs and 'Jhola chhap' social activists and phoney foresters — portray the romantic vision of promoting encroachments on forest land.

They must desist or must be sidelined by the Government and asked to work to make the land so far allotted to tribals productive so that their socio-economic status improves.

It is hoped that this intervention of the Apex Court will force all concerned to change track. In conclusion, the Supreme Court's timely intervention once again underscores the vital role of the judiciary in safeguarding India's forests and wildlife.

The strong stance taken by the Court, including warnings of imprisonment for errant officials — reaffirms the sanctity of the 1996 Godavarman order and its relevance despite recent legislative changes. It also highlights the growing civic engagement, especially from students and media, in environmental issues.

Moving forward, it is imperative for administrative leadership and policymakers to prioritise ecological integrity, implement restoration measures, and foster genuine, professional commitment to forest conservation — balancing development with sustainability for future generations.

(The writer is former Director-General & Chancellor of ICFRE, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Views are personal)

Bridging the agritech divide with advanced farming technology

As the agriculture sector stands at a crossroads, scalable innovations like satellite-based sensing, region-specific tools, and inclusive pricing models offer a path toward a more sustainable and tech-enabled agricultural future

The farming industry is one of the significant pillars of the Indian economy, contributing a significant 16 per cent of India's GDP and engaging more than half of the country's population. However, to date, there has been a slow uptake of advanced technologies in agriculture. While several agritech start-ups have been launched and well-funded by investors, the connection between these ventures and farmers remains a challenge. One of the main problems that these start-ups have to contend with is that of high costs, which tend to be associated with technology.

There are many tools — including those used in precision farming, machinery such as weather stations, and sensors that can be applied to the soil — that hold the future of increased yields and sustainable farming. However, the cost associated with such technologies might be unaffordable for small farmers, who form the largest percentage of India's farming community. Devices such as IoT sensors can cost hundreds of dollars per year, meaning that while a slight increase in yield for such farmers is hard to come by, the devices do not offer value for money.

More than 80 per cent of farmers in India are marginal farmers, cultivating landholdings of less than five acres. These marginal lands are often fragmented into multiple smaller plots, allowing farmers to grow different crops on the same holding.

This fragmentation poses a challenge for agritech solutions designed for large-scale farming. However, satellite-based data solutions can bridge this gap by providing precise, farm-specific insights even for farms having an area of only a quarter of an acre (about 10,000 square feet), enabling even smallholder farmers to optimise their crop management and improve productivity.

The policies of the Indian agricultural sector fluctuate, and some crucial aspects like water — which is a basic necessity for agriculture — are controlled by the state government.

While such interventions as subsidies and grants are useful, they have led to a situation where agritech remains a state-subsidised model rather than a market-driven one.



Many new agritechs have come to depend on these Government partnerships for revenue instead of selling directly to farmers, which has impacted the growth and sustainability of most of them in the private market.

Among the challenges that have limited the embrace of agritech is ignorance among farmers.

It is essential to understand that large-scale farmers might invest time and resources to evaluate and consider adopting new technologies, while smallholder farmers are more likely to make decisions by word of mouth or based on regular practices. This is mainly due to the poor devel-



SAT KUMAR TOMAR

opment of facilities and capacity-building to form the basis for adopting innovations in farming technologies.

Cost-Effective Solutions

The first area of intervention for farmer uptake can be increased through improved adoption of technologies that are cheaper to develop. Although IoT-based sensors are costly, satellite remote sensing is feasible.

While IoT sensors can cost several hundred dollars and give localised information, satellite technology offers information for the whole farm area at a considerably lower cost — usually less than 5 per cent of the price of sensors. Satellite remote sensing, combined with artificial intelligence and machine learning, can be used to monitor soil nutrient levels, manage pest and disease risks, and support irrigation water management across large areas of farmland.

These solutions are especially practical and accessible for smallholder farm-

ers. In this way, satellite-based solutions represent a constrained set of technological tools whereby agritech companies can propose complete and high-quality products and services at more competitive prices.

Localised Solutions

Given the highly heterogeneous climate of the country and the different farming practices followed across regions, it can be said that a market solution carved in one casting will not fit this agritech market. Start-ups must provide region-specific products.

They can, therefore, apply different ways of ensuring their solution reaches farms in varying regions so that farmers can adopt it.

Pricing Models

Long-term, technology must be accessible to small and marginal farmers and useful even for field crops like wheat — especially in terms of the ultimate cost

of the technology delivered to the farm. A scholar cited that the cost of any new technology farmers must consider has to be less than or equal to 10 per cent of the total farming cost. This is crucial for adoption.

Affordability is another value that agritech start-ups should embrace, enabling them to offer their products at a cheaper cost and within reach of many farmers. Other revenue models that can be used include fee-for-service or usage plans in which the farmer pays only for what is used.

Fostering Education

Guaranteeing extensive use of such technology — even if it is cheap — requires more education and support. Agritech companies must incorporate education campaigns as a key means of informing farmers about the benefits of using these products.

This might be achievable through human capital development programmes,

farmer organisations or local associations. This paper contends that hands-on training and demonstrations enable farmers to overcome hesitance stemming from a lack of familiarity. Current strategies point to the need to make technology simple and easy to use to minimise the chances of farmers being unable to adopt it on the farm.

Government and Private Sector Collaboration

Although major funding is currently being attracted to agritech start-ups via government grants, the long-term model will require the involvement of both public and private entities.

This implies a need for policies that encourage agritech growth while avoiding excessive dependence on state subsidies. This includes strengthening policy content, creating private-sector incentives, and guaranteeing support for farmers transitioning to better technologies. Scaling efforts via public-private partnerships may help deliver appropriate support to farmers.

Final Thoughts

The Indian agritech industry is at a turning point. Although there is hope in the power of technology to transform agriculture, challenges such as cost, accessibility and uptake remain significant. High-end technologies like IoT sensors and UAVs are often too expensive for small and marginal farmers.

However, affordable and scalable solutions — such as satellite remote sensing, regionalised products, optional pricing structures and farmers' sensitisation — are available. When combined with agricultural expertise and AI/ML, satellite remote sensing emerges as a practical and inclusive solution, making advanced technology accessible even to small and marginal farmers.

India, being one of the top agricultural producers globally, has a wealth of insights from its diverse farming landscape. These learnings not only improve Indian agriculture but are also leveraged globally to assist small and marginal farmers elsewhere.

(The writer is Founder, Co-founder & CEO, Satyukt Analytics. Views are personal)

Jammu-Srinagar highway to open after 6 days: NHAI

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on Monday said that it would take at least six days to restore traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar highway as tons of debris remain accumulated at multiple locations in the Ramban district of Jammu division. Sharing his preliminary assessment of the ongoing restoration works, NHAI project director Purshottam Kumar Sharma said, "Going by the condition of the damaged road and volume of debris accumulated due to the landslides, it may take six days for us to make the affected stretch worthy for partial restoration of traffic." "The height of the sludge at some places is more than 20 feet," he said. The NHAI is facing a challenging situation due to massive deposits of muck on the highway at more than a dozen places, especially on the four-kilometre stretch between Seri and Maroog, he added.

Meanwhile, to clear the rush of stranded vehicles, the authorities threw open the Mughal road connecting the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch in Jammu to south Kashmir's Shopian district. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also visited Ramban on Monday to assess the ground situation. Three people, including two minor siblings, were killed and more than 100 people were rescued after cloudburst-induced floods and landslides on Sunday caused massive damage to infrastructure, including roads and residential buildings. Bad weather prevented the Chief Minister from reaching out to the affected families. Earlier in the day, Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar and Inspector General of Police Bhim Sen Tuti visited flood-affected and landslide-hit areas of Ramban district to assess the damage. Accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Ramban Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, SSP Ramban Kulbir Singh, SSP



Chief Minister Omar Abdullah visited Maroog in Ramban district to take stock of the devastation caused by the recent flash floods and landslides. PIONEER PHOTO

Traffic NHW Raja Adil Hamid, the Divisional Commissioner and IGP Jammu visited several severely affected locations including Seri, Boli Bazar, Main Bazar Ramban, Higher Secondary School area and Nawi Basti. "About 10 to 12 villages, including Seri, Bagna, Panote and Khari, have suffered varying degrees of damage and our teams are on the ground to make a complete assessment so that the affected population is provided relief," the divisional commissioner told reporters. The Div Com and IGP interacted with affected families and took a firsthand account of the ongoing rescue, relief, and restoration operations. Cutting across party lines, political leaders urged the Centre to declare the tragedy a "national disaster" and provide adequate financial assistance to the families affected to restart their lives. Senior BJP leader and Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma visited the

affected villages and said, "We have come to assess the situation and submit a report to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah." "We want the government to declare it as a national disaster and announce a rehabilitation package for the affected population," Sharma told reporters. National Conference MLA Arjun Singh Raju demanded that the tragedy be declared a "national disaster" and said villages in the hilly areas had suffered major damage. "The full assessment can be made only when the roads leading to the villages in the hills are opened. The administration is making efforts on a war footing and we are hopeful of restoring essential supplies by later this evening," he said. Police, army and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, along with civil volunteers, have been at the forefront to provide relief, especially to hundreds of the stranded commuters and tourists.

