



OPINION 6
BRS FACES EXISTENTIAL
CRISIS AS KCR FALTERS

WORLD 9
CHINA ACCUSES QUAD OF
'INCITING' CONFRONTATION

MONEY 10
INDIA'S POWER GENERATION
CAPACITY RISES

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Dilli door ast... aspirants

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The tragedy in infamous by-lane of Old Rajinder Nagar in the national Capital, which claimed the lives of three IAS aspirants last week, rocked Parliament on Monday. Leaders cutting across party lines demanded a high-level probe and called for a mechanism to curb mushrooming of coaching centres nationwide, particularly in Delhi. Lok Sabha members demanded an enquiry into the tragic incident, while Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said the culture of coaching centres has spawned "gas chambers" and stressed on the need to examine the huge expenditure on newspaper advertisements by them. Given the sensitivity and urgency of the matter the Upper House agreed for a short duration discussion on the deaths of three UPSC aspirants by drowning in a coaching centre in Delhi due to waterlogging. While BJP's New Delhi Lok Sabha MP Bansuri Swaraj blamed the AAP-led Delhi Government for "utter apathy", AAP leader Sanjay Singh urged the Rajya Sabha Chairperson to hold discussions in the House also on NEET, Manipur violence and "infiltration" by China. DMK MP Tiruchi Siva sought to know had this incident happened in a NEET centre, what would have the Treasury Benches done. He said the Delhi Lieutenant Governor has all the powers in the national Capital and only he should be held responsible (for this incident). "The Chief Minister of Delhi is just for namesake," he said.



File photo: PTI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan informed Parliament that there are clear guidelines for running coaching centres and it is the duty of the State Governments to supervise their functioning. "We must fix responsibility so that such incidents do not recur. There should be no politics... Negligence has happened and someone has to take responsibility so that a solution can be found," Pradhan said. The Government has sent advisories related to coaching centres to the States and Union

Territories in 2017, 2019, 2020 and 2024, he informed. BJP MP Sudhanshu Trivedi who initiated the discussion in Rajya Sabha, pointed towards the "laxities" of the Delhi Government's various departments. "There were many complaints (against the institute). A student complained on June 26 and then a reminder on July 22 while the fire department gave NOC (no-objection certificate) for the use of the basement as storage," Trivedi said. In his remarks Dhankhar said, "I find that youth demographic

dividend of the country has to be nurtured, I further find that coaching has become virtually commerce." He also pointed out the high sums earned by the coaching centres leading to commercialisation of education. "Coaching have become a flourishing industry with high returns.... Every time we read a newspaper front one or two pages are by way of advertisements.... Every penny spent on advertisement is coming from the students, every new building is coming from the students," he said.

Comparing the coaching culture to no less than "gas chambers", the Chairman stated, "In a country where opportunities are growing this silo is turning out to be a problem... They are becoming no less than a gas chamber." He urged the members to tell the youths about the various other employment and skill opportunities available in the country. Congress MP Randeep Singh Surjewala demanded a law to regulate fee structure and ensure safety of students, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav wrote to Speaker Om Birla urging him to direct the Government to pay ₹one crore compensation to the next of kin of the students who died. In the Lok Sabha the issue of suicides in the coaching hub of Kota in Rajasthan was also raised and Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar said several initiatives have been taken by the Centre to curb incidents of suicide among students. "According to NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) and Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India, only 1.2 per cent of total suicide cases are related to failure in examinations," Majumdar told the House. On the other hand a civil services aspirant wrote to Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud seeking action against officials responsible for the deaths of three fellow students. In his letter, Avinash Dubey said students residing in these areas are "living a life of hell" due to annual flooding caused by "apathy" of the authorities.

Media muffled



Pioneer photo

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

After a day-long protest by the mediapersons over the security norms to curb the movement of journalists in the Parliament premises on Monday, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla met a group of journalists and assured them that all their grievances would be redressed and better facilities would be provided to them to discharge their duties. Print and TV journalists routinely record comments from MPs near the entry and exit points of the Parliament building but on Monday they were restricted to a porta-cabin enclosure made for them. Reporters were removed from Parliament's Makar Dwar where they usually interact with MPs. Makar Dwar is one of the entrances to the new Parliament building. Leader of the Opposition

Rahul Gandhi raised the issue in the Lok Sabha and requested the Speaker to remove the restrictions imposed on the media within Parliament premises. "Sir, I would request you to allow the media, who have been restricted to a cage, to move out," Rahul said in the Lok Sabha. Birla reminded Rahul about the rules of procedures of Parliament and said such issues should be discussed with him in person and not be raised on the floor of the House. Rahul and other Opposition leaders such as Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien, Congress MP Karti Chidambaram, and Shiv Sena-UBT MP Priyanka Chaturvedi met mediapersons in the media enclosure. "This is censorship. This is completely unacceptable. We are with you in this fight," O'Brien said.

Jammu terrorised Hunted to extinction

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A late-night fire incident, in which at least four houses belonging to Kashmiri Pandits were gutted under mysterious circumstances in the Mattan area of Anantnag district on Sunday, has once again sparked a debate and raised serious security concerns among the Kashmiri Pandit community living in exile since 1990. The houses stood tall and witnessed over three-decade-long struggle before they were gutted under mysterious circumstances late last night. "We received this news early in the morning. The fire incident took place around 2.30 am. We demand a high-level probe into the fire," a close relative of the family living in Jammu told reporters. The multi-floor building was considered heritage site in the area. Most visitors reaching Mattan to fulfil their religious obligations used to pay a visit to the area and soak themselves in the glorious history of their forefathers who had constructed these architecturally rich structures. A prominent Kashmiri Pandit activist Ravinder Padita, associated with the Save Sharda in a post on X commented, "Is it sabotage or natural causes? One needs to know".



At least four houses belonging to Kashmiri Pandits were gutted under mysterious circumstances in the Mattan area of Anantnag district. Pioneer Photo

Another Kashmiri Pandit sharing his angst posted a message on X, "A Kashmiri Pandit house gutted in Mattan, Anantnag, Kashmir last night. The genocide continues for 34 years". Chetan Wanchoo, a political worker

associated with the BJP said, "I strongly resent the fire incident at Mattan, Anantnag, where more than 4 houses of Kashmiri Pandits were gutted. This incident raises serious concerns. Urgently request L-G Manoj Sinha to form a high-level enquiry to uncover why these houses were targeted. The main concern is clear: Why are Kashmiri Pandit homes and Hindu shrines repeatedly targeted? Time has come to take decisive action against the miscreants." Meanwhile, Chief Spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Tanvir Sadiq in a post on X commented, "Very sorry to hear that. These are such aesthetic constructions, and architecture which are disappearing slowly. It's a significant loss. I request the police to investigate the case and find out reasons behind this fire incident". Umesh Talashi, also associated with the National Conference said, Heartbroken as four KP houses, including mine, were gutted in a fire in Mattan. Urging Deputy Commissioner Anantnag and Jammu Kashmir Police to take swift action and ensure justice. At the time of the fire incident, no one was staying in the house. Family members claimed in the absence of any power connection the question of fire caused by a short circuit does not arise.

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

On World Tiger Day, July 29, India faces troubling news about its iconic wildlife. If in the first seven months of this year alone, 81 tigers have died across the country due to habitat destruction, poaching, territorial disputes, disease, and human-wildlife conflicts, in the past five years 528 elephants have lost their lives to unnatural causes including electrocution, train accidents, poaching, and poisoning. According to the data available from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Madhya Pradesh-home to the country's largest tiger population-has reported the highest number of mortalities at 27 followed by Maharashtra (14) and Karnataka (11). Madhya Pradesh has seven tiger reserves. The other States which also reported tiger deaths are Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Rajasthan and Assam. Of the total deaths, 45 were adults and eight were cubs, with the sex of the remaining tigers still to be identified. Most fatalities occurred within tiger reserves,



suggesting territorial disputes among the predators and increased human-animal conflicts as many tigers ventured into fringe areas. Presently, there are 54 tiger reserves in India, managed under Project Tiger and overseen by the NTCA. Last calendar year 2023, the country reported a disturbing surge in tiger deaths, reaching a record 204, as reported by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), a non-profit organization engaged in the conservation of these majestic creatures. In contrast, the NTCA data put the figures at 182. The number of tigers in India has increased from 2,967 in 2018 to 3,682 in 2022, an annual rise of 6 per cent,

according to the government data released on the International Tiger Day last year. Meanwhile, distressing figures on elephant deaths were tabled by the Government in the Lok Sabha on Monday underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive conservation strategies amidst growing human-wildlife conflicts and environmental pressures. As per the data on the jumbo deaths, electrocution has been the leading cause, with Odisha topping the list at 71 followed by Assam (55), Karnataka (52), Tamil Nadu (49), Chhattisgarh (32), Jharkhand (30), and Kerala (29) which have been the most affected. Train accidents contributed to deaths

in Assam (22) and Odisha (16). Poaching was reported primarily in Odisha (17), Meghalaya (14), and Tamil Nadu (10), while poisoning cases occurred in Assam (10), Chhattisgarh (2), and West Bengal (1). The question on jumbo deaths was raised by BJP MPs Jayanta Kumar Roy and Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo. In response, Union Minister of State for Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh told the Lok Sabha that 392 elephants died from electrocution and 73 were killed in train accidents during this period. According to the last elephant census conducted in 2017, India has 29,964 elephants, which is around 60 per cent of their global population. Data presented in Parliament last week revealed that human-elephant conflict resulted in 2,853 human deaths in India over the last five years, with the number of fatalities reaching a five-year high of 628 in 2023. The data revealed that Odisha recorded 624 such deaths during this period, Jharkhand 474, West Bengal 436, Assam 383, Chhattisgarh 303, Tamil Nadu 256, Karnataka 160, and Kerala 124.

Kejriwal booked

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday filed a chargesheet against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with its corruption probe into the now scrapped 2021-22 Delhi excise policy, calling him one of the conspirators of the criminal conspiracy. In a related development, the Delhi High Court on Monday reserved its order on the bail plea by Kejriwal in the corruption case. The verdict was reserved by Justice Neena Bansal Krishna after hearing the counsel appearing for the AAP leader as well as the CBI. In the trial court, the CBI filed a chargesheet against Kejriwal alleging the AAP received kickbacks worth ₹100 crore. The CBI, which first questioned Kejriwal in April



2023, has so far filed five chargesheets in the case against 18 accused including Kejriwal's former deputy, Manish Sisodia, and Bharat Rashtia Samithi leader K Kavitha. The CBI said the one filed today, will be its final charge sheet in the case. The development came days after Delhi's Rouse Avenue Court extended Kejriwal's judicial custody in the case

till August 8. The court also extended the judicial custody of Sisodia and Kavitha in connection with a money-laundering case linked to the liquor policy case. The CBI has named Kejriwal, AAP MLA Durgesh Pathak, non-executive director of Aurobindo Pharma P. Sarath Chandra Reddy, director of Buddy Retail Pvt Ltd Amit Arora, alleged hawala

operator Vinod Chauhan, and businessman Ashish Mathur as accused. According to the agency, it has been revealed that Vijay Nair [former media in charge of AAP], a close associate of Kejriwal, was contacting various liquor manufacturers and traders and demanding undue gratification since March 2021, for incorporation of provisions favourable to them in the upcoming Delhi excise policy 2021-22." The CBI also alleged that kickbacks of around ₹90-100 crore were paid in advance to some politicians of the ruling AAP in Delhi and other public servants by some persons in the liquor business from South India through co-accused Vijay Nair, Abhishek Boinpally and Dinesh Arora to tweak the Excise Policy for 2021-22.

Continued on Page 8



Shimla: Clouds hover over the hill town of Shimla on Monday

PTI

Priyanka targets UP govt over poor health services

Lucknow (PNS): Congress general secretary and former in-charge of party affairs in Uttar Pradesh, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, on Monday attacked the Yogi Adityanath government over the poor state of affairs of the government-run hospitals.

state." She added. "There is no hospital for treatment; if there is a hospital, there is no ambulance, if you reach the hospital on a handcart with unbearable pain of a broken bone, there is no doctor. The patient is told, there is no orthopedic doctor, come after three days. The promise was of good days, but here the people are struggling to save their lives."

LMC using drone tech to fight mosquito menace

Lucknow (PNS): In a bid to prevent communicable diseases, the Lucknow Municipal Corporation has launched an innovative campaign to spray mosquito larvicidal oil through drones. Under the direction of Municipal Commissioner Inderjit Singh, this large-scale campaign aims to eliminate mosquito breeding sites and control the spread of diseases such as dengue and malaria.

to raise awareness about disease prevention among the general public. "The workshop aims to equip local representatives with the knowledge needed to educate their constituents about communicable disease prevention," an LMC official explained.

Govt to establish UP as hub of pumped storage projects

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government, dedicated to propelling Uttar Pradesh towards becoming a one trillion-dollar economy, has made significant strides in recent years, particularly in increasing the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).

wind energy projects are being rapidly accelerated in the state, the Yogi government is also taking significant steps to establish UP as a hub of pumped storage projects and to develop the necessary infrastructure to support this initiative.

process for a consultancy firm to manage these projects has commenced. In alignment with Yogi's vision, the focus is now on transforming UP into a hub for solar and wind energy and pumped storage projects (PSP).

of a consultancy firm, this report will consider various factors, including capacity, needs, and development standards for PSP sites. Four divisions have been identified for PSP development: Chitrakoot Dham, Jhansi, Varanasi and Vindhyachal.

ment. The pumped storage projects (PSPs) scheme stands out for several reasons. It offers rapid ramping capacity, essential for addressing sudden shortfalls in energy generation. When renewable energy sources like solar and wind experience unexpected drops in output, hydroelectric PSPs can serve as a reliable alternative, providing the necessary power.

releasing it during peak times. This capability helps manage daily and weekly fluctuations in energy supply and demand. Additionally, PSPs enhance overall energy efficiency by enabling large-scale energy storage, optimizing the utilization of generated power, and improving system efficiency.

Two arrested for murder at salon

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the arrest of two youths, the Madaon police on Monday claimed to have worked out the two-day-old murder case of Osama aka Abu Amama. The brutal stabbing, which took place at a barber's shop in Millat Nagar, Faizullahganj, had shocked the local community.

Kin refuse to approve marriage with girlfriend, youth jumps into canal

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Distraught over his family's refusal to approve his marriage to his girlfriend, a young man jumped into a canal in Gosainganj on Monday. The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) carried out a rescue operation but the youth could not be located. The strong water current in the canal hampered search efforts even as the SDRF team was scouring a five-km radius.

ed by Fahad's family, called the SDRF to assist in the search operation. SUBJECTED TO CASTEIST ABUSE, DALIT YOUTH HANGS SELF A 23-year-old Dalit youth, Mahesh Rawat, ended his life hours after allegedly being subjected to casteist abuse in the Madaon police station area on Monday.

chief minister, in contrast to the SP or the Congress. MAYAWATI ACCUSES SP OF MISLEADING PDA Bahujan Samaj Party national president Mayawati has accused Samajwadi Party of misleading the Pichhda, Dalit and Alpsankhyak (PDA) communities to get their votes.

PDA a big betrayal, says KP Maurya

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held the Bharatiya Janata Party Legislative Party meeting ahead of the state assembly monsoon session which commenced on Monday. Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak were also present in the meeting.

There is definitely no place for the Brahmin community (in SP) because the oppression and neglect they have faced in the Samajwadi Party and Bharatiya Janata Party governments is not hidden from anyone. In fact, their development and uplift happened only in the BSP government. Therefore, these people must be careful, she pointed out.

CLASSIFIEDS

सूचना

मैंने अपना पुराना नाम निकिता राठी (Niketa Rathie) एवं पुराना पता 12/482 प्लाटोनी कानपुर नगर 20090, 208001 से बदलकर नया नाम निकिता राठी (Niketaa Rathie) एवं नया पता 4/274-ए प्लाट नं 5 बसंत कुंज राठी नगर कारनिबिदाय नवाबगंज कानपुर नगर उत्तर प्रदेश-208002 कर लिया है भविष्य में मुझे इसी नाम एवं पते से जाना जाए।

सूचना

मैंने अपना नाम Mohammad MERAJ से बदलकर Mohd MERAJ रख लिया है, Mohd Meraj S/o Mohammad Atzal R/o 105/661, रेलवे लाइन फहीमाबाद, कानपुर।

NOTICE

I have changed my name from MOHAMMAD SHAMIM to MOHAMMAD SAMIM SALMANI S/O MOHAMMAD SALEEM SALMANI for future purpose. Add- B-1071/2 G.T.B. NAGAR KARELI PRAYAGRAJ.

सूचना

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरे पुत्र का सही नाम राज त्रिपाठी पुत्र आदित्य नारायण है, जो उसके शैक्षिक अभिलेख में अंकित है। सुविधा मेरे पुत्र के आधार कार्ड संख्या 599388 193108 में भास्कर नारायण अंकित हो गया है, जो उसका सही नाम है। भविष्य में मेरे पुत्र को राज त्रिपाठी पुत्र आदित्य नारायण के नाम से जाना और पहचाना जाए। आदित्य नारायण पुत्र स्वर्गीय मृगु लाल त्रिपाठी निवासी ग्राम खड़ेवा मौजा खंडेडा तहसील मक, जिला चित्रकुट।

NOTICE

I declare my name in Passport GITA Srivastava is wrong. That the my Right Name is GITA SHRIVASTAV. In future my name is called GITA SHRIVASTAV. Ressi. 614/S/40 Preeti Nagar Dudauli Marg Lucknow. UP 226021

NOTICE

I HAV. BENEESH K S S/O P KARUNAKARAN ARMY NO-4007075Y UNIT -4 DOGRA R/o-Vill-Vellara Post- kudappanmoodu, Tehsil- Neyyattinkara Dist-thiruvananthapuram Kerala-695505. In my service record my mother's name has been written by mistake as SOBHY G and date of birth is 31-08-1955 whereas her real name is SOBHI G and correct date of birth is 24-08-1960. This should be recorded.

NOTICE

Notify that due to mistake my son's Name shourya Srivastava s/o Puneet Srivastava written in School Records where as correct Name is shaurya Srivastava s/o Puneet Srivastava Please correct accordingly. Punit srivastava D-67 Shivani vihar Kalyanpur lucknow UP -226022

सूचना

सूचित किया जाता है कि शैलेन्द्र कुमार उपाध्याय पुत्र सुंदर कौता नाथ उपाध्याय प्लॉट सं 56, EWS ADA कालोनी, म्योराबाद, प्रयागराज आज दिनांक 18.07.2024 को सार्व 04:30 बजे उपरोक्त प्लॉट के सभी मूल प्रति आवंटन पत्र दिनांक 27.03.1990 के कब्जा पत्र दिनांक 14.10.1992 विक्रय-विलेख दिनांक 04.01.2008 को बही सं 0-1, जिल्द सं 5864, पृष्ठ सं 243 से 256 पर क्रमांक सं 29, लीज डीड 04.01.2008 को बही सं 0-1, जिल्द सं 5864, पृष्ठ सं 257 से 272 तक क्रमांक सं 30 उप निबंधक (प्रथम) इलाहाबाद जो श्री विनोद कुमार राय पुत्र सुंदर सुब्रंश से बैनामा कराया था सभी मूल प्रति हाईकोर्ट फोटो सेंटर के आस-पास गिर गयी है।

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Inderjeet Singh To Indrajeet Singh S/O Ranjeet Singh R/O 83, Panchwati Vaishnu Mata Mandir Ke Pass Vinayakpur, Rawatpur Kanpur for future purpose

NOTICE

This is to inform that Original sale deed (chain deed), which was duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar Nawabganj, Barabanki bearing document no. 404, dated 23/01/2007, regarding the property Gata no. 259/524, Situated at Village Dharsaniya, Pargana Deva, Tehsil Nawabganj, District Barabanki was lost with my client namely Vijay Kumar Agarwal S/O Late Bhola Nath Agarwal R/O 9, Shahnajaf Road, Lucknow Managing Director of Premier Car Sales Limited, 9, Shahnajaf Road, Lucknow on 25/07/2024. If any person has found, claim or objection over it, kindly inform within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice and after the completion of above time period, no claim of any kind will be considered. B.M. Tripathi Advocate, Res: C-15, Nehru Vihar, Kalyanpur, Lucknow, Mob: 9336127853

NOTICE

I have changed my name from JALIL AHMAD TO JALIL AHMAD KHAN, Jalil Ahmad Khan S/o Aziz Ahmad Khan R/o 11/29 C, Sooter Ganj, Civil Lines, Kanpur.