CM Mamata hates Hindus, says BJP

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

More than a hundred ejected families of riot-torn Murshidabad that were allegedly "forced" by the State administration to return home to once again live in a climate of terror have raised fresh demands for setting up of a permanent camp of the Border Security Force besides an investigation conducted by the National Investigation Agency. Senior BJP leader Sambit Patra on Monday attacked Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for her "hatred for the Hindus." The victim families on Monday narrated their woes to Bengal BJP president Sukanto Majumdar complaining how they were forced by the Bengal Police to evacuate the relief camp at a Government School in Malda before making a fresh demand for setting up of a permanent BSF camp in the riot affected areas of Murshidabad. "We did not want to return home as there is nothing left here and we have no faith in the State Police. But the police forced us to evacuate the camp at Baisnabnagar in Malda, they forced us to return home, but where will we live as there is no home left, everything is burnt down, our shops, houses doors windows and everything," locals complained adding how "the rioters are still threat-

ening us with murder and rape once the BSF leaves this area. They are telling that 'how long the BSF will protect you, let them leave then we will cut you up', we have no faith in the Bengal Police. If you want us safe then don't remove BSF from here" the victims told Majumdar who is also a Union Minister. "I will take this issue up with the Home Minister once I am in Delhi. The BSF is still there for a few days more, by then we will try to do something for them," the Minister said wondering at the "sense of responsibility of the Mamata Banerjee Government. They were driven out of Malda like livestock, without considering what they will eat and where they will live, they have no money, no roof, everything has been torched by the Muslim rioters. Mamata Banerjee is only concerned with saving her honour nationally by forcing the people to return home." He also met the Das family two members of which were hacked to death on the 11 April by a mob of rioters who were protesting against the Waqf Amendment Act. The family an alleged supporter of the CPI(M) had on Saturday refused to accept a compensation of ₹20 lakh offered by the Government. "We only want BSF camp and adequate punishment for the murderers" they said amid reports that five people had thus far been arrested in that connection by the SIT team.

Regarding NIA investigation Majumdar said, "The Agency cannot come on its own. A petition has been filed in the High Court seeking NIA investigation and as and when the Court orders the investigation will be started." Curiously however Firdaus Shamim and JN Chattopadhyay advocates in Calcutta High Court said that the NIA had inherent powers to investigate such offences where national security or similar issues are involved. "The BJP, like the TMC too is playing with the woes of these poor people, they don't need any Court direction for NIA investigation, they are doing so because they know that NIA investigation will expose the game plan of both the parties and bring the truth to the fore regarding how these riots were planned," they said. Meanwhile, the BJP on Monday launched scathing attack on the Chief Minister calling her a "hater of the Hindus." Saffron leader Sambit Patra in a media conference in Delhi said that Mamata Banerjee "hates Hindus," wondering whether she would not have started agitating "had such atrocities been carried out against Muslim brothers." Attacking the Left too he questioned their silence on the issue despite the fact that the persons killed were all Marxist supporters.

Saamana hails possible Thackeray re-union

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

Saamana, the official mouth-piece of the Shiv Sena (UBT), on Monday hailed the possible coming together of the two Thackeray cousins — Uddhav and Raj, saying that the reunion of the two leaders was what Maharashtra needed, it as it was in the larger interests of Maharashtra. Holding that the impending re-union of Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray as a "befitting reply" to those who were "anti-Maharashtra" in their approach, "Saamana" welcomed the possible coming together of the two Thackeray cousins. "Marathi manoes have the strength and power to fight against those who are anti-Maharashtra. And that is why Marathi manoes should come together. Raj Thackeray understands the importance of reunion, while Uddhav Thackeray has responded positively," the Sena (UBT) mouth-piece stated in its editorial. It may be recalled that three months after he rebelled against Uddhav's leadership and quit the united Shiv Sena on December 18, 2005, Raj founded the MNS on March 9, 2006. Sena patriarch Bal Thackeray, who was alive at the time of Raj walking out of the Sena and founding the MNS, passed away on November 17, 2012.

More than 19 years after he quit the Bal Thackeray-headed Shiv Sena and founded the MNS, Raj held out an olive branch to his cousin Uddhav on Saturday — which the latter showed sure signs of accepting. After that there has been considerable discussion in the state political circles. Maintaining that possible reunion of Uddhav and Raj had caused unease in certain political quarters of Maharashtra while others had welcomed the development, the "Saamana" editorial stated: "Whatever is in the heart of Maharashtra should take place. If we continue to fight and dispute all our lives, the future generation of Maharashtra will never forgive us. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and chief minister Devendra Fadnis do not actually represent the nation. That being the case, how will they belong to Maharashtra state?" The Sena (UBT) mouth-piece said that after Raj quit the undivided Shiv Sena in December 2005 and founded the MNS, his party received public support in civic and Assembly elections. However, the MNS suffered electoral setbacks in the subsequent elections. Averring that the BJP "trapped" the MNS chief through its "fake Hindutva" stance, "Saamana" editorial stated: "He (Raj) used the support of the BJP and the Shinde Sena to attack us. As a consequence, the Marathi unity suffered a setback.

Though he had taken a stand not to allow Modi-Shah to put their foot on Maharashtra's soil and that they were not working in Maharashtra's interest, Raj did not stick to his stand". Alluding to the reported differences between the two Thackeray cousins, the Sena (UBT) mouth-piece stated: "In a media interview, Raj said whatever has happened, their dispute and differences are trivial compared to the bigger issues. The differences have never come out in the open. Raj has been speaking about Marathi manoes, while Uddhav Thackeray has been doing the same over the years. Both have now once again spoken about Marathi manoes and Maharashtra's interests. If we keep out the BJP and Shinde Sena, then the differences will not remain. Because they are the ones who caused the differences". "Amit Shah, Modi, Fadnis and Eknath Shinde have tried to weaken Maharashtra. They attacked the late Bal Thackeray-founded Shiv Sena... Raj Thackeray was born in the womb of the same Shiv Sena. And therefore, Uddhav Thackeray expects that Raj Thackeray should not align with such people," Saamana stated. It may be recalled that in a recent podcast by senior filmmaker Mahesh Manjrekar, Raj had said: "For me, the interest of Maharashtra is bigger and everything else is secondary before it."

Ex police officer gets life term for colleague's murder

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

Nine years after the ghastly murder of a lady police officer, a trial court at Panvel in the adjoining Raigad district has handed out to senior police inspector and recipient of President's gallantry award Abhay Kurundkar to life imprisonment and sentenced two others to seven years of rigorous imprisonment

for their involvement in the sensational crime. Holding Kurundkar and his two aides Mahesh Phalnikar and Kundan Bhandari guilty of involvement in the crime, Sessions Judge of Panvel court K G Paldekar convicted them for the gruesome murder of Assistant Police Inspector Ashwini Bidre-Gore on the basis of strong circumstantial and technical evi-

dence. While the prime accused Kurundkar was awarded life imprisonment, Phalnikar and Bhandari were sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment for destruction of evidence. However, another accused Raju Patil was acquitted of the charges due to insufficient evidence. While Phalnikar is a close friend of Kurundkar, Bhandari is the driver of the

prime accused. It may be recalled that Bidre-Gore, a resident of Roadpali in Kalamboli in Navi Mumbai who was then posted with the Protection of Civil Rights Unit in Konkarn Bhavan at Belapur, had gone missing from April 15 2016 and that a missing case was registered three months later on July 14 2016 on the basis of a complaint made by her brother Anand Bidre.

Modi, Vance discuss BTA, strategic ties

Continued from >> P1 Bilateral Trade Agreement focused on the welfare of the people of the two countries. Likewise, they noted continued efforts towards enhancing cooperation in energy, defence, strategic technologies and other areas, it said. The two leaders also exchanged views on various regional and global issues of mutual interest, and called for dialogue and diplomacy as the way forward. Prime Minister Modi also conveyed his warm greetings to President Trump and said he looked forward to his visit to India later this year. Vance arrived here on Monday on a four-day visit accompanied by his Indian origin wife Usha Chilukuri and their three children Ewan, Vivek, Mirabel, and a delegation of senior US government officials. The US Vice President and the Second Lady were received at the Palam air base by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. The American leader was also accorded a ceremonial welcome on his arrival. The visit spanning Delhi, Jaipur and Agra is expected to further deepen the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership. Vance's first visit to India came weeks after US President Donald Trump imposed and then paused a sweeping tar-

iff regime against around 60 countries, including India. Also, Vance's visit comes weeks after US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard visited India for a geopolitical conference. New Delhi and Washington are now holding negotiations to seal a bilateral trade agreement that is expected to address a variety of issues, including tariff and market access. Vance and his family left for Jaipur on Monday night. On Tuesday, the Vances will visit a number of historical sites in Jaipur, including the Amer Fort, also known as Amber Fort. The fort is a UNESCO world heritage site. In the afternoon, the US Vice President is scheduled to address a gathering at the Rajasthan International Centre in Jaipur. Vance is expected to delve into broader aspects of India-US relations under the Donald Trump administration during his speech that is expected to be attended by diplomats, foreign policy experts, Indian government officials and academia. The US Vice President and his family will travel to Agra on the morning of April 23. They will visit Taj Mahal and Shilpgram which is an open air emporium showcasing various Indian artefacts. The US Vice President and his family will depart for the US from Jaipur on April 24.