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NOTICE

I have changed my name from Roshani Devi to Roshani Khatri in future I shall be known Roshani khatri, W/o Sanjay Khatri R/o i-17, L I G, Gujaini, Kanpur

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This is to inform that Original sale deed (chain deed), which was duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar Nawabganj, Barabanki bearing document no. 404, dated 23/01/2007, regarding the property Gata no. 259/524, Situated at Village Dharsaniya, Pargana Deva, Tehsil Nawabganj, District Barabanki was lost with my client namely Vijay Kumar Agarwal S/O Late Bhola Nath Agarwal R/O 9, Shahnajaf Road, Lucknow Managing Director of Premier Car Sales Limited, 9, Shahnajaf Road, Lucknow on 25/07/2024. If any person has found, claim or objection over it, kindly inform within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice and after the completion of above time period, no claim of any kind will be considered. B.M. Tripathi Advocate, Res: C-15, Nehru Vihar, Kalyanpur, Lucknow, Mob: 9336127853

NOTICE

I have changed my name from DILEEP AWASTHI TO DILIP AWASTHI S/O SHANT AWASTHI R/O 197 E, BARRA VISHVA BANK, KANPUR for future purpose

NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that I have lost my original allotment letter of my house number 6/45 vipul khand gombi nagar lucknow which is name of ramashray prasad, whose property id is 513791, whose use will be considered illegal. shiva malhotra s/o ravi kumar malhotra 6/45 vipul khand gombi nagar lucknow.

Two arrested for murder at salon

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the arrest of two youths, the Madaon police on Monday claimed to have worked out the two-day-old murder case of Osama aka Abu Amama. The brutal stabbing, which took place at a barber's shop in Millat Nagar, Faizullahganj, had shocked the local community.

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gang, which handled local disputes outside the legal framework. Osama had recently distanced himself from the gang, leading to intensified animosity with his former associates. Preliminary investigations revealed that Osama's friend Abhay Dhawri was attacked eight days prior to Osama's murder. Even though Osama expressed concerns for his safety, the police did not take

adequate preventive measures. Osama's family criticised the police for their inaction. "The attack on his friend was a clear warning. Osama feared for his life after breaking ties with the gang. The police registered an NCR but did not take steps to prevent further attacks, allowing the assailants to roam freely," they lamented. The family claimed that the arrested accused were involved in the

earlier attack on Abhay Dhawri. Police sources indicated that the local authorities were aware of the escalating rivalry but failed to intervene effectively. This negligence allowed the conflict to reach a deadly conclusion. The murder case highlights the complex interplay of gang rivalries, local power struggles, and the critical role of law enforcement in preventing such tragedies.

BJP leader JPS Rathore said that anyone from the Bharatiya Janata Party could voice their opinions and dream to be the

Gold chain stolen from jewellery shop

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Two women posing as customers stole a gold chain from a jewellery shop in BBD police station area. The theft occurred on Saturday but came to light on Monday when the shopkeeper reviewed CCTV footage. The theft was captured on camera, providing crucial evidence for the investigation.

Kajal attended to them, displaying various items. The women engaged Kajal in conversation, distracting her while one of them discreetly stole a 13-gram gold chain. The theft went unnoticed until the evening when Kishan counted and weighed his inventory, realising a chain was missing. Reviewing the CCTV footage, he identified the women as the culprits.

woman into paying the money to get the fictitious FIR cancelled. The incident occurred on July 24 when the woman received a call. The caller falsely accused her of engaging in inappropriate conversations on her mobile phone and claimed to have audio and video evidence. He demanded Rs 1 lakh as a fee to cancel the purported FIR. The woman recounted her experience, describing her fear and confusion during the call. "I was trembling with fear when the fraudster accused me of sleazy conversations. My mind stopped working at that moment," she said. "He told me he would get the

FIR cancelled and sent me a scanner link to pay the money. I did not want this issue to escalate, so I paid the money out of fear of damaging my reputation," she added. The fraudster introduced himself as a policeman and promised to delete the alleged audio and video recordings. "I was scared of the consequences of a police case and knew I was being framed," the woman explained. She paid the money in multiple installments through several transactions. The victim's distress deepened as she struggled to recall any inappropriate conversations she might have had.

WOMAN DUPED

A woman in Malihabad was duped of Rs 1 lakh by a fraudster who falsely claimed that an FIR had been registered against her. The scammer, posing as a police officer, coerced the

woman into paying the money to get the fictitious FIR cancelled. The incident occurred on July 24 when the woman received a call. The caller falsely accused her of engaging in inappropriate conversations on her mobile phone and claimed to have audio and video evidence. He demanded Rs 1 lakh as a fee to cancel the purported FIR. The woman recounted her experience, describing her fear and confusion during the call. "I was trembling with fear when the fraudster accused me of sleazy conversations. My mind stopped working at that moment," she said. "He told me he would get the

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BJP leader JPS Rathore said that anyone from the Bharatiya Janata Party could voice their opinions and dream to be the

LDA vice-chairman concerned over RML Park's poor upkeep

Lucknow (PNS): Lucknow Development Authority Vice-Chairman Prathmesh Kumar on Monday expressed grave concerns over the deteriorating condition of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Park in Gomti Nagar. During his inspection of the park, he emphasised the urgent need for renovation to restore it to its former glory. Kumar engaged with employees and security guards to gather first-hand information about the park's rapid decline. He noted that the park's poor condition was likely due to long-term neglect. He stressed on the need for immediate repair work

to enhance its appearance and functionality. The LDA vice-chairman was surprised to learn that despite the park's state, over 500 walkers and cyclists visit daily. Security guard Ram Lakhani confirmed the high visitor numbers. Kumar was also informed that the gate fees and entry pass revenues were being deposited into the LDA exchequer, though the exact amounts were unclear. He directed the accounts department to review the funds collected from the park. Kumar requested a list of gardeners responsible for maintaining the park. He was informed

that their attendance was irregular, with some gardeners assigned to maintain lawns for senior government officials. He ordered that these gardeners be redirected to their duties at the Park. The park's two walking and cycling tracks are in poor condition and are slated for re-laying within ten days. Additionally, Kumar highlighted the need for an extensive planting drive, noting that many existing plants are decaying. He suggested initiating a large-scale plantation drive similar to that of Janeshwar Mishra Park to increase the park's greenery.

Viral hepatitis: Stress on early screening, treatment

Lucknow (PNS): World Hepatitis Day is observed annually to enhance awareness about viral hepatitis among the general public and healthcare workers. To commemorate this significant day, the department of hepatology at the Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS) organised a comprehensive two-day master class for postgraduate medical students and practising physicians.

The focus was on educating them about viral hepatitis, with special emphasis on hepatitis B and C, which are the most prevalent and deadly forms of the disease. SGPGIMS director Dr RK Dhiman emphasised the importance of such educational initiatives. "Viral hepatitis is a severe health issue, claiming millions of lives annually. This master class is a pivotal step in training our future and current medical

professionals to combat this disease effectively," he stated. Head of the department Dr Amit Goel served as the course director. He led the training sessions, delivering detailed lectures on the diagnosis and management of viral hepatitis. Dr Goel, who is also the head of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Viral Hepatitis, has extensive experience as a subject expert for WHO on this matter.

verka APPOINTMENTS The Punjab state Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Limited (Milked Punjab) invites applications/resumes for appointment of 01 post of Animal Nutrition Officer (ANO), 02 posts of Animal Nutrition Supervisor and 05 posts of Calf Rearing Programme Supervisor on contract basis till March 2026 under JICA Project (which could be extended further as per requirement of the project) Qualification: 1. For the post of Animal Nutrition Officer:- Veterinary post graduate/graduate or agriculture post graduate/graduate with relevant field experience. 2. For the post of Animal Nutrition Supervisor:- Graduation in veterinary Science/agriculture. However, if such graduates cannot be found, then candidates with diploma in veterinary science/agriculture will be considered. If even such candidates are not available then bachelor's degree in any discipline, having field experience will be considered. 3. For the post of calf Rearing Programme Supervisor:- Any graduate. In case person with graduation is not available, then suitable candidate with Higher Secondary School Certificate(Class 12) will be considered. All the requisite details of the posts and process of submitting applications are available under "Career Section" of our website http://www.verka.coop/career/. The last date of receipt of the resumes/applications is 15.08.2024. General Manager (QA&E)/ Incharge (HR) NA/12/24407/2023/36097 Dated CHD :- 7/29/2024

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) IDFC FIRST Bank Notice under Section 13 (2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 The following borrowers and co-borrowers availed the below mentioned secured loans from IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) The loans of the below-mentioned borrowers and co-borrowers have been secured by the mortgage of their respective properties. As they have failed to adhere to the terms and conditions of the respective loan agreements and had become irregular, their loan were classified as NPA as per the RBI guidelines. Amounts due by them to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) are mentioned as per respective notices issued more particularly described in the following table and further interest on the said amounts shall also be applicable and the same will be charged as per contractual rate with effect from their respective dates. Sr No. Loan Account No. Type of Loan Name of borrowers and co-borrowers Section 13 (2) Notice Date Outstanding amount as per Section 13 (2) Notice 1 35559028 LOAN AGAINST PROPERTY 1.MOHD WASIF 2.MUHAMMAD ANWAR SIDDIQUE 17.06.2024 11,04,435.78/- PROPERTY ADDRESS : ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OFRESIDENTIAL PART OF PLOT NO. 1, KHASRA NO.194 MIN., ADMEASURING 111.524 SQ. MTR. I.E. 1200 SQ. FT., SITUATED AT MOHALLA GENDKHANA, WARD HUSAINABAD, LUCKNOW, UTTAR PRADESH-226003, AND, BOUNDED AS: EAST:HOUSE OF OTHERS, WEST: RASTA 15' FEET WIDE NORTH: HOUSE OF OTHERS, SOUTH:PART OF PLOT NO. 1 Sr No. Loan Account No. Type of Loan Name of borrowers and co-borrowers Section 13 (2) Notice Date Outstanding amount as per Section 13 (2) Notice 2 23191007 & 33728828 LOAN AGAINST PROPERTY 1.SHARDA SINGH 2. RAKESH KUMAR SINGH 17.06.2024 8,25,770.41/- PROPERTY ADDRESS : ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OFRESIDENTIAL HOUSE NO.11-A, CONSTRUCTED ON PART OF PLOT NO.11A & 12A, KHASRA NO. 74 & 75, ADMEASURING 118.209 SQ. MTR., SITUATED AT SITUATED ATKHARGAPUR, FARIDNAGAR, WARD BABU JAGJEEVAN RAM, LUCKNOW, UTTAR PRADESH- 226016, AND, BOUNDED AS: EAST: 7.5 MTR. WIDE ROAD, WEST: HOUSE BUILT ON PLOT NO. 30 & 31, NORTH: PLOT NO. 10A, SOUTH:SELLER OF HOUSE NO. 11B You are hereby called upon to pay the amounts to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) as per the details shown in the above table with contracted rate of interest thereupon from their respective dates and other costs, charges etc. within 60 days from the date of this publication, failing which the undersigned shall be constrained to initiate proceedings, under Section 13 (4) and section 14 of the SARFAESI Act, against the mortgaged properties mentioned hereinabove to realize the amount due to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited). Further you are prohibited under Section 13 (13) of the said Act from transferring the said secured assets either by way of sale/lease or otherwise. Date : 30.07.2024 Place : LUCKNOW IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited) Sd/- Authorized Officer

Govt fully prepared to respond to every issue: CM



Chief Minister Adityanath addressing a press conference before the monsoon session of the UP Assembly

PNS ■ LUCKNOW
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, ahead of the monsoon session on Monday, said that the government was fully committed to the state's development and resolving all public issues. He emphasised the government's openness to addressing any constructive issue that the opposition members bring to the attention of the House. The chief minister was addressing the media at

Vidhan Bhavan ahead of the monsoon session of the state legislature. "Today marks the beginning of the monsoon session of the Uttar Pradesh legislature. I warmly welcome MLAs and MLCs, colleagues from all parties who contribute to the successful conduct of the legislative assembly's proceedings, as well as officers from the Secretariat. I hope that everyone will contribute to ensuring a smooth and productive monsoon session," he said. Emphasising that UP passed its

budget in February itself, Yogi Adityanath said, "In response to the state's needs, the first supplementary demand will be presented during the monsoon session. Uttar Pradesh is progressing towards becoming one of the country's largest emerging economies. The achievements of the state in the past seven years under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership are unprecedented, unforgettable and exemplary." The chief minister appealed to all public representatives to

ensure smooth proceedings in the House and urged both ruling and opposition members to contribute to Uttar Pradesh's development. Urging the House to become a platform for meaningful discussion and debate, the chief minister stated, "The government will be fully prepared to respond to every issue raised." "This sacred month of Shraavan is dedicated to Devadhidev Mahadev. During this time, Shiva devotees take out Kanwar Yatra while our public representatives diligently work to serve the public," he said. The chief minister added that the government was prepared for a constructive debate on issues raised by public representatives concerning the development and challenges facing the state. "I am confident that everyone will contribute to expanding the monsoon session by engaging in meaningful discussions on supplementary demands related to state development and public welfare," he added. Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mayankeshwar Sharan Singh and Jansatta Dal Loktantrik Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also released a souvenir titled

Yogi congratulates Pandey



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The chief minister congratulated leader of the opposition Mata Prasad Pandey. He presented him with a bouquet and extended his best wishes to the newly appointed leader of the opposition and former speaker of the assembly. The chief minister expressed confidence that the opposition will also make a valuable contribution to the successful conduct of the monsoon session. Later, the chief minister inaugurated the newly-constructed committee room at Vidhan Bhavan before the session began. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also released a souvenir titled

'Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha mein Mananiya Adhyaksh Satish Mahana ke do varsh' (Two years of Speaker Satish Mahana in Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly). Speaker Satish Mahana, Legislative Council Chairman Manvendra Singh, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, leader of opposition Mata Prasad Pandey, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna, Mayankeshwar Sharan Singh, Congress MLA Anuradha Mishra 'Mona', Samajwadi Party MLA Om Prakash Singh, Sangram Singh Yadav, Jaikumar Singh Jackie, Akash Saxena, Preamsagar Patel and others were present.

Yogi: Extensive arrangements made for safety, comfort of devotees during Kanwar Yatra

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Monday that in light of the beginning of the sacred Shraavan month dedicated to Devadhidev Mahadev, both the Central and state governments had made extensive arrangements to ensure the safety, convenience and smooth conduct of the Kanwar Yatra for devotees. Speaking to the media at his official residence here, Yogi Adityanath remarked, "The Kanwar Yatra during the Shraavan month is renowned worldwide. During this period, Shiva devotees from across the country, including North India, engage deeply in the rituals of Mahadev, showing their devotion by performing 'jalabhishek' at Shiva temples." He added, "The Central and state governments have coordinated to provide comprehensive arrangements for a safe and orderly Kanwar Yatra. Measures have been put in place to prevent any problems, chaos or playing with faith." The chief minister also extended his wishes to the people of the state on the second Monday of the Shraavan month, saying, "We are devoted to Lord Shiva. We have been blessed by Mahadev's boundless grace, and we pray that his blessings continue forever." He added, "No festival, celebration or 'sadhana' is complete without self-discipline. To ensure a smooth and safe journey, we must be devoted not only internally but also externally. Shivo Bhutva Shivam Yajet (to worship Shiva, first become Shiva)." Yogi emphasised that self-discipline was crucial. He said with this approach, the Kanwar Yatra would not only be a symbol of faith and devotion but also reflect the widespread belief of the common people. He said that with great devotion, the public and various sections of society were working diligently to support Kanwar pilgrims. The government is also making extensive efforts, including enhanced patrolling, cleanliness measures and health camps. Additionally, provisions have been made for surveillance and flower showers from drones and helicopters as needed, he added. Chief Minister Yogi urged Shiva devotees to not only enjoy their journey by participating in the system but also to contribute to the successful conduct of the Kanwar Yatra during the holy month of Shraavan by practising self-discipline and maintaining faith. He also extended his wishes to all devotees for a smooth and safe journey.

SP MLAs raise slogans, target BJP govt over development, law, order

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The opposition Samajwadi Party MLAs created a ruckus in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly on the first day of the Monsoon session on Monday by raising slogans against the BJP government in the state, terming it "anti-development" and "anti-Constitution". As soon as the Assembly met, SP legislators trooped into the well of the House with placards, targeting the government over development and law and order issues. Samajwadi Party MLA Jahid Beg was seen tying a poster on his back demanding the cancellation of the Bhadohi Development Authority's master plan in public interest. The Samajwadi Party MLAs returned to their seats following Speaker Satish Mahana's intervention. In the first session of the Assembly since the Lok Sabha election, changes in seating



arrangements were observed in the House. In place of Akhilesh Yadav, who has been elected to the Lok Sabha, Mata Prasad Pandey was the Leader of Opposition while Shivpal Yadav was seen sitting beside him. SP MLA Rakesh Pratap Singh and

Abhay Singh, who voted in favour of the BJP's candidate in Rajya Sabha polls, were also seen in the House. While Rakesh Pratap Singh was sat with Jansatta Dal Loktantrik Leader Raghuraj Pratap Singh alias Raja Bhaiya, Abhay was

seen in the last row. Apna Dal (Sonelal) leader and SP MLA Pallavi Patel, who distanced herself from the Samajwadi Party during the Lok Sabha polls, was seen sitting with SP members. She however did not join the SP's protest in the House.

About 90 pc cane dues of UP farmers cleared: Minister

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

About 90 per cent of the outstanding sugarcane dues of farmers in UP has been cleared, Sugar Development Minister Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary said on Monday. He was replying to a question raised by SP member Ashutosh Sinha in the state legislative council. Chaudhary said that according to the current status of sugarcane price payment, the government has purchased sugarcane worth Rs 35,909 crore, out of which Rs 32,357 crore, that is 90.11 per cent of the outstanding dues, has been paid. As soon as the next sugarcane crushing season begins, the remaining dues will be cleared. During the crushing season 2022-23, he said except for Rs 213 crore due on the Shamli mill, the remaining 99.99 per

cent of sugarcane dues has been paid to farmers. Chaudhary claimed that Uttar Pradesh ranks first in sugarcane production in the country. "It is also the leader in sugarcane price payment. This is the first time in the history of the state that 82 sugar mills paid 100 per cent of their sugarcane price in the last season. The government has got weekly payments made to farmers from 21 mills," he said. The minister said that from 2007 to 2017, the then Bahujan Samaj Party and Samajwadi Party governments paid Rs 1.47 lakh crore to sugarcane farmers, while in the last seven years, the current BJP-led government has paid Rs 2.53 lakh crore as sugarcane price. The BJP government has also paid Rs 11,000 crore of sugarcane price due during the previous SP government.

UP number one in supplying electricity to consumers: Min

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Energy Minister AK Sharma said that with 30,618 megawatt supply, Uttar Pradesh was number one in supplying electricity to the consumers. He said that UP had surpassed Maharashtra in power supply which was unprecedented in the history of India for any state. On the first day of the monsoon session, the Samajwadi Party raised the issue of power crisis in the state through an adjournment notice. The minister rebutted the charges of the opposition, arguing that Uttar Pradesh currently leads the nation with a doubling of power supply in the Yogi Adityanath government. He said during the Samajwadi Party government (2012-17) the maximum power supplied was 12,327 MW which was increased by over 2.5 times to 30,658 MW by March 2024. "When the SP-Congress was in power for 70 years, you were not concerned, but now out of power and sitting in the opposition, you are suddenly concerned about the state of supply of electricity. The high-cost power purchase agreements (PPAs) with power generators from previous governments are also contributing to the additional burden on the state," the minister said and added, "We are working to resolve this issue." Taking a dig at SP leaders while mentioning the suspension of officials involved in bribery in Ballia, the minister said, "The electricity problems in the state have historical roots. One such reason is that the previous governments did not work effectively, and even when they did, they failed to maintain quality in their efforts." The minister said the employees of the UP Power Corporation Limited were continuously delivering excellent services across the state, working tirelessly day and night. The energy minister emphasised that the state government was providing two and a half times more electricity compared to the SP government. "In the year 2013-14, the maximum load was 12,327 MW. In contrast, under the Yogi government, the supply has increased to over 30,618 MW, more than two and a half times higher. Additionally, 81,598 million units were supplied in 2013-14, whereas in 2023-24, the Yogi government has supplied 1,47,701 million units, effectively doubling the electricity supply," the minister pointed out. Sharma said that people who were deprived of electricity during the SP government were getting regular power supply. He noted that over 1.5 lakh hamlets in rural areas were neglected by the SP government, out of which 1.21 lakh have been electrified after the year 2017. He also noted that UP has now become the leading state in providing electricity to farmers in the country. "A scheme of ₹917 crore has been approved for 19,503 villages and soon we are going to provide electricity," he said. "While the opposition boasts about supporting farmers, our government has actually waived electricity bills for the farm sector. Under the previous SP government, a total of 25,112 connections were provided to farmers in 2012-13,