Delhi unveils action plan to combat heatwave

Continued from >> P1 The national capital has already registered its first heatwave this summer — from April 7 to 9 — as temperatures crossed 40 degree Celsius. With the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasting a higher-than-usual number of heatwave days this year, the Heat Action Plans prepared at the state, district, and city levels are aimed at mitigating the adverse impacts of extreme weather. Building on last year's groundwork, the Delhi Government has expanded the scope of its heat preparedness efforts this summer. As per the plan, shading structures will be built along footpaths to offer pedestrians relief from the sun. Bus stops will be designed to protect waiting passengers from the heat. Additionally, Government and private buildings will adopt cool roof and green roof technologies. Over 1.4 million students in more than 5,500 schools across Delhi will be trained and will be made aware on disaster management and heatwave preparedness. Comprehensive arrangements have been made to tackle heatwaves from slum areas to major hospitals. Heatwave wards are being developed in hospitals, and cold water facili-

ties are being ensured at public places like bus stops and railway stations. The plan has been developed following NDMA guidelines, global best practices, district-level vulnerability mapping, and consultations with knowledge partners such as NDMA, UNEP, UNICEF, Resilience AI, and UC Berkeley. Under this Heat Action Plan, 3,000 water coolers will be installed throughout the city; 1,000 on roads, 1,000 in government buildings, and 1,000 in locations that lack water facilities for those living on footpaths or homeless individuals. As per the plan, heatwave wards are being prepared in major hospitals in Delhi, equipped with cooling facilities, ORS, and trained staff. Shade, drinking water, and assistance centers are being set up in slums and low-income neighborhoods. In schools, children will be encouraged to drink water through the "Water Bell" initiative, and more than 1.4 million children in over 5,500 schools will be educated on disaster management and heatwave protection. Cold water facilities will also be arranged at public places such as bus stops and railway stations. The salient features of the Delhi Heat

Action Plan 2025 include: Cool Roof Technology will be implemented at major sites, including the Vivekananda terminal, Kashmere Gate ISBT, and Delhi Secretariat; Dedicated heatwave wards to be set up in large hospitals, equipped with trained medical staff to treat heat-related illnesses; Cooling shelters and shaded structures will be developed along footpaths for pedestrian relief; Booklets for schools detailing safety guidelines and preparedness strategies for students and staff during extreme heat. Ambulance, kits, and booklet launched for emergency transport of heat stroke patients; Deployment of 1,800 trained Disaster Mitras to assist during heat emergencies as first responders and Real-time issuance of heat alerts in collaboration with the weather department. The Chief Minister further explained that in recent years, temperatures in Delhi has touched up to 50 degrees Celsius — which is a serious threat for public. "Our mission is to make Delhi heat-resilient, protect lives and make every season livable for its residents," the chief minister said. She said the government has been working extensively to reduce the impact

of heatwaves, which have become increasingly frequent and intense, with the temperature in Delhi going as high as 52.9 degrees Celsius. As part of the plan, the government has asked hospitals to create dedicated wards equipped with ICU beds and essential medicines for heat-stroke patients. Cooling centres will also be set up in densely populated areas, especially near footpaths and slums. Other initiatives include green roofs, shaded areas at bus stops and an early warning system for heatwaves, the chief minister said. The government will issue heatwave alerts through medical portals and text messages, she said. Government schools will follow stricter routines to ensure regular water intake among children and slums will be equipped with cool shelters and have access to chilled drinking water, she said. The Chief Minister stated that the "Delhi Heat Action Plan" is not only for the people but also for the thousands of voiceless birds and animals who are part of our planet. Health Minister Pankaj Singh, PWD and Water Minister Parvash Sahib Singh Verma and senior officials attended the event.

World mourns death of Pope Francis

Continued from >> P1 Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof said that Francis "was in every way a man of the people." Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi said in a statement that Francis leaves behind "a great human legacy that will remain etched in the conscience of humanity" and called him "an exceptional global figure who dedicated his life to serving the values of peace and justice." Irish Foreign Minister Simon Harris praised Francis' advocacy for the poor, and calls for improved interfaith relations and a focus on protecting the environment that made him "a beacon of hope and a voice for the voiceless." But some critics voiced frustration, with the Women's Ordination Conference lamenting Francis' unwillingness to push for the ordination of women. "His repeated closed door" policy on

women's ordination was painfully incongruous with his otherwise pastoral nature, and for many, a betrayal of the synodal, listening church he championed," the conference said. "This made him a complicated, frustrating, and sometimes heart-breaking figure for many women." The Vatican announced that Francis, the 266th pope, died Monday morning - a day after his last public appearance on Easter Sunday to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square. Bishop Paolo Martinelli, the apostolic vicar of Southern Arabia, issued a statement saying that "all the people in the UAE are greatly saddened by the death of Pope Francis, whom we remember with gratitude for his visit to Abu Dhabi in 2019." He asked all parishes to plan a Mass for Francis. The vicariate oversees the Catholic Church in the United Arab Emirates,

Oman and Yemen. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, called Francis "a great leader whose compassion and commitment to peace touched countless lives." "His legacy of humility and interfaith unity will continue to inspire many communities around the world," Sheikh Mohammed said in an online message. Bishop James Ruggieri of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland, Maine, said that Francis' legacy will be "one of mercy and compassion, but also of hope. In this Jubilee Year, may we honor Pope Francis by carrying on his mission and living as pilgrims of hope." From Buenos Aires, Francis' hometown, the office of Argentine President Javier Milei expressed condolences and support to all the faithful in the predominately

Catholic South American country. Milei highlighted the "tireless struggle of Francis' papacy to protect life from conception, promote inter-religious dialogue and bring a spiritual and virtuous life closer to young people," his office said, describing Argentina as "the land of Pope Francis." Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says the passing of Francis is an irreparable loss to the global community. Sharif praised Francis as a "pioneer of interfaith harmony, peace, and the promotion of humanity." He said under the pope's leadership, the Catholic Church consistently spread the message of love, tolerance and mutual respect across the world. "Pope Francis' life and conduct have been a beacon of light - not only for Christians but for people of all faiths.

PM condones Pope's death

Continued from >> P1 The two leaders discussed a range of topics - from poverty to climate change. The Prime Minister also visited Pope Francis to India. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday condoned the demise of Pope Francis. "Saddened at the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. His compassion and commitment to building a better world defined his papacy," Jaishankar said in a social media post. Rajnath Singh said "Deeply saddened by the passing away of His Holiness Pope Francis. He will be remembered for his remarkable service to the human society, specially poor and the marginalized. My thoughts are with the millions around the world who grieve his demise." Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge expressed sadness over the passing away of Pope Francis, whom he described as a consistent champion of inter-religious understanding and an influential force for global peace and harmony. "The entire world is saddened by the passing away of Pope Francis who will be seen by posterity as being hugely consequential. "He was a consistent champion of

inter-religious understanding and engagement. He was also a greatly influential force for global peace and harmony who actively supported causes like the ending of discrimination of all forms, the mitigation of economic inequalities and of collaborative endeavours to deal with the impacts of climate change," Kharge said in a statement. The Congress president said Pope Francis was truly an iconic personality, a humanitarian par excellence, who has left behind a very valuable legacy. "On behalf of the Indian National Congress, I extend our sincere condolences to our Christian brethren especially in different parts of our country and the world," the Congress chief said. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the passing away of His Holiness Pope Francis is a loss to the entire world. "He was truly an embodiment of love and compassion. He stood for the truth, he spoke out fearlessly against injustice and cared for the poor and marginalised in true faith. "He was an inspiration to millions across the world who hope and strive for a more peaceful and kinder world. May his soul rest in eternal peace," she said in her message on social media.

Rites and rituals that follow the death of a Pope

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Vatican City

The death of a pope sets in motion a series of carefully orchestrated rites and rituals well before the conclave to elect his successor begins. They involve the certification of death and public display of his body for the faithful to pay their respects, followed by the funeral and burial.

Pope Francis, who died on Monday, revised various rites last year, simplifying the funeral rituals to emphasize his role as a mere bishop and allowing for burial outside the Vatican in keeping with his wishes. But the core elements remain, including the three key moments that must be observed between the death of a pope and his burial.

The reforms are incorporated into the slim red volume "Ordo Exsequiarum Romani Pontificis," Latin for "Rite of Burial for Roman Pontiffs."

Why were changes to the funeral rites necessary?

While popes often tinker with the rules regulating the conclave that elects their successor, a revision of the papal funeral rites hadn't been undertaken since 2000.

The changes became necessary after Francis expressed his own wishes, and after Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI died on Dec. 31, 2022. For Benedict, the Vatican had to work out the novelty of a funeral for the first retired pope in 600 years.

A few months later, Francis revealed he was working with the Vatican's master of liturgical ceremonies, Archbishop Diego Ravelli, to overhaul the entire book of rites to simplify them.

In explaining the reforms, Ravelli said the changes aimed "to emphasise even

more that the Roman Pontiff's funeral is that of a pastor and disciple of Christ and not of a powerful man of this world.

THE DECLARATION OF DEATH: The three main stations, or moments, occur first in his home, then in St. Peter's Basilica, and then in the place of burial.

The reform allows for the formal confirmation of death to occur in Francis' personal chapel rather than his bedroom. It is unclear why, the change may be more practical than anything since Francis chose to live in a small suite in the Vatican's Santa Marta hotel rather than the Apostolic Palace. He has a personal chapel at Santa Marta.

Upon the pope's death, the head of the Vatican health service examines the body, ascertains the cause of death and writes a report. The body is dressed in white.

The body rests in the pope's personal chapel for the ritual pronouncement of death, presided over by the camerlengo, the Vatican official who runs the Holy See administration between the death or resignation of one pope and the election of another. The camerlengo is American Cardinal Kevin Farrell, one of Francis' most trusted aides.

In a change from the past, the rite no longer requires the body to be placed in the traditional three coffins made of cypress, lead and oak. Now, the pope's body is placed in a wooden coffin, with a zinc coffin inside. The pope is dressed in red liturgical vestments, his miter - the traditional headdress of bishops - and the pallium woolen stole, a kind of scarf. The Pasqual candle, a large, decorated candle used at Easter, is placed nearby.

The camerlengo drafts the formal declaration of death, attaching the certificate



that had been prepared by the health service chief.

The master of liturgical celebrations, Ravelli, then decides when other faithful can pay their respects before the coffin is moved to St. Peter's Basilica for public viewing.