18,000 in 2013-14, 34,000 in 2014-15 and 29,000 in 2015-16. In contrast, we have provided 70,545 connections in 2022-23 and 63,000 in 2023-24. Additionally, the power supply to the agriculture sector has been increased to 12 hours from 10 hours," the minister said. Sharma charged that the opposition which in power did not make adequate investment to upgrade power infrastructure leading to the current problems. In 2017-18, the number of 33/11 sub stations were 4,092 and today this number is 4,507, he pointed out. Claiming improvements in power infrastructure, he said the number of 765 kV transmission sub-stations was only four till 2017, and the present government added three new, taking the number to seven. The number of 400 kV transmission stations has increased from 14 in 2017-18 to 29, and 120 kV transmission stations have risen from 72 to 166, he added. He also mentioned that a memorandum of understanding was signed with NTPC at the Global Investors Summit to set up 800x2 MW units, and work on this project has already begun. He said that an MoU had been signed to establish 800x2 MW units in Anpara, and the work was already underway. "We are also progressing rapidly towards generating 1,800x3 MW through three units. Additionally, we have issued a tender to import more power and to set up a new 1,600 MW coal-fired power plant," he said. "Our focus is on doubling our thermal energy capacity while also investing in solar energy. We plan to add 5,000 MW in solar power, increase pump storage capacity by 2,500 MW, and boost thermal capacity by 10,600 MW. Over the next 10 years, we aim to develop five times the current energy capacity," the minister said. Responding to a question about replacement of burnt transformers, Sharma said that maintenance efforts had significantly reduced the number of transformer damage. "In the past two years, we have installed over 30,000 new transformers and increased the capacity of 40,000 existing ones. Additionally, 3,511 new transformers have been added. We have also installed 21,43,981 electric poles across the state, and we are in the process of upgrading the wiring on these poles. Strict action is being taken against any instances of negligence," he said. He said that projects worth ₹14,000 crore were currently underway in the state and a business plan of ₹50,000 crore had been approved for this year, and ₹1,000 crore had been allocated from the Urban Development department's budget to the electricity sector. Interrupting Sharma, leader of opposition Mata Prasad Pandey said the minister did not give a satisfactory response on the issue. "The minister did not say that he had suspended an engineer. Instead he said a Yadaoji has been suspended. This should be removed from the proceedings of the House," Pandey said. Later, the SP members came into the well of the House, shouting and demanding an apology from the energy minister. Speaker Satish Mahana requested the members to return to their seats and later when their demand for a discussion was not accepted, they staged a walk out from the House.

108 dist-level hospitals, 261 spl hospitals functioning: Pathak

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak on Monday said that the state's health and medical system has become better with 108 district-level hospitals and 261 special hospitals functioning in the state, where patients suffering from serious diseases are being treated. Pathak was answering the questions of the members of the UP Legislative Assembly during the Question Hour on Monday, the first day of the monsoon session in the Assembly. Pathak, who also holds the Medical Health and Medical

Education portfolio, said, "108 district level hospitals and 261 special hospitals are established and functioning in the state, where patients suffering from serious diseases are treated. Dialysis facility is available free of cost in 75 district hospitals, and CT scan facility is available free of cost in 71 district hospitals in the state." There are 75 districts in Uttar Pradesh. He also said, "Blood component separation units are functional and operational in 45 districts of the state. Ventilator facilities are available in all the districts. A total of 1,679 Jan Aushadhi Kendras have been

opened in the private sector and government hospitals in the state, and 2,200 departmental BLS ambulances are available in the state under 108 toll-free numbers, and 250 ALS ambulances are available to the public for referral." Samajwadi Party member Dr Ragini Sonkar had asked the deputy chief minister what plan has the government made to reduce the mortality rate of patients suffering from serious diseases in the state. In her supplementary question, she also said that the medical college of Jaunpur is filled with black water, and the buildings are falling. "How will we treat

the patients, even the doctors are falling ill," she said. To this, Pathak replied that the construction of the medical college in Jaunpur started during the SP government and the person to whom the tender was given ran away. An investigation is going on into it. Pathak also said, "The SP has been the mother of corruption." On the allegation of corruption by the current schemes, Pathak said that if any complaint of corruption is received, an investigation will be conducted. If the truth is found, the guilty person will be sent to jail, no corrupt person will be

spared. In response to a starred question by SP member Atul Pradhan, Pathak said, "A total of 8,431 posts of specialist doctors are approved in the state, out of which 4,426 posts of doctors are approved for the district hospitals." He said, "A total of 1,240 doctors from level-1 to level-3 and 883 regular specialist doctors of level-4 and level-5 are currently working in the state district hospital. A total of 2,929 specialist doctors are working in the district hospitals of the state." Pathak also said "A requisition has been sent to the Public Service Commission on 19

February 2024 to fill the vacant 2,532 posts of specialist doctors in the state." In response to SP member Anil Pradhan's question, Pathak said that "128 types of equipment have been approved at 958 community health centres in the state. Ultrasound machines are already available at 68 community health centres." Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition Mata Prasad Pandey asked a supplementary question whether TB medicine is available at all district headquarters, to which Pathak said, "We are providing the medicine and are also monitoring it ourselves."

'The power of Bajrangbali in OBC society will burn Lanka of those splitting Hindus'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Addressing the Bharatiya Janata Party Backward Class Front's state working committee meeting on Monday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that during the Samajwadi Party rule in 2015-2016, 56 out of 86 SDMs (sub-divisional magistrates) appointed by the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission belonged to a single caste, which he described as detrimental to the OBC community's interests. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath remarked that just as foreign invaders historically sought to divide Hindu society, the opposition parties were similarly conspiring to create internal conflicts among Hindus in the guise of pseudo-secularism. He emphasised that the OBC community possesses the strength of Bajrangbali (Lord Hanuman), which needs to be awakened to counter these divisive forces. He assured that it would not take long to dismantle the metaphorical 'Lanka' of Ravana - those attempting to split Hindu society. Yogi highlighted that over the past six and a half years, approximately 650,000 government recruitments have been made in the state, with 60

per cent of the positions filled by members of the OBC community. He pointed out that those questioning the recent 69,000 teacher recruitments in basic education are the same individuals who, under the Samajwadi Party, favoured selecting 56 out of 86 officials from the same family and community. He emphasised that 1,25,000 teachers were recruited in basic education under his administration. Moreover, regarding the 27 per cent reservation policy for the 69,000 teacher positions, while it would have ensured 18,200 OBC recruits, the government appointed 31,500 teachers from the OBC community. The chief minister stated, "The opposition parties are troubled by the increasing success of OBC youth, securing many seats based on their intelligence and abilities." He added, "This is why these parties attempt to create controversy around recruitment processes." Yogi elaborated, "The Kanwar Yatra was banned during the tenure of the SP, BSP and Congress governments. The Kanwar Yatra is not only a spiritual pilgrimage for devotees of Shiva but also a source of livelihood for small shopkeepers and artisans,

which previous governments disrupted." He noted that Congress had ruled the state numerous times and the Samajwadi Party four times, still, these parties did nothing to support the ODOP (One District, One Product) initiative, which benefits artisans, many of whom come from the OBC community. Yogi also referred to the 2006 murder of BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai, highlighting that Umesh Patel and Ramesh Yadav, who were also killed in the same incident, were from the OBC community. He criticised the Samajwadi Party for allegedly aligning with mafia elements responsible for the deaths of Raju Pal and Umesh Pal in Prayagraj, accusing the party of plunging the state into chaos, lawlessness, and riots by fostering ties with criminal elements. Yogi said, "Those who deprived the OBC community of job opportunities, snatched away youth employment, and created an identity crisis in the state are now engaging in divisive politics." He accused the Samajwadi Party of taking away jobs from the OBC community while emphasising that the BJP has employed this group.

CM introduces four new ministers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath introduced four new ministers of his cabinet - Om Prakash Rajbhar, Anil Kumar, Dara Singh Chauhan and Sunil Sharma - in the state assembly on Monday. "These four cabinet ministers were part of this assembly. I introduce them as part of the cabinet in this House," Yogi Adityanath said while speaking at the assembly. In the first expansion of the Yogi cabinet since March 2022, four new ministers, including Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party chief Om Prakash Rajbhar, Bharatiya Janata Party MLC Dara Singh Chauhan, Rashtriya Lok Dal MLC from Purkazi (Muzaffarnagar) Anil Kumar and BJP's Sahibabad MLA Sunil Sharma were inducted into the Yogi cabinet on March 6 ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. There are 57 ministers in the Yogi council of ministers. Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana welcomed Samajwadi Party leader Mata Prasad Pandey who has been appointed as the leader of opposition of the House.

"I thank you for your gesture. The state is facing very serious issues currently; there is flood, law and order issues and corruption as well," Pandey said. In response, Speaker Satish Mahana said, "We will discuss all of these. You are the leader of the opposition and you have the right to give notices, you will do it and we will discuss all of them. The government is ready to answer." Leader of opposition and Samajwadi Party MLA Mata Prasad Pandey greeted Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath as the assembly session kicked off. "I will try my best to raise the issues of the deprived people, who have been neglected by this government, in the Vidhan Sabha. We will raise all issues whether it is in the matter of electricity, law and order, or governance," he said. "It is a 5-day session. We have requested that the session be extended for another five days. Now the government has to decide how many days it will be. We will try to continue it further so that all the problems can be discussed," Pandey said.

Second Shravan Monday: Flowers showered on devotees in Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Lakhs of devotees thronged the Dwadasa Jyotirlinga Kashi Vishwanath Temple (KVT) on the second Monday in the auspicious month of Shravan amidst showering of flowers and rose petals by Divisional Commissioner (DC) Kaushal Raj Sharma, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust Vishwa Bhushan Mishra and other officers. Long queues of people were seen towards the temple throughout the day not only from Godowlia and Maidagin areas but also from the river side.

Besides, thousands of saffron-clad Kanwariyas also thronged there and the echoes of traditional slogan 'Har Har Mahadev', along with 'Bol Bom' rented in the air throughout the day. It was the third Shravan since the inauguration of the sprawling Kashi Vishwanath Corridor (KVC) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 13, 2021, when the KV Temple was directly linked with the Ganga river at Lalita Ghat.

Elaborate security arrangements were made on the occasion and no vehicles were allowed to move between Godowlia and Maidagin throughout the day. To maintain law and order, the devotees were checked at many places through metal detectors. Senior administrative and police officers were present there to keep a watch on the situation in KVC premises. All the activities were also watched through various CCTV cameras. To avoid congregation the devotees were asked to move towards the corridor only through barricading and Rapid Action Force (RAF), paramilitary and Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) jawans were deployed both inside and outside the premises.

Right after Mangla Aarti, devotees started thronging the temple and queues of devotees were there on both sides of the temple, including Maidagin and Godowlia as well as Lalita Ghat. A large number of Kanwariyas came from Prayagraj and other places. For the convenience of the devotees, at six places big LED screens were installed to display



Divisional Commissioner KR Sharma and other officials showering flowers on devotees at KVT in Varanasi on the second Monday of Shravan month.

ties were also watched through various CCTV cameras. To avoid congregation the devotees were asked to move towards the corridor only through barricading and Rapid Action Force (RAF), paramilitary and Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) jawans were deployed both inside and outside the premises. Right after Mangla Aarti, devotees started thronging the temple and queues of devotees were there on both sides of the temple, including Maidagin and Godowlia as well as Lalita Ghat. A large number of Kanwariyas came from Prayagraj and other places. For the convenience of the devotees, at six places big LED screens were installed to display

the activities of 'garbhagriha' (sanctum sanctorum) as the devotees were not allowed to touch the 'shivling' and they offered 'jalabhishek' through big metal structure from outside the 'garbhagriha'. Apart from KVT, lakhs of devotees offered prayers at several other famous temples located in the city as well as its outskirts. Maximum rush was seen at the Markandey Mahadev Temple located near the confluence of rivers Ganga and Gomti at Kaithi. Besides, there was also heavy rush of devotees at all famous temples, including Mahamritunjya Mahadev (Daranganagar), Gauri Kedarshwar (Kedar Ghat), Jogeshwar Mahadev

(Ishwargangi), Omkleshwar Mahadev (Chittanpura), Teel Bhandeshwar (Pandey Haveli), Sarangnath Mahadev (Sarnath) and many others in the city areas. In the outskirts, a heavy rush of devotees was also seen at all the Shiva temples located on Panchkoshi Marg, including Karmdeshwar Mahadev, Bhim Chandi, Rameshwar Mahadev, Paach Pandev and Kapildhara. Apart from these famous temples, heavy rush of devotees was also seen at Vishwanath Temple in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) premises and Shool Tankeshwar Mahadev and scores of all others as the city is famous for having the replicas of all the Dwadasa Jyotirlingas.

Huge rush witnessed at Shiva temples

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

On the second Monday of Shravan month, a long queue of devotees was witnessed in all the Shiva temples, including Shri Mankameshwar Mahadev temple situated on the banks of Yamuna and Koteswar Mahadev temple located at Shivkuti. Ganga jal, milk, bael leaves, flowers, garlands, 'dhatura', sweets etc. were offered to Lord Shiva. Jalabhishek was performed and happiness and prosperity was wished for in Koteswar Mahadev temple in Shivkuti. A large number of devotees performed Rudrabhishek here. Along with making earthen Shivling in homes and performing Rudrabhishek in temples, the number of people performing 'abhishek' was also very high. Devotees were seen offering water to Lord Shiva in temples throughout the city.

There was a long queue of devotees in Mankameshwar Temple located at Saraswati Ghat since morning. A large number of police and women police were deployed here for



Devotees performing 'jalabhishek' of Lord Shiva at a temple on the second 'Somwar' of the holy Shravan month in Prayagraj on Monday.

PTI

security. A huge crowd of devotees was seen in the Shiva temples located in Someshwar Mahadev in Arañil, Padila Mahadev in Phaphamau, Shivkuti Kacheri temple in

Shivkuti, Dashashwamedh Temple, Bhole Giri Mahadev in Katghar, Laliteshwar Mahadev Temple and Civil Lines Hanuman Temple. Kanwariyas filled water from

Sangam and Daraganj Ganga Ghat and performed 'jalabhishek' of Lord Mahadev. A large number of Shiva devotees left for Kashi Vishwanath Dham on Kanwar Yatra.

Apart from Civil Lines, there was a crowd of devotees in all the temples in Daraganj, Kydganj, Mutthiganj, Sulemsari, Dhoomanganj, Kalindipur, Katra, Chowk, Zero Road, Johnstonganj, Rajapur, Rajrupur, Jhalwa, Phaphamau, Naini, Jhunsu etc areas since morning. There was a huge crowd at the flower and garland shops outside the temples. At this time in the month of Shravan, a large number of Kanwariyas are reaching Shiva temples with Kanwar. They are reaching Baba Vishwanath Temple, Nagvasuki Temple, Padila Mahadev and other Shiva temples in Varanasi with the water of Sangam. Some are performing 'jalabhishek' with Ganga jal, some with milk or sugarcane juice. The holy month of Shravan commenced on July 22, with Shravan Shivratni expected to be celebrated on August 2.

Radhakrishna Temple organises 'Rudrabhishek'



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

On the occasion of holy Shravan month, Shri Radhakrishna Temple (JK Temple) organised a grand 'Rudrabhishek' on Monday. The temple management informed that other interested devotees can also organise 'Rudrabhishek' in the temple with prior permission. In the programme that started from 8 am, 'Rudrabhishek'

was performed by the 11 acce priests with full religious rituals by chanting mantras and offering milk, curd, ghee, honey, gangajal, pancharmi, chandan, til, dhan, haldi, kumkum, belpatra, lotus flower, shami leaves etc. The students of temple's gurukul also took part in the event. The temple management pledged to organise such religious programmes in future also.

CMO: New facilities will be provided in CHCs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that new facilities will be provided in Community Health Centres (CHCs) for better treatment of patients as continuous efforts are being made to further strengthen the medical and health services available in the district.

According to him, on the initiative of District Magistrate S Rajlingam and Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal, the district has got approval to purchase

digital X-ray, ultrasound, laparoscopic and C-arm machines from CSR fund and such machines will be purchased and installed at CHCs soon. The chief medical officer said that in this direction, a demand letter was sent to the Regional Manager of Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC), Lucknow. For the availability of all these machines, an amount of Rs 3.06 crore has been approved. "This approval has been given to purchase four laparoscopic, five ultrasound, five digital X-ray and four C-arm machines",

he said adding that by installing these machines at the identified CHCs, high level medical and health services can be provided to the patients near their homes.

Dr Chaudhary said Varanasi is a world famous religious and cultural city as well as the parliamentary constituency of the Prime Minister, where almost every day religious devotees from across the country and abroad along with VVIPs and other dignitaries keep coming. "Also, patients from about 15 districts of Purvanchal (eastern Uttar Pradesh) and western Bihar, northern Jharkhand,

northern Madhya Pradesh etc come to Varanasi for treatment and most of them are referred for treatment at upgraded health centres", he said. According to the CMO, at present, in order to further strengthen the medical system available in Varanasi district and to provide high level medical facilities to all the citizens of the district near their homes, there is an urgent need of digital X-ray, ultrasound, laparoscopic and C-arm machines in every community health centre so that better health services can be provided to the people of the district.

Driver dies as auto overturns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

An auto driver was killed after his speeding vehicle overturned near Malkhanpur village under Rasoolabad police station area on Kanpur-Bela road in Kanpur Dehat late on Sunday night. In the incident, the driver sustained serious injury. Police rushed to the spot which, after informing the kin, sent him to community health centre (CHC) Rasoolabad by an ambulance where he was declared dead by the doctors. Sanjay (35) of Usri village used to drive auto of Phool Singh of the village. On Sunday night,

when he was returning home, his speeding auto suddenly overturned on Kanpur-Bela road. As a result Sanjay was seriously injured in the incident. SSI Rasoolabad Deo Narain Dwivedi rushed to the spot who, after informing the kin of the injured, sent him to the CHC where Dr Saurabh Shakya on emergency duty declared him dead. Police sent the body for autopsy. Inspector Rasoolabad Anil Kumar said a probe was on. Meanwhile a youth was fatally knocked down by a speeding loader in Saidpur village under Achalganj police station area of Unnao late on Sunday night.

His kin staged an agitation at the police station and demanded penal action against the loader driver. Police sent the body for autopsy and assured to initiate action against the guilty. The incident occurred when Kamlesh (30) son of Durga Prasad of Jhabbakhedha, Saidpur, was standing along the road on Sunday night. Seriously injured Kamlesh succumbed to his injury after few minutes. Kin staged agitation at the police station alleging the killing of Kamlesh. Brother Suresh informed at the mortuary that Kamlesh had an argument with Santosh four days

ago when the former had asked the latter to drive slowly on the street. This had irked Santosh who allegedly hit Kamlesh with his loader which led to killing of the latter. The kin demanded an FIR for murder should be lodged and action should be initiated against the guilty. In another incident around a dozen people were injured after their uncontrolled loader suddenly overturned in Jalaun on Monday morning. The incident took place when around 20 persons were going to immerse the ashes after the death of one of their family members a few days ago.

Importance of accurate information in combating hepatitis emphasised



A programme on hepatitis being held at IMS-BHU in Varanasi on Monday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Adolescent Centre at TOPD 104, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU), in collaboration with the Mamta Health Institute for Mother and Child, New Delhi, and the National Health Mission (NHM), hosted a highly informative event to mark World Hepatitis Day here on Monday. Under the guidance of Prof Sangeeta Rai, Nodal Officer of the Adolescent Centre, the event aimed at raising awareness about hepatitis and providing crucial information on its prevention and

management. The highlight of the event was a series of expert presentations led by distinguished speakers from the Gastroenterology, Dermatology, and Paediatrics departments at IMS-BHU. Head of the Gastroenterology department Dr Dawesh Prakash Yadav gave an extensive overview of hepatitis, covering its various types, symptoms, modes of transmission, and preventive measures. Dr Yadav also addressed common myths about the disease, emphasising the importance of accurate information in combating hepatitis. Dr Yadav elaborated on differ-

ent forms of hepatitis, including Hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E, each with its own transmission methods and health implications. He highlighted the significance of recognising symptoms such as jaundice, abdominal pain and persistent fatigue and stressed the role of timely diagnosis and treatment in managing the disease effectively. Dr Tulika Rai (dermatologist) and Dr Sarita Chaudhary, (paediatric surgeon) also expressed their views. Dr Rai provided insights into the epidemiology of hepatitis and its impact on public health, while Dr Sarita Chaudhary focused on the latest advancements in hepatitis research and treatment options. Counsellor Naveen Pandey and programme assistant Mazahir Abbas Haidari organised the event and resources, while interns from BHU Rohit, Manmohan, Akarshita, Rashmi, Shreya, Shivangi and Shubham supported the event, ensuring smooth management and facilitation. The event also featured interactive sessions where attendees had the opportunity to engage with the experts, ask questions and clarify doubts. These discussions aimed at enhancing understanding and dispelling misinformation surrounding hepatitis.