ONCE IN THE BASILICA: When the body is brought into the basilica, the Litany of Saints chant is sung. The camerlengo leads the procession.

In another change, the pope's body is no longer placed on an elevated bier. Rather, the simplified wooden coffin is placed facing the pews, with the Pasqual candle nearby.

THE SEALING OF THE COFFIN: The night before the funeral, the camerlengo presides over the closing and sealing of the coffin, in the presence of other senior cardinals. A white cloth is placed over the pope's face. A bag containing coins minted during

his papacy is placed in the coffin along with a one-page written account of his papacy - known in Italian as a "rogito," a word indicating an official deed. It is read aloud by the master of liturgical ceremonies and then rolled up and slipped inside a cylindrical tube that is placed inside the coffin. Another copy is kept in the Vatican archives. The covers of both the zinc coffin and the wooden one bear a cross and the papal coat of arms.

Francis' coat of arms, which he kept from when he was bishop, features a shield and the monogram of his Jesuit order, with the words "Miserando atque eligendo," Latin for "Having had mercy, he called him." It comes from an episode in the Gospel where Christ picks a seemingly unworthy person to follow him.

THE FUNERAL AND BURIAL: The funeral is presided over by the dean of the College of Cardinals or, if that is not possible, by the vice dean or another senior cardinal. The current dean is Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, 91. The vice dean is Argentine Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, 81. Francis earlier this year extended both of their five-year terms rather than appoint new ones.

Francis' reform allows for burial outside the Vatican, with the camerlengo presiding. Various seals are impressed on the coffin, and it is placed inside the tomb.

Francis has said he wants to be buried not in St. Peter's Basilica or its grottoes, where most popes are buried, but in the St. Mary Major Basilica across town. His choice reflects his veneration of an icon of the Virgin Mary that is located there, the Salus Populi Romani (Salvation of the people of Rome). After every foreign trip, Francis would go to the basilica to pray before the Byzantine-style painting that features an image of Mary, draped in a blue robe, holding the infant Jesus who in turn holds a jewelled golden book.

"It's my great devotion," Francis told Mexico's N+ in revealing his future burial plans. "The place is already prepared."

With the burial, the Catholic Church begins nine days of official mourning, known as the "novendiales" and the conclave begins.

Hindu temple vandalised in Canada's Surrey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Toronto

A temple in Canada's Surrey has been defaced by vandals with pro-Khalistan graffiti at its entrance and the pillars, authorities said.

The incident took place on April 19 at the Shree Lakshmi Narayana Mandir in Surrey, the temple said in a statement.

"It is with deep sorrow that we inform the community of a disturbing incident that took place in the early hours of April 19, 2025, at approximately 3:00 AM. Two unidentified individuals vandalised the Shree Lakshmi Narayana Mandir in Surrey by defacing the entrance sign and the temple pillars with the word 'Khalistan', the statement said.

Also, the security camera was stolen during this act.

"We strongly condemn this hateful act of vandalism and theft, which is not only a crime but a direct attack on a sacred space that serves as a spiritual and cultural centre for many families, including elderly members and children," it said.

"An FIR has been officially registered with the Surrey Police, and we are cooperating fully with the authorities in their investigation," the statement added.

"We urge members of the public and leaders at all levels of government to join us in condemning this hate crime. Attacks on places of worship have no place in a respectful and diverse society of Canada," it said.

Russian attacks Kherson during Easter ceasefire three killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kyiv

Russian attacks during the 30-hour Easter ceasefire unilaterally declared by President Vladimir Putin over the weekend killed three people in Ukraine's southern Kherson region, the local governor said Monday.

Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin wrote on Telegram that the casualties occurred over the last 24 hours, adding that three others were wounded. Overall, Russia violated the ceasefire more than 2,900 times,

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a Telegram statement in the early hours on Monday. Zelenskyy said that Russian forces carried out 96 assault operations along the front line, shelled Ukrainian positions more than 1,800 times and used hundreds of drones during the course of the ceasefire.

"The nature of Ukrainian actions will continue to be mirror-like: we will respond to silence with silence, and our blows will be a defense against Russian blows. Actions always speak louder than words,"

he said. Putin announced a temporary Easter truce on Saturday, citing humanitarian reasons. Ukraine said that it would reciprocate any genuine ceasefire by Moscow, but voiced skepticism over the Kremlin's intentions. Both sides traded accusations of violations shortly after. The ceasefire expired at midnight (2100 GMT) following Easter Sunday.

Overnight into Monday, the Russian forces fired three missiles at Ukraine's southern regions of Kherson and Mykolaiv regions, as well as 96 Shahed

drones targeting other parts of the country, Ukraine's Air Force reported. It said it downed 42 drones, while 47 others were jammed mid-flight.

In the Dnipropetrovsk region, Russian drones sparked a fire at an "outbuilding" and a "food enterprise," Gov. Serhii Lysak wrote on Telegram. No one was injured in the attack, he said. An unspecified infrastructure object was damaged in the Cherkasy region overnight, Gov. Ihor Taburets said on Telegram.

The Russian Defence Ministry, in a

statement on Monday, maintained that Moscow's forces "strictly observed the ceasefire and remained at previously occupied lines and positions." It accused Ukraine of violating the ceasefire 4,900 times, including six attempts at assault operations, 1,404 attacks from artillery, multiple rocket launchers and mortars, and 3,316 drone strikes targeting Russian troops.

The ministry said that once the ceasefire expired, the Russian military "resumed the special military operation" in Ukraine.

Zelenskyy says Russia feigning 'ceasefire' as attacks continue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia on Sunday of creating a false appearance of honouring an Easter ceasefire, saying Moscow continued to launch attacks after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a unilateral temporary truce.

"As of Easter morning, we can say that the Russian army is trying to create a general impression of a ceasefire, but in some places, it does not abandon individual attempts to advance and inflict losses on Ukraine," Zelenskyy said in a post on X.

Despite Putin's declaration of an Easter ceasefire, Zelenskyy said Sunday morning that Ukrainian forces had recorded 59 instances of Russian shelling and five assaults by units along the front line, as well as dozens of drone strikes.

In later updates, Zelenskyy said that

despite Ukraine declaring a symmetrical approach to Russian actions, "the trend of increasing the use of heavy weaponry by Russian forces continues." He said, however, that it was "a good thing, at least, that there were no air raid sirens." He noted that some Ukrainian troops were killed in a Russian "ambush" on Sunday in the Donetsk region, and said the Russian soldiers responsible would be "eliminated."

Russia's Defence Ministry accused Ukrainian forces of overnight attacks in the Donetsk region despite the ceasefire. It said Ukraine had sent 48 drones into Russian territory. According to the ministry, there were "dead and wounded among the civilian population," without giving details. It claimed Russian troops had strictly observed the truce.

Russia-installed officials in the partially occupied Ukrainian region of Kherson also said Ukrainian forces had launched



attacks. Zelenskyy said that Russia must fully adhere to the ceasefire conditions and reiterated Ukraine's offer to extend the truce for 30 days when it ends midnight

Sunday. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said Moscow had not responded to Kyiv's proposal.

"In practice, either Putin does not have

full control over his army, or the situation proves that in Russia, they have no intention of making a genuine move toward ending the war, and are only interested in favourable PR coverage," Zelenskyy wrote.

Just hours after announcing the ceasefire, Putin attended an Easter service late Saturday at Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour led by Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church and a vocal supporter of Putin and the war in Ukraine.

Putin offered no details on how the ceasefire would be monitored or whether it would cover airstrikes or ongoing ground battles that rage around the clock.

His announcement came after US President Donald Trump said Friday that negotiations between Ukraine and Russia are "coming to a head" and insisted that neither side is "playing" him in his push to end the grinding three-year war.

Trump might help Canadian Carney

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Toronto

Mark Carney's political career is only months old, and it's already been a roller-coaster ride. The former central banker appeared destined to become one of Canada's shortest-serving prime ministers until President Donald Trump picked a fight with the US's northern neighbour.

Carney, who was sworn in on March 14 following Justin Trudeau's resignation and a Liberal Party leadership race, now leads in the polls heading into the April 28 parliamentary elections, marking a dramatic turnaround for a party that seemed headed for a crushing defeat until the American president started attacking Canada's economy and sovereignty almost daily.

Trump's trade war and threats to make

Canada the 51st state have infuriated Canadians and led to a surge in Canadian nationalism that has helped Liberals flip the election narrative. In a mid-January poll by Nanos, Liberals trailed the Conservative Party by 47% to 20%.

In the latest Nanos poll, which was conducted during a three-day period that ended April 19, the Liberals led by six percentage points. The January poll had a margin of error 3.1 points while the latest poll had a 2.7-point margin.

"Timing is everything in politics and Carney entered the political arena at a most favorable time," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal.

Carney's opponent is Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, a career politician and firebrand populist who has campaigned with Trump-like swagger, even

taking a page from the "America First" president by adopting the slogan "Canada First." "This election is a test about whether Canada will embrace or reject populism," Béland said, suggesting many voters view Carney as reassuring because of his experience and calm.

"Without the Trump effect, the Conservatives would probably be in a much stronger position in the polls right now. If Trump wasn't currently in the White House, it would be hard to imagine the Liberals being the favorites in this federal race, considering how unpopular they were just a few months ago."

Who is Carney? Carney navigated crises when he ran Canada's central bank and when he later became the first non-UK citizen to run the Bank of England since its founding in 1694.

More Democratic lawmakers visiting El Salvador on Abrego Garcia's behalf

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

Four House Democratic lawmakers have travelled to El Salvador to call attention to the plight of a man the Trump administration deported to a Salvadoran prison and has refused to help return - even after the Supreme Court ruled that it was the government's duty to do so.