Challenges associated with Hepatitis B & C in India highlighted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Central Hospital, North Central Railway (NCR), Prayagraj organised a seminar on World Hepatitis Day 2024 on the theme "It's Time for Action", in which Dr Rohit Kumar threw light on the global and local impacts of viral hepatitis. It was successfully organised under the distinguished leadership of Medical Director Dr SK Handoo, Chief Medical Superintendent (CMS) Dr SP Sharma, Dr Kalpana Mishra, ACHD (Administration) and Dr Reena Agarwal, ACMS/PRYJ.

Dr Kumar emphasised the vital role of the liver and the various sources of hepatitis such as viruses and alcohol-induced diseases, identifying five main types: A, B, C, D and E. He also highlighted the challenges associated with Hepatitis B and C in India and emphasised the goals of the National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme to eliminate the disease by 2030. The success of the seminar was greatly attributed to the staff mem-



bers like Raj Kumar, chief pharmacist, matrons Sita and Sumanti and health educator Shrawan who helped in the smooth running of the programme. The programme concluded with a call by Dr Kumar to advocate collective efforts to prevent new infections, ensure early diagnosis and provide effective treatment. The seminar underscored the importance of public education and scientific advancements to continue the effort towards a hepatitis-free future. Due to the dedicated efforts of Dr Handoo, Dr Sharma, Dr Mishra, Dr Agarwal and the support staff, the seminar succeeded in making significant progress in the fight against hepatitis at the local and global levels.

Woman killed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A woman was killed after her husband allegedly attacked her and her mother with a sharp-edged weapon in Bilhaur police station area on Monday morning. On getting information about the incident police rushed to the spot and sent both the injured to a hospital from where after the first aid, doctors referred them to Kanpur where wife of the assailant succumbed to her injury during treatment.

A property dispute is stated to be the cause of the incident. According to a report received here, retired teacher Kaushal Kishore Katiyar of Kharanau, Araul police station (Bilhaur) presently lives in his guest house in Araul. His wife Manorama (65), also a retired teacher, following differences with husband lived with her mother Imarti Devi (90), wife of late Ram Singh in Hindupur village. Her son Shivam also lives with mother Manorama while the daughter is married. On Monday morning around 6 am Kaushal Kishore reached Hindupur by car and after an altercation attacked his wife and mother-in-law with the sharp-edged weapon and seriously injuring them. Inspector Akhilesh Kumar Pal along with force rushed to the spot and took the injured mother-daughter to Bilhaur community health centre (CHC).

Fire in container on elevated highway disrupts traffic



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A container going to Assam caught fire on the elevated highway near Keshav Nagar on Monday morning. At the instance of the vehicle drivers following the container, the latter's driver immediately parked his vehicle on the roadside and jumped off it. When efforts were being made to unload the goods from the container, the fire flared up and assumed an ugly turn.

This disrupted the traffic movement going towards Naubasta from Barra bypass. After efforts for around two hours, fire brigade controlled the fire when the traffic was also restored. Container driver Shaileendra Kumar of Karrahi said after collecting goods from a delivery company godown in Sachendi (Kanpur), he was going to Tejpur (Assam). He was accompanied by another driver Umesh Sahni of Meenapur, Muzaffarpur. While heading towards Naubasta from Barra bypass, the rear side of the container caught fire on the elevated highway near Keshav Nagar. He immediately parked the container on the roadside and both saved themselves by jumping off the vehicle. Meanwhile, passers-by

informed the fire brigade. By the time fire brigade reached the spot, they with the help of other people started unloading the goods from the container. Meanwhile, there was explosion in one of the parcels but did not cause harm to anybody. In the incident, traffic remained disrupted for about two hours. Massive jam prevailed on both the sides of the highway upto several kms. Station House Officer Hanuman Vihar Udai Pratap Singh said after the jam, traffic was diverted through Bhaunti, Naubasta bypass to reach the elevated highway. **CAMPAGN:** The students of Pratap International School's cricket club took part in the Immune India Campaign on Monday. Principal Rati Gupta said the campaign fully matches with the school's mission of providing healthy atmosphere to students and their all round development through sports activities. At the end of the programme, organised in association with the Dabur India, an interactive session was organised in which students showed enthusiasm towards adopting a healthy lifestyle and participating in sports activities. School's cricket coach Ashish Tewari was also present.

Yuva Utsav for AIDS awareness today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Yuva Utsav (Youth Fest) will be organised at Sanatan Dharma Inter College located on Nai Sadak on Tuesday to raise awareness about Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) among youth. On the occasion Red Ribbon Quiz Competition will be organised among children between 14 to 18 years and Red Run Marathon will be held among the youth aged

between 17 to 25 years. The students of class VIII, IX and XI will be included in the quiz competition. The graduate and postgraduate students will participate in the marathon. The entire programme will be organised under the aegis of Uttar Pradesh State AIDS Control Society. The officials of Disha Cluster will play an important role in this. District HIV AIDS Control Officer Dr Piyush Rai said that the objective of the pro-

gramme is to raise awareness about HIV among youth. He said that for increasing awareness about AIDS, disseminating information among the youth in an interesting way and increasing demand for services provided by the society, wide publicity of the national toll-free helpline number 1097, dispelling social myths and misconceptions, motivating youth towards diet, nutrition, hygiene and healthy lifestyle and eliminating discrimination will be important.

Fire breaks out in shop

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A massive fire broke out here in a shop located at Devghat Tiraha of Koroan police station area in Meja on due to an electric short circuit. This created panic among the people. Goods worth lakhs kept in the shop were reduced to ashes. People present on the spot informed the fire brigade. Nisar Ahmed alias Raju, a resident of Devghat, runs a clothes and shoe shop at Devghat

Tiraha since 2009. On Monday, on seeing smoke coming out the neighbours informed the shopkeeper and called the fire brigade. However, clothes, shoes and other goods kept in the shop were burnt to ashes. On the other hand, the Soroan police arrested two miscreants and recovered a stolen tractor and pickup van on their information. During interrogation, the miscreants confessed to stealing many more vehicles.

Fuel prices lowest in India despite global uptick: Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Monday said India is the only country where rates of petrol and diesel have come down between November 2021 and April 2024. Replying to various queries during Question Hour in Rajya Sabha, the Minister also said that the Government is encouraging dialogue between Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) and dealers regarding margins for the latter.

Puri noted that petrol and diesel were deregulated during the UPA Government. Deregulation means that prices of the commodity in the market are not set by the Government, he added. "Prices here being high and elsewhere being low. It's exactly the opposite. In India today, the prices are the lowest and is the only country where prices have actually come down," Puri said. He attributed this to very bold, ambitious and farsighted decisions taken by the Prime



Minister.

"The prices in the world, I am giving you a two-year reference period between November 2021 and April 2024. Why I'm doing this because we have prices available. In India the price of petrol came down 13.65 per cent and of diesel 10.97 per cent," the Minister said. However, he said in France the increase in petrol price has been 22.19 per cent, Germany 15.28 per cent, Italy 14.82 per cent, Spain 16.58 per cent.

These are all published international figures of prices, he added. Puri also highlighted that while prices in India have declined, the rates have gone up in neighbouring countries. The Minister also attacked the UPA Government for floating oil bonds. "Oil bonds were floated for ₹ 1.41 lakh crore. Today we are having to pay back ₹ 3.5 lakh crore for that kind of a farsighted decision," he said. On the dealers' margin increase, Puri said this is a

commercial contractual situation between OMCs and the dealers whom they employ as part of that contract. As of July 1, 2024, there are 90,639 retail outlets in the country of which about 90 per cent belong to public sector companies and rest to the private sector companies. "We have been monitoring this, there are discussions going on between OMCs and the dealers. Last time the margins were increased was in 2017." Dealers went to court, because they saw that some of the conditions in the stipulated guidelines were somewhat stringent. "So, when the dealer margin is raised, one of the conditions that the dealer has to comply with is to ensure that the wages to their employees are paid according to the minimum wages act. "So OMCs won the case in the High Court and then the dealers went up to the Supreme Court in 2022. It is sub judice but we are encouraging dialogue between OMCs and dealers and we would like to see them coming to a conclusion," he said.

Surge in snakebites due to global warming, 50,000 deaths annually

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Echoing findings from various studies on climate change and biodiversity, BJP MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy raised a critical issue in the Lok Sabha on Monday regarding the rise in snakebite incidents and fatalities in India.

Rudy attributed this surge to climate change, noting that rising temperatures above 28 degrees Celsius are contributing to an increase in snakebite cases. India already has the highest rate of snakebite fatalities globally, with approximately 50,000 deaths and 3 to 4 million bites reported annually in the country. This is for the first time that the issue of surge in snakebites linking with climate change was raised in Parliament, thus underscoring the need for urgent action in the matter. The MP from Saran constituency in Bihar emphasized that many of these deaths could be avoided, particularly in Bihar, which suffers disproportionately due to its poverty and vulnerability to natural disasters. According to government data, snakebites result in 2,000



deaths in the country but studies contravene these claims stating that only 7.23 per cent of snakebite deaths are officially reported. Studies, including one published in Lancet Planetary Health, suggest that climate change will alter snake habitats, pushing them into new areas and increasing the likelihood of encounters with humans. This shift is expected to occur if greenhouse gas emissions remain unchecked, with venomous snakes potentially moving into new regions by 2070. The World Health Organization (WHO) too has warned that climate change will exacerbate the problem by affecting snake distribution and behavior. "As temperatures rise and extreme weather events become more frequent,

human-snake interactions are predicted to become more common." According to WHO, changes in farming practices and increased human migration will further heighten these interactions. Globally, snakebites afflict about 5.4 million people each year, resulting in 81,410 to 137,880 deaths, along with numerous amputations and disabilities. The study published in the Lancet Planetary Health which is co-authored by ecologist Pablo Ariel Martinez from the Federal University of Sergipe in Brazil predicts that savannas, grasslands, and deserts will see an influx of venomous snake species, while tropical rainforests will lose some. Notably, three viper species—Bitis rhinoceros, Vipera aspis, and Vipera ammodytes—are

expected to expand into new habitats, particularly in areas undergoing agricultural expansion and experiencing warmer, drier conditions. Rural communities are particularly at risk as these new species encroach upon their environments. Climate change induced extreme weather events such as floods can also worsen the problem. Research in Southeast Asia has shown that snakebite incidents increase during the monsoon season; this is because snakes and people both seek shelter away from floodwaters and become more likely to encounter each other. Hence, as climate change increases flooding, the risk of snakebite may rise even further. Despite these threats to humans, the researchers asserted that venomous snakes are crucial parts of ecosystems as predators of animals such as rats and insects. They also brought home the point that these venoms contain some compounds that have potential medical uses unrelated to snakebite, such as cytotoxins with anticancer potential or proteins that can be used in antihypertensive drugs.