Reps. Yassamin Ansari of Arizona, Maxine Dexter of Oregon, Maxwell Frost of Florida and Robert Garcia of California arrived in the Central American nation on Sunday to investigate the condition of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, who had lived in the United States for more than a decade.

The Trump administration deported him, a move that administration officials have said in court filings was erroneous. But despite a Supreme Court ordering the Trump administration to help facilitate Abrego Garcia's return, the administration has said it has no power to bring him back, a choice being scrutinised by federal courts as potentially in violation of judicial rulings.

"To see the Trump administration so blatantly and egregiously defy the Supreme Court and have no regard for due process is extremely alarming to me," Ansari said in an interview.

"Even with all of the illegal actions we've seen over the last couple of months, I think this is the one that terrifies me the most when it comes to the future of our democracy."

The quartet's trip comes after Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland travelled to El Salvador last week and met Abrego Garcia and Salvadoran officials. Abrego Garcia had lived in Maryland with his wife and

Despite a Supreme Court ordering the Donald Trump administration to help facilitate Abrego Garcia's return, the administration has said it has no power to bring him back

three children, who are American citizens, before he was deported on March 15.

Abrego Garcia's protected legal status prohibited him from being deported to El Salvador. He was deported on one of three planes filled with alleged migrant gang members.

Garcia said he and Frost sent a letter last week to House Oversight Committee Chair James Comer, R-Ky., requesting that an official delegation go to El Salvador to investigate Abrego Garcia's condition and push for his return, but received no response.

Ansari said more Democrats would be travelling to El Salvador in the coming days and weeks.

"Those of us in the House who are here greatly admire and support what Sen. Van Hollen did," Garcia said.

Of Abrego Garcia, he said, "His family knew that he was safe, but he's not home, and so we've got to continue the pressure, and we've got to ensure that the rule of law in the United States is allowed."

Justice Department lawyers said in court last week that they have no power to advance Abrego Garcia's return because he is in a foreign country's custody.

Administration officials also claimed in public comments that Abrego Garcia was

engaged in human trafficking and terrorism and therefore correctly deported.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said that if Abrego Garcia were to return to the US, "he would immediately be deported again."

Van Hollen unsuccessfully lobbied the Salvadoran government for Abrego Garcia's return. He told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that the United States is facing a "constitutional crisis" if the Trump administration does not follow the Supreme Court's order to push to bring Abrego Garcia back.

It's a warning Democrats are increasingly amplifying. Rather than debate President Donald Trump's headline immigration policy or the merits of the administration's invocation of national security to carry out deportations, Democratic lawmakers are zeroing in on the issue of due process, with some noting that the Supreme Court and lower court federal judges found Abrego Garcia was deported without a proper hearing.

"The government's argument, moreover, implies that it could deport and incarcerate any person, including US citizens, without legal consequence, so long as it does so before a court can intervene," Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote in the court's ruling in Abrego Garcia's case.

Said Garcia: "They're trying to demonize him, and we're not here to defend him. He deserves due process, and everyone deserves due process. ... What he did or may have done, that has to be decided by a judge." Several House Republicans have visited El Salvador's Terrorism Confinement Centre, the prison where Abrego Garcia is being held, and lauded the facility for what they view as El Salvador's tough-on-crime policies.

Drones pose increasing risk to airliners

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

A commercial airliner was on final approach to San Francisco's international airport in November when the crew spotted a drone outside the cockpit window. By then it was too late "to take evasive action," the pilots reported, and the quadcopter passed by their windshield, not 300 feet away.

A month earlier, a jetliner was flying at an altitude of 4,000 feet near Miami's international airport when its pilots reported a "close encounter" with a drone. In August, a drone came within 50 feet of clipping the left wing of a passenger jet as it departed Newark International Airport. The incidents were all classified as "near midair collisions" - any one of



which could have had catastrophic consequences, according to aviation safety experts. They were also not isolated encounters.

An Associated Press analysis of an aviation safety database reveals that drones last year accounted for nearly two-thirds of reported near midair collisions involving commercial passenger planes taking

off and landing at the country's top 30 busiest airports. That was the highest percentage of such near misses since 2020, when air traffic dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first reports of near misses involving drones were logged in 2014, the AP found. The number of such encounters spiked the following year. Over the last decade, drones accounted for 51% - 122 of 240 - of reported near misses, according to AP's analysis.

Passenger jets have long been subject to risks around airports - whether from bird strikes or congested airspace - as was made clear by the January collision between a military helicopter and commercial jet near Washington, D.C., that killed 67 people.

Oscar Piastri wins F1's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jeddah

Oscar Piastri has shown he has the pace to fight for the Formula 1 title. In winning the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, he showed he can win an argument, too.

For the first time this season, a penalty played a key role in deciding a race win as Piastri went top of the standings with his victory.

Piastri's two earlier wins this season had been dominant drives from pole position. This time he had to get past four-time champion Max Verstappen.

Verstappen started on pole but went off the track when battling for the lead with Piastri at the very first corner. He stayed in front but got a five-second penalty. Piastri argued he had got in front of Verstappen on the inside of the corner and deserved the place.

"Once I got on the inside, I was not coming out of turn one in second," Piastri said.

"I tried my best. Obviously the stewards had to get involved. I thought I was plenty far enough up and that's what won me the race."

Charles Leclerc was third for Ferrari and Piastri's McLaren teammate, Lando Norris,



finished fourth thanks to a smart strategy and overtaking. Norris had started 10th following a crash in qualifying.

It was the second win in a row for Piastri, who took the victory in Bahrain last week and has three wins from five races this year. He'd only won two before this season.

Piastri leads the standings by 10 points from Norris, with Verstappen two points further back in third.

Piastri was three points behind Norris going into Sunday's race, partly because of a costly spin at his home race in Australia, the first GP of the season.

He becomes the first Australian to lead the F1 standings since Mark Webber — who is now Piastri's manager — in 2010 as a Red Bull driver. No Australian has won the title since Alan Jones in 1980.

A race-deciding decision

Piastri said the penalty was what gave him the win. He had problems keeping up with Verstappen's car before the pit stops without damaging his tires.

Piastri beat Verstappen off the line and was slightly ahead into the first corner, only for Verstappen to run wide across the chicane. Following a crash between Yuki Tsunoda and Pierre Gasly seconds later,

Piastri and Verstappen argued their cases over the radio while lined up behind the safety car. Verstappen accused Piastri of forcing him off but the stewards disagreed and gave the Dutch driver a five-second penalty for driving off-track and gaining an advantage. That was "lovely," Verstappen reacted sarcastically. He had to serve the penalty parked at his pit stop before the crew could touch the car to change tires.

Asked about the incident after the race, Verstappen instead praised the fans and the track and said "the rest is what it is."

Norris' gamble

Norris recovered to fourth after starting 10th. Norris' strategy was the opposite of most of the field, starting on the slower, longer-lasting hard tires. It meant he briefly led the race after most other drivers had pitted earlier and could have put him in a position to win if there was an incident requiring the safety car or red flag while he was leading.

There nearly was a big crash when Fernando Alonso and Gabriel Bortoleto banged wheels while battling for position near the back of the field. Two-time champion Alonso ran into a runoff area but kept his car under control.

Liverpool victory over Leicester in Premier League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manchester

The Premier League title is so close Liverpool can almost touch it. Trent Alexander-Arnold's second-half strike in Liverpool's 1-0 victory over Leicester on Sunday pushed the Merseyside club to within one more win of a record-equalling 20th English league crown. It would not even require that if second-placed Arsenal loses to Crystal Palace on Wednesday. But regardless of any other result, Liverpool knows victory against Tottenham at Anfield next Sunday will be enough to seal the title.

"One win away now, it's very close," said Alexander-Arnold, who tore his jersey off in celebration after his decisive goal.

Arsenal had ensured Liverpool would have to wait a while longer for its crowning moment after routing Ipswich 4-0 earlier Sunday.

And for long periods at the King Power Stadium, Leicester threatened to frustrate the league leader — even having a Conor Coady goal disallowed before Alexander-Arnold's winner.

Defeat confirmed 2016 league champion Leicester's relegation.

Wolves sealed top-flight safety by beating Manchester United 1-0 after Pablo Sarabia's brilliant second-half free kick. Chelsea moved up to fifth by rallying to beat Fulham 2-1 with two late goals.

One more win. That's all it will take for Liverpool to be crowned champion and

move level with Manchester United's record title haul. And the joy on Alexander-Arnold's face after crashing a left-footed shot past Leicester goalkeeper Mads Hermansen in the 76th minute underlined the importance of the win.

Liverpool struggled to find a breakthrough despite hitting the frame of the goal including twice in the buildup to Alexander-Arnold's strike

While the title has looked destined for Anfield for much of the season, this was the latest occasion in recent weeks when the strains of the campaign have seemed to weigh on Liverpool.

Against a Leicester team that needed to win to hold off relegation, Liverpool struggled to find a breakthrough despite hitting the frame of the goal — including twice in the buildup to Alexander-Arnold's strike. Leicester also saw an effort from Wilfried Ndidi hit the post in the first half and Coady had a goal ruled out for a foul on Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson.

On came Alexander-Arnold, who is widely tipped to join Real Madrid at the end of the season, and he provided the decisive moment.

After a goalmouth scramble had seen Mohamed Salah and Diogo Jota hit the woodwork, Alexander-Arnold's shot went

under the body of Hermansen. The goal sparked wild scenes as Alexander-Arnold ran to the corner to celebrate with the traveling supporters.

Liverpool's last title in 2020 came when teams had to play behind closed doors because of the COVID-19 pandemic. "To be so close to sealing for some of us a second league title, and for a lot of us a first league title, but especially in front of fans — which is what we've been missing — is very special," Alexander-Arnold said. After eliminating holder Real Madrid from the Champions League in midweek, Arsenal cruised to victory against an Ipswich team that is now all but certain to be relegated.

Leandro Trossard's low shot gave Mikel Arteta's team the lead in the 14th and Gabriel Martinelli made it 2-0 before the break. Trossard scored his ninth of the season in the second half and Ethan Nwaneri completed the rout late on.

Arsenal plays Liverpool midweek when it can at least delay Liverpool's coronation until next weekend.

Ipswich's fate is almost sealed. Sitting 18th in the standings, it can only pick up a maximum of 36 points by winning its remaining five games this season. That would still only put it level with 17th-placed West Ham's current points tally.

Highs and lows

After the highs of United's epic Europa League comeback against Lyon on Thursday, Old Trafford was brought back

down to earth after yet another Premier League defeat.

A 15th league loss of the season is a club record high for United in the Premier League era. United has not lost so many games in a league season since the 1989-90 campaign when it was defeated 16 times in England's old Division One.

According to statistician Opta, eight home defeats in the league is the most since United was beaten nine times in 1962-63.

United is already certain to set the club's worst-ever points total in the Premier League. The latest loss left Ruben Amorim's team on 38 points. United's lowest total was 58 in the 2021-22 season. With five rounds remaining, even a perfect finish would only see United amass 53. "We have to score goals. We need to improve in that area of the game clearly. If you don't score goals, you don't win games," United coach Amorim said.

Wolves, meanwhile, made it five wins in a row in the Premier League — and set a new club best in the Premier League.

Substitute Sarabia had only been on the field for three minutes when he curled a free kick from outside of the area into the top corner.

Wolves moved level on points with United to ensure it would avoid the drop.

Chelsea's Champions League hopes looked set to take a hit when trailing 1-0 to Fulham and with time running out at Craven Cottage.

Bayer Leverkusen draw 1-1 with St Pauli in Bundesliga

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Augsburg

Bayer Leverkusen's hopes of a second consecutive Bundesliga title faded with a 1-1 draw at St. Pauli on Sunday. Patrik Schick put Leverkusen ahead in the first half but Carlo Boukhalfa equalised in the 78th to leave the defending champion eight points behind Bayern Munich with four rounds remaining.

Bayern, which beat Heidenheim 4-0 on Saturday, could clinch the title on Saturday if it beats Mainz and Leverkusen loses to Augsburg.

Last season, Leverkusen completed an unprecedented unbeaten Bundesliga season for its first Germany league title — and also went unbeaten to lift the German Cup.

Dortmund wins after Champions League elimination

Borussia Dortmund beat Borussia Mönchengladbach 3-2 in Dortmund's first game since its Champions League elimination.

Dortmund scored three goals in the space of nine minutes to turn the game around just before halftime.

Fresh off scoring a hat trick against Barcelona on Tuesday, Serhou Guirassy leveled the score in the 41st off Pascal Gross' cross following Ko Itakura's opener for Mönchengladbach.

Felix Nmecha made it 2-1 off a cross

from Yan Couto soon after. Daniel Svensson added a third in the fifth minute of first-half added time with a looping header on the rebound when a Guirassy shot was saved.

Kevin Stoger pulled one back for Mönchengladbach with a second-half penalty. On-loan Chelsea midfielder Carney Chukwuemeka played a prominent role in the buildup to all three of Dortmund's goals after missing the Barcelona loss with injury.

Augsburg rescues a point

A last-second clearance from Cédric Zesiger rescued a point for Augsburg in a 0-0 draw with Eintracht Frankfurt that set back both teams' efforts to qualify for European competition next season.

Frankfurt's Ansgar Knauff seemed certain to score after dribbling past defender Zesiger and goalkeeper Finn Dahmen but Zesiger sprinted back and slid to block Knauff's shot in front of an unguarded net.

Augsburg nearly took the win in the final minutes but Frankfurt goalkeeper Kevin Trapp reacted quickly to push Phillip Tietz's shot around the post.

Frankfurt stays third but has won just four of 12 Bundesliga games since forward Omar Marmoush left for Manchester City in January as teams behind have gained ground.



Saint-Etienne beats Lyon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

Saint-Etienne boosted its chances of staying in Ligue 1 after winning a match which had been interrupted Sunday when a linesman was hit on the head by a projectile.

Saint-Etienne beat Lyon 2-1 to dent its local rival's hopes of qualifying directly for the Champions League.

The high-octane match was halted for 45 minutes after linesman Mehdi Rahmouni was hit by a projectile — possibly a coin — thrown from the crowd close to halftime at Stade Geoffroy-Guichard. Belgian forward Lucas Stassin scored before and after the interruption to reach 12 league goals and the 20-year-old's scoring prowess could prove crucial to keeping his side up.

Saint-Etienne moved level on points with 16th-placed Le Havre in the relegation-playoff spot, with four games left.

Lyon's goal came from American defender Tanner Tessmann's fine curler from the edge of the penalty area in the 76th minute. It was his first goal for the club. "We needed to start the game better," Tessmann said. "The first half was really bad." French league officials met to decide whether to continue the match and agreed to do so because Rahmouni was not injured.

The match resumed at 10:15 p.m. Local time with the closing stages of the first half, and Rahmouni was given a thumbs up by referee François Letexier and a warm ovation as he took up his position.

Letexier had halted the game in the 45th minute. It was unclear who threw the projectile. There were no away fans

at the match for security reasons due to a high risk of clashes between rival supporters. Saint-Etienne was leading 1-0 at the time. Left back Léo Pétrot curled in a pinpoint cross to Stassin, who headed in from close range and celebrated among the fans.

Stassin was shown a red card in the 23rd minute for a crude foul on Lyon midfielder Corentin Tolisso, who had to be taken off, but Letexier changed his decision following a video review and Stassin received only a yellow card.

The decision enraged Lyon president John Textor. "One of the most obvious red cards one can see is waved off," the American posted on Instagram.

David double
Canada striker Jonathan David scored two goals and set up the other as Lille beat Auxerre 3-1 to maintain its push for a Champions League place next season.

Lille's win moved it provisionally up to fourth place and pressured Lyon, which had to win. The top three sides in France earn an automatic place into Europe's elite club competition, while the side in fourth enters qualifying.

Belgium right back Thomas Meunier gave Lille an early lead after being found by David, who then netted late in the first half with a clinical first-time effort.

After an own-goal from Brazilian defender Alessandro made it 2-1, David ran through deep into injury time and held off defenders before grabbing his 16th league goal of what is likely to be his final season at Lille.

He is expected to move to a leading European club this summer. Since joining Lille in 2020, he has scored 107 goals in 228 games.

Neeraj Chopra Classic javelin event shifted to Bengaluru

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The maiden edition of Neeraj Chopra Classic javelin throw event on May 24 has been shifted from Panchkula to Bengaluru due to lack of adequate lighting at the original venue but the field will be teeming with stars as the likes of Anderson Peters and Thomas Rohler have confirmed their participation.

Peters, who hails from Grenada, is a two-time world champion and Rohler is the gold-medallist from the 2016 Olympics. Chopra said he has also invited Pakistani Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem who is, however, yet to confirm participation.

"I have sent invitation to Arshad and he said he will get back to me after discussing with his coach. As of now he is yet to confirm participation," Chopra told reporters in a virtual media interaction.

The competition has been granted category A status by World Athletics.

"I wanted the event in Panchkula but there are certain issues related to lighting at the stadium there. World Athletics

requirement is 600 lux (a measure of the intensity of light), which is not there (in Panchkula) and it will take time (to install it)," he said.

I wanted the event in Panchkula but there are certain issues related to lighting at the stadium there

— NEERAJ CHOPRA, ATHLETE

"So, we have decided to shift the event to Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru. We have a team there and it will be lot easier for the event to be staged there," said the 27-year-old who is also supported by Bengaluru-based JSW Sports.

The event will be jointly organised by Chopra and JSW Sports in collaboration with the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) and World Athletics, featuring top global as well as Indian javelin throwers.

Besides Peters, who also won a bronze medal in the 2024 Paris Olympics, and Rohler, the participation of Kenyan Julius Yego, a silver-medallist in the 2016 Rio

Olympics besides being a 2015 World Championships gold winner, and American Curtis Thompson, who is the current season leader with 87.76m, has also been confirmed.

"A Brazilian, who qualified for the final in (Paris Olympics) has also confirmed participation," Chopra said without giving name, though it could be Luiz da Silva, who finished 11th in Paris with a best throw of 80.67m.

"I'm very much involved in the organisation of the event, which is a dream come true for me. I am also competing. Yesterday, I spoke to Rohit (Yadav) and three to four Indians will be competing. It will be a very good opportunity to get ranking points for World Championships in Tokyo (in September)."

He said his current coach Jan Zelezny, the legendary world record holder, suggested that the event should be named after the Indian superstar.

"I was talking to Zelezny about this event and he said that it would be good if it is named after me.

Bologna defeats Inter Milan in Serie A

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rome

Inter Milan has a history of recent struggles at Bologna and Sunday proved no different.

Riccardo Orsolini's stoppage-time bicycle kick lifted Bologna to a 1-0 victory over the Serie A leader and left the Nerazzurri level with second-placed Napoli with five rounds remaining.

"It hurts conceding a goal like that seconds from the end," Inter coach Simone Inzaghi said. "But the season doesn't end here in Bologna. We still have a lot of goals to chase and now we'll bounce back."

The defeat brought back memories of a goalkeeping blunder by Ionut Radu that gifted Bologna a victory three years ago, setting up the title for rival AC Milan. Inter also lost at Bologna the next season in a rain storm.

Inter won at Bologna last season but spent so much energy it couldn't recover in time before getting eliminated by Atletico Madrid in the Champions League four days later. This time, the match was decided when a long throw-in was flicked on by Inter defender Yann Bisseck toward Orsolini, who turned it in with an acrobatic left-footed volley to send the Renato Dall'Ara into delirium. Inter is chasing a



treble this season and also faces big upcoming games in the Champions League and Italian Cup, but coach Simone Inzaghi had labeled the Bologna visit as the biggest match of the season.

Now the Nerazzurri are deadlocked with Antonio Conte's Napoli team, which isn't involved in any other competitions and can devote all of its energy toward chasing a second title in three years. Napoli won 1-0 at last-placed Monza

on Saturday to heap more pressure onto Inter. Bologna moved up to fourth, one point ahead of Juventus, which visits Parma on Monday.

Inter next faces Milan in the second leg of the Italian Cup semifinals on Wednesday (the first leg finished 1-1). Then after Roma visits the San Siro next weekend, Inter travels to face Barcelona in the first leg of the Champions League semifinals.

Indian women's hockey team leaves for five match series in Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

The Indian women's hockey team led by Salima Tete has left for Australia to compete in a five-match friendly series starting April 26 in Perth, an engagement that will be crucial preparation for the side ahead of the FIH Pro League's European leg in June.

The team left late on Sunday night. The series will begin with two matches against Australia A on April 26 and 27, followed by three encounters against world No. 5 ranked Australian senior team on May 1, 3, and 4 at the Perth Hockey Stadium.

Led by dynamic midfielder Salima, with experienced forward Navneet Kaur as her deputy, the 26-member squad will use the tour as a preparation ground ahead of the European leg of the Pro League, where India will start its campaign on June 7 against the Netherlands.

IPL: Delhi Capitals take on LSG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

Delhi Capitals (DC) will expect a more productive effort from their openers when they visit the 'City of Nawabs' to face an increasingly confident Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in an IPL match here on Tuesday. The Capitals' opening has been a bit of roulette so far this season with Faf du Plessis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Abhishek Porel and the latest entrant Karun Nair coming in at the pole position.

In fact, in the last five matches they had three different opening combinations between those four batters, producing partnerships of 23, 34 0, 9, 0.

It also had to do with the injury of Du Plessis, and the South African's fitness will be closely watched ahead of this match.

Thus far, it looked like a minor glitch because the Capitals have won five of their seven matches and the middle-order under the aegis of KL Rahul too worked like a well-oiled machine.

But Lucknow's competent bowling unit of Digvish Rathie, Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan and Shardul Thakur, though he is a bit expensive, has choked the opposition without much fanfare.

The way Avesh excelled in the 18th and 20th over against Rajasthan Royals in LSG's two-run win is an example of that.

It might have also doubled the confidence of the Super Giants that they can pull off wins from any situation.

Therefore, the Capitals will not like to leave the task of building the innings to



Rahul and his middle-order colleagues as they have been doing so often this time.

Instead, the DC management will like to see their middle-order driving in the early advantage given to them by the top two. In contrast, the Lucknow outfit has a solid top three with Mitchell Marsh, Nicholas Pooran and Aiden Markram firing more often than not and it has given them an edge over opponents in the Power Play phase.

It's ironic that the personal form of DC and LSG skippers is going in exactly the opposite direction of their teams' fortunes. Both DC and LSG have 10 points and

a win will keep them safely perched in the higher echelons of the points table ahead of the jostlers.

But the lukewarm form of skipper Rishabh Pant has been a massive issue for LSG. He has merely 106 runs from eight games and 63 of those came in a single match. His strike-rate of 98 is also a tad worrisome.

Against Delhi, Pant will have to deal with an excellent bowling unit comprising Mitchell Starc, Kuldeep Yadav, Vipraj Nigam and Mukesh Kumar.

But much like LSG, the Delhi side too will have some concerns about their skip-

per — Axar Patel. Axar has led well and made 140 runs at a strike-rate of 159, but those improvements have masked his diminishing returns as a bowler — just a solitary wicket from seven matches at an economy of 9.36.

It seems that the added responsibility of captaining the side and the demands of batting higher up in the order have forced Axar to neglect his primary skills.

The DC management might want him to address this disparity at the earliest so that they can have more variety in their attack.

Teams

Lucknow Super Giants: Rishabh Pant (wk/captain), Aiden Markram, Mitchell Marsh, Nicholas Pooran, Ayush Badoni, Abdul Samad, David Miller, Shardul Thakur, Avesh Khan, Akash Deep, Digvish Singh Rathie, Ravi Bishnoi, Prince Yadav, Shahbaz Ahmed, Matthew Breetzke, Himmat Singh, Shamar Joseph, Manimaran Siddharth, Aryan Juyal, RS Hangargekar, Yuvraj Chaudhary, Akash Maharaj Singh, Mayank Yadav, Arshin Kulkarni.

Delhi Capitals: Axar Patel (c), Jake Fraser-McGurk, Abhishek Porel, Karun Nair, KL Rahul(w), Tristan Stubbs, Ashutosh Sharma, Vipraj Nigam, Mitchell Starc, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohit Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Sameer Rizvi, Darshan Nalkande, Donovan Ferreira, Tripurana Vijay, Dushmantha Chameera, Faf du Plessis, T Natarajan, Ajay Yadav Mandal, Manvanth Kumar L, Madhav Tiwari.

Gujarat Titans defeat Kolkata Knight Riders by 39 runs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Gujarat Titans' top order fired once again as the visitors defeated Kolkata Knight Riders by 39 runs in the IPL here on Monday.

Invited to bat, skipper Shubman Gill sizzled with a 55-ball 90 as fellow opener Sai Sudharsan (52) also continued his purple patch with yet another half-century to help GT post 198/3.

GT bowlers then restricted the hosts to 159/8 despite skipper Ajinkya Rahane's 50.

Skipper Shubman Gill and Sai Sudharsan struck fluent half-centuries in a century-opening stand to guide Gujarat Titans to 196 for 3 against Kolkata Knight Riders in an IPL match here on Monday.

Gill looked set for his maiden ton of the season but fell for 90 off 55 balls, swat-flicking a full toss from Vaibhav Arora straight to Rinku Singh at deep square leg, missing out by just 10 runs. His knock included 10 fours and three sixes.

Together with Sudharsan, Gill added 114 runs for the opening stand.

Despite the strong platform, GT's innings slowed down in the final phase. They managed only 59 runs in the last five overs, with KKR bowlers executing their plans well at the death.

Jos Buttler, despite a promising start, was tied down and finished unbeaten on 41 off 23 balls (8x4s) without hitting a

single six.

The Titans' batting stuttered further as Rahul Tewatia, sent ahead of Sherfane Rutherford, was dismissed for a two-ball duck.

KKR's spin trio — Moeen Ali, Varun Chakravarty, and Sunil Narine — were particularly effective, conceding just 96 runs from their combined 11 overs.

Chakravarty stood out, giving away just three runs in a superb 14th over.

GT's reluctance to take aerial risks — managing just five lofted shots in total — highlighted the effectiveness of KKR's bowling in the second half of the innings.

Fielding, however, remained a concern for the home side. Vaibhav Arora dropped a straightforward chance running back from mid-off to dismiss Buttler when he was on 17.

Opting to bowl, KKR endured a wicketless powerplay as GT made a steady start, reaching 45 for no loss.

Harshit Rana's fifth over, which went for 12 runs, was the only expensive one in that phase. KKR tried four bowlers in the powerplay, including spinners Moeen and Chakravarty, but couldn't find a breakthrough. Gill and Sudharsan batted with maturity, rotating strike efficiently and picking boundaries without taking unnecessary risks.

They maintained a scoring rate close to nine an over and played just one aerial shot in the first 10 overs showing their controlled approach.

Mumbai Indians have encouraged Rohit to bat with aggressive approach: Jayawardene

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Rohit Sharma's aggressive approach with the bat might have drawn criticism for more misses than hits but Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardene said the team has backed the former captain to bat at a similar tempo despite its perils.

Rohit stroked his way to a match-winning 45-ball 76 here on Sunday against Chennai Super Kings to banish an ordinary run of scores so far in this IPL season. "Once he comes off like that, you know that he's going to change the game and the momentum and that's going to filter down to the rest of the boys as well, so pretty happy with the approach," Jayawardene told the media in the post-match press conference.

"He never changed his approach. The intent was there from day one, even though he was failing, so that was good for us (in the way) that he was trying to play for the team and how he wanted to do it. We just backed him to do that," he added.

Jayawardene said showing situational

awareness is imperative and Rohit was able to execute his plans well against CSK.

"He's been playing at this tempo for a while and that's something that he understands himself. But at the same time, he will understand the game better in situational awareness as well," he said.

He (Rohit) has been playing at this tempo for a while and that's something that he understands himself.

— MAHELA JAYAWARDENE, COACH

"Like today, when Ash (Ravichandran Ashwin) came (on to bowl) as well, he (Rohit) took a little bit of time. He knew that he didn't have to take (on) the long boundary straight away," Jayawardene said. "But those are experienced players making those good decisions out there. He'll still play with that tempo and we've encouraged him to do that because he's a damn good player, we want him to take control of that."

"He has got a couple of other guys who are going to follow him, who will bat

around him as well (to) take that little bit of onus away from certain situations," he added.

Jayawardene said MI built match-up situations in the game for Rohit in training to help him be in the right frame of mind. "Rohit does bat in the nets, but there is a different preparation to how he goes about it. For him, there were a couple of good balls he got and then a couple of times that he tried things that didn't work, so you try to fight through those situations," he said.

"For a guy with that kind of experience, you literally leave them be and have those positive conversations and say that, 'let's do the matchups and then see how he's going' and keep those positive intent."

"That was the very few conversations Polly (Kieron Pollard) had with him, I had with him and he was quite okay about everything. He knows what he needs to do," he added.

Jayawardene said there wasn't much concern around Rohit's string of ordinary scores. "It was just a timing thing that he gets going and then gets through that first three, four overs," he said.

Even if CSK does not qualify, need to get 'secure eleven': Captain MS Dhoni

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

We need to see whether we are playing the right form of cricket," the struggling Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni said, urging his teammates to do a bit of soul-searching with an eye on the bigger picture of creating a "secure eleven" for the 2026 IPL season.

Dhoni hinted that players "aren't applying themselves" but also said that he is closer to identifying the core for next year.

"With all the games that are in front of us that we are supposed to win, we just take it one game at a time and if we lose a few, what will be important for us is to get the right combination for next year," Dhoni said after his team got trounced by nine wickets at the hands of Mumbai Indians in an IPL game here on Sunday evening. "You do not want too many players getting changed, what will be important is to try and qualify, but if not get a secure 11 for next year and come back strong," the skipper said.

If one talks about core, CSK's class of

2026 will not be a 'Dad's Army' like the previous years. A 17-year-old Ayush Mhatre, 20-year-old Shaikh Rasheed, 21-year-old Dewald Brevis, and 22-year-old Vansh Bedi are expected to form the batting core next year with the 25-year-old Rachin Ravindra, skipper Rituraj Gaikwad and slogger Shivam Dube.

Having already lost six out of eight games, the bottom-placed CSK will find it extremely difficult to win all their remaining six games to make it to the last four stage which looks like a long shot at the moment. "We are successful because we play good cricket and at the same time, when we are not playing good cricket what is important is not to get too emotional about it and at the same time, you want to be practical," he added.

Dhoni rarely gives his opinion on any issue but he did not mince words in dissecting his team's poor batting. CSK have consistently failed to either chase or put up big scores.

"I think we were quite below par, because we all knew that dew will come in the second half and we were in a posi-

tion to exploit the middle overs," Dhoni spoke about lack of cricketing sense among the batters. He wanted his set batters to start slogging slightly earlier.

"I just felt that (Jasprit) Bumrah being one of the best death bowlers in the world right now, once he (Bumrah) started early, that was the time we should have capitalised and started our slog slightly early.

"And if even Bumrah also goes for runs, it's a plus point. I think there were a few overs where we could have got slightly more runs. We needed those runs because 175 with the dew around is not a par score." He was all praise for Mhatre, who smashed everyone out of the park.

"I think as a youngster he batted really well, and that's the kind of approach that is needed where you play your shots and at the same time, you pick your shots that is your strength," the skipper said.

"He went and played his shots and we also have not seen him much. So, it is a good sign for us at the top of the order that if he can keep playing the shots, it will become slightly easier for the middle and lower order."

Shubman Gill take bold decisions: Rashid Khan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Star Afghan spinner Rashid Khan says the pressure of performance in IPL is more than the World Cup and Shubman Gill as the leader of Gujarat Titans has a great opportunity to take bold decisions to prove his credentials as a great captain. Rashid, who plays under Gill at Gujarat Titans, spoke highly of his skipper saying he has all the qualities to be a great leader.

"Shubman has a very bright future as a leader, not just as a batter but in the way he thinks and understands the game," Rashid said on JioHotstar's special series 'Gen Gold'. "He comes with a plan. He's very calm, and when you see him on the ground—the way he manages the team, the bowlers, and the overall environment, he has all the qualities to be a great leader."

"He's captaining in such a big league, and the pressure here is even more than the World Cup. This is the best opportunity for him as a captain to perform under pressure and take bold decisions," said the 26-year-old wily leg-spinner.

Talking about his own brief stint with Titans as skipper when Hardik Pandya was indisposed, Rashid said the opportunity during the 2022 season helped him grow as a leader which helped him do national duty even better.

"It was a dream come true. That experience helped me grow, not just in the league but also when I returned to lead Afghanistan. I started thinking differently," he said. "Compared to 4-5 years ago, I had a shift in mindset. That leadership stint helped me and played a part in Afghanistan reaching the semi-finals in 2024 (of the T20 World Cup)."

BCCI central contracts: Rohit, Virat retained in top grade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's Test and ODI captain Rohit Sharma and batting talisman Virat Kohli retained their place in the top category, while the out-of-favour duo of Shreyas Iyer and Ishan Kishan returned to the fold in lower brackets in a 34-strong list of centrally contracted players released by the BCCI on Monday.

The A+ grade, which commands an annual retainer fee of ₹7 crore, also features Ravindra Jadeja and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah much like the last few years. India's Champions Trophy hero Iyer has been the notable comeback in the list, inducted in group B which comes with an annual remuneration of ₹3 crore. Iyer was dropped last season for allegedly ignoring domestic cricket for IPL. Wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan. Dropped for the same reason, also made a comeback in category C, which is worth ₹1 crore annually.

Rishabh Pant, who was demoted to



group B during the 2023-24 season as he didn't play due to his recovery from a life-threatening accident, is back in A category in place of the retired Ravichandran Ashwin. Category A comes with a retainer of ₹5 crore annually.

Category C features the maximum

number of players, 19 in all, with five new entrants in Harshit Rana, Varun Chakravarty, Abhishek Sharma and Nitish Kumar Reddy and Akash Deep, who earlier had a fast bowling contract.

The only notable name missing in the list is Mumbai all-rounder Shardul

Thakur, who last played for India in the 2023 ODI World Cup game against Bangladesh in Pune.

Fast bowler Avesh Khan, keeper-batters Kona Bharat and Jitesh Sharma have also been excluded from the list.

BCCI central contracts list:

A+ category: Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja

A category: Mohammed Siraj, KL Rahul, Shubman Gill, Hardik Pandya, Mohammad Shami, Rishabh Pant

B category: Suryakumar Yadav, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shreyas Iyer

C category: Rinku Singh, Tilak Verma, Rituraj Gaikwad, Shivam Dube, Ravi Bishnoi, Washington Sundar, Mukesh Kumar, Sanju Samson, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Rajat Patidar, Dhruv Jurel, Sarfaraz Khan, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Ishan Kishan, Abhishek Sharma, Akash Deep, Varun Chakravarty, Harshit Rana.

IPL: Ayush Mhatre debut marks shift in CSK's with experience-first philosophy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

For a side which has thrived on experienced players for its five IPL titles, it was uncharacteristic of Chennai Super Kings to promote a 17-year-old Ayush Mhatre barely days after he joined the camp. It was only last Monday when domestic giants Mumbai's newest batting talent Mhatre joined the CSK ranks for an IPL marred by lack of form and courage from batters, made worse by a season-ending injury to skipper Rituraj Gaikwad.

Mhatre's debut against MI might have come as a surprise for those who have seen CSK taking their own time before putting faith in young players. But his story will now be that point in history when the IPL powerhouse ended its own tradition with a "view to the future".

In a mere 18 minutes in the middle, Mhatre gave a fine account of himself for

someone who wants to be purely known as an "aggressive batsman", something that he said after breaking Yashasvi Jaiswal's List A record for being the youngest to score 150 or more. On Sunday, he struck four fours and two sixes for a 15-ball 32.

Mhatre's brisk knock didn't last long but it gave CSK the spark they've been missing in the powerplay most of this IPL, putting him in a very small group of players to watch out for in the future including Rajasthan Royals' Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. It also rightfully earned him a pat on the back from senior pros Rohit Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav.

"We have had a few players through at our trainings and he was a player that stood out," CSK head coach Stephen Fleming told the media after the match.

"It's still very hard when you're in a net situation to get a true gauge of a player, but from a skill set (perspective), he was very



impressive and a very composed young man which is often just as important.

"Both MS (Dhoni) and I were very impressed with the way he moved together for the trial, and when the opportunity came up — we have obviously got a view to the future — he was a name that was pretty easy to pick," he added.

Fleming acknowledged CSK's situation of carrying several out-of-form batters and Mhatre's familiarity with his hometown Mumbai and the Wankhede Stadium spurred them to hand him the debut.

"Probably the position (that) we're in, and with the injury to Ritu and with form for others, it made it quite an easy decision to get him in there," Fleming said.

"A stage that seems big — but it's (the) one that's familiar — so we banked on him being comfortable with his surroundings and he certainly looked all that. It was an impressive debut," he added.

From a far away suburb of Virar, Mhatre learnt his cricket in Mumbai taking early morning days into the city and putting in the hard yards.

He rose through the ranks quickly before an unfortunate road accident involving Musheer Khan paved the way for the 17-year-old to be picked, and Mhatre

made the most of the opportunity.

His maiden century in Ranji Trophy was not merely a ton but a knock long enough to tell that there was plenty of substance in his fledgling career. Mhatre scored 176 for his maiden First-Class ton which came off 232 balls with 22 fours and four sixes as Mumbai took down Maharashtra by nine wickets. He scored 471 runs in eight matches at 33.64 with two centuries and one fifty in his debut Ranji season.

In the premier 50-overs domestic competition Vijay Hazare Trophy, Mhatre's successful run persisted as he scored 458 runs in seven matches at 65.42 with two centuries and a fifty to finish eighth in the overall list of highest run-scorers.

Mhatre is not alone, 20-year-old Shaikh Rasheed, 21-year-old Dewald Brevis, and 22-year-old Vansh Bedi are also expected to form CSK's batting core next year.