ICG rescues injured crew member from fire-hit LPG tanker

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) successfully evacuated a critically injured patient from LPG tanker Limra (Flag: Panama) and brought to Kochi at 1942 hrs on Sunday, officials said here on Monday. The patient was shifted to Aster Medcity Hospital for further medical treatment. Giving details, they said on Sunday at approximately 1620 hrs, the ICG Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC), Mumbai, received a distress alert from the LPG tanker Limra reporting major fire in engine room. The incident occurred at around 1453 hrs resulting in total power and propulsion failure, prompting the crew to raise a distress alarm. The vessel was en route from Chittagong, Bangladesh, to Khor Fakkan, UAE, with 21 crew including 18 Indian

nationals, 1 Ukrainian, 1 Sri Lankan, and 1 Pakistani national. The crew successfully contained the fire; however, a 36-year-old Sri Lankan national, was found missing during the firefighting efforts. On locating the crew member his vitals were found to be critical. The crew administered basic aid and requested urgent medical evacuation. The ICG promptly activated the Search and Rescue mechanism and immediately dispatched ICG Ship Abhinav for SAR assistance. Additionally, an Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) equipped for medical emergencies was launched from Kochi at 1800 hrs approximately. The patient was evacuated and brought to Kochi at around 1942 hrs and transported to Aster Medcity Hospital. Despite all efforts, the patient succumbed to his injuries.

SC dismisses PIL against UGC-NET exam cancellation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a PIL challenging the Government's decision to cancel the UGC-NET examination following alleged question paper leak. A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, however, said the

dismissal of the PIL does not amount to a decision on the merits of the PIL as it was filed by a lawyer and not by aggrieved students. "Why are you (lawyer) coming? Let the students come here themselves," the CJ told the lawyer, adding "while declining the above PIL, we express nothing on merits". The bench asked advocate Ujjawal Gaur, who has filed the

PIL as a petitioner, to focus on some legal matters and leave such issues for aggrieved persons. The plea was filed against the decision of the Union Education Ministry and the National Testing Agency to cancel the UGC-NET exam following inputs that its integrity may have been compromised. The Ministry on June 19 had ordered the cancellation of the UGC-NET exam and handed

over the matter to the CBI for an investigation. In the plea, Gaur also sought a direction to immediately stay the proposed re-examination of the UGC-NET exam until the CBI completes its inquiry into the paper leak allegations. "The petitioner asserts that the decision is not only arbitrary but also unjust, given the recent findings of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).



tored, thus nullifying the grounds on which the cancellation was based," the plea, filed through advocate Rohit Pandey, said. The petitioner submitted that the "unwarranted" cancellation of the exam has caused significant distress, anxiety, and an unnecessary expenditure of resources for the aspirants who have rigorously prepared for this crucial examination.

SC rejects ED's challenge to Jharkhand CM Soren's bail

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a relief to Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, the Supreme Court on Monday dismissed the Enforcement Directorate's plea challenging a High Court order granting him bail in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam. The apex court said the Jharkhand High Court's June 28 order granting bail to Soren was a "very well reasoned judgement". We are not inclined to interfere with the impugned order," a bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan said. However, the top court said that since the observations made by the High Court were with regard to consideration for granting bail, the same would not influence the trial judge, either at the stage of trial or any other proceedings. "We find a very well reasoned judgement has been rendered by the single judge (of the High Court)," the bench said, adding, "We don't want to

observe anything more... If we observe, you (ED) might be in difficulty," Soren, the Executive President of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), had resigned as Chief Minister shortly before the ED arrested him on January 31 in the case. After coming out of jail on bail in the case, he returned as the Chief Minister of Jharkhand on July 4. Opposing Soren's bail plea in the High Court, the ED had alleged that he misused his position as the Chief Minister to "unlawfully" acquire 8.86 acres of land in the Bargain area in the state capital Ranchi. Soren's lawyer had earlier con-

tended that he was falsely implicated in the criminal case by the central agency. During the hearing in the apex court on Monday, Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, appearing for the ED, claimed the probe agency has evidence to show that the Chief Minister's office was directly dealing with the issue concerning the land in question. Detailed statements are there which clearly indicate his (Soren's) role," Raju said, adding that it is substantiated by evidence also. He argued the High Court has said that statements recorded by the ED under

Section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) cannot be relied upon at the stage of bail. The bench observed that the High Court has considered the statements recorded under Section 50 of the PMLA and given reasons. It said there was a specific finding that in all the records which were seized from one of the co-accused, there was nothing implicating Soren. Justice Gavai also referred to a recent statement given by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud in Bengaluru that the trial courts play safe when the question of granting bail arises. The ED had claimed that during the probe, Soren's media consultant Abhishek Prasad admitted that the JMM leader had instructed him to manipulate official records to change the ownership details of the plot. The agency had also claimed that the original owner of the land, Raj Kumar Pahan, had tried to lodge a complaint about his land being usurped but it was never acted upon.

Min: Govt takes action to address student suicides

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has taken several steps to curb suicide cases among students, Union Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar said in the Lok Sabha on Monday and added that 1.2 per cent of suicides were related to examination failures. Asked about student suicides in Kota, a hub of coaching centres in Rajasthan for competitive examinations, the Minister said a number of steps had been taken by the Central and the State Governments. "Several initiatives have been taken by our Government to curb incidents of suicide among students. According to NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) and Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India, only 1.2 per cent of total suicide cases are related to failure in examinations," Majumdar told the House. He said the Union education ministry had started the

'Manodarpan' initiative for providing psychological support to students. He added that the Rajasthan Government had also taken several steps to ensure mental health support for the students. "The Rajasthan Government issued a guideline in 2022 and again in 2023, which is enforced by the district administration. They have appointed 90 psychological counsellors... There is also a toll free helpline," he said. Majumdar added that 10,000 hostel gatekeepers had been trained to identify if a student required mental health-related help.

SC launches Special Lok Adalat for settlement of cases, media allowed

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a first, the first seven benches of the Supreme Court commenced a Special Lok Adalat at 2 pm on Monday for an amicable resolution of disputes, with media cameras being allowed inside courtrooms. The week-long special Lok Adalat, celebrating 75 years of the Supreme Court, began with the aim to "facilitate amicable settlements of suitable pending cases", in matters that have "elements of settlement". Earlier in the day, Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud said the first seven benches of the apex court will hear cases in the Special Lok Adalat at 2 pm. The top court will hold the Special Lok Adalat till August 3, in an effort to reduce the pendency of cases. "From today till Friday, we will have the Supreme Court Lok Adalat and the first seven benches will sit for it. If lawyers have cases which can go before the Lok Adalat, please bring them," the CJI said at the out-



set of the day's proceedings. Justice Chandrachud had earlier requested citizens, who have pending cases before the Supreme Court, to take part in the special Lok Adalat to get their disputes resolved amicably and speedily. In a video message uploaded on the court's website, he had said, "From July 29 to August 3, the Supreme Court is organising a Special Lok Adalat. This is part of a series of activities which the Supreme Court is observing to commemorate the 75th year since the establishment of the Supreme Court." Most significantly, the CJI had said judges dedicated to the institution of justice are concerned about the large backlog of cases.

"The Lok Adalat represents a very informal technology-based solution to resolve cases involving our citizens to their satisfaction in a purely voluntary, consensual mode. "Therefore, on behalf of all my colleagues and the staff of the Supreme Court, I would appeal to all citizens who have cases before the Supreme Court or lawyers advocates on record to take the advantage and benefit of this opportunity in an attempt to resolve the cases speedily, in a manner which is acceptable to every contesting party," Justice Chandrachud had said. The top court said Lok Adalats are an integral component of the country's judicial system, enhancing alternative dispute resolution as a means of expediting and fostering amicable settlements. It said cases with elements of settlement, including those relating to matrimonial disputes, property disputes, motor-accident claims, land acquisition, compensation, service and labour, pending before the apex court would be taken up to facilitate a speedy disposal.

DAC approves Advanced Navigation System for AFVs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to give a fillip to operational preparedness, nod was given on Monday for acquisition of Advanced Land Navigation System (ALNS) to armoured fighting vehicles for the army and 22 interceptor boats for the Coast Guard. Giving details here, Defence Ministry officials said a meeting of Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), under the Chairmanship of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday considered various Capital acquisition proposals. Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) was accorded to the procurement of Advanced Land Navigation System (ALNS) for Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) of the Indian Army. The system is spoof-proof with high levels of encryption. The ALNS Mk-II is compatible with Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System, NAVIGATION using Indian Constellation (IRNSS, NavIC), India in addition to Global Positioning System (GPS) and Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS).



The ALNS Mk-II offers compatibility with Defence Series Maps resulting in very high accuracy in navigational applications for AFVs. This equipment will be procured from Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Chennai under Buy [Indian-Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured (IDDM)] category. In order to enhance the capabilities of the Indian Coast Guard, the DAC accorded AoN for procurement of 22 Interceptor Boats with latest state-of-art system capable of quick interception and shallow water operation in territorial waters. These boats will be used for coastal surveillance and patrolling, search and rescue operations, including medical evacuation.

Navy pulls out oil tanker, looks for truck washed away in Uttara Kannada

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Navy is working round the clock as part of rescue and relief effort in rain hit Shirur, Ankola in Uttara Kannada district (40 kms south of Karwar) since last week and pulled out an oil tanker. Rescue team were now looking for a truck washed away, Navy officials said here on Monday. Giving details, officials said incessant monsoon rains triggered a landslide at Shirur on Ankola — Kumta Road, in Uttara Kannada district (40 kms south of Karwar), Karnataka on July 16. This led to the closing of National Highway 66 between Kumta and Karwar. It has been reported that a few personnel and vehicles including a Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) tanker were missing or washed away into the adjoining Gangavali river. The Uttara Kannada district administration had requested assistance from the Indian Navy to locate the HPCL tanker in the area. Responding promptly, two diving teams



(comprising twelve divers and six Hydrographers) with inflatable craft/ requisite equipment, from the Indian Navy's Base at Karwar were dispatched to the site in Shirur. In coordination with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team, the Naval personnel tackling strong river currents recovered the HPCL LPG tanker that had fallen into the river and by July 17 was hauled ashore, where representatives from HPCL then drained the gas making it safe and avoiding any potential danger.

Thereafter, from July 19 onwards two Indian Navy teams, along with high-resolution sonar, have been searching for another missing truck purportedly driven by Arjun Mooladikuzhiyil from Kerala. The strong currents in the river, dislocated debris from the hill, and adverse weather conditions have made searching the riverbed difficult. A coordinated response by the Indian Navy, the NDRF and the district administration is presently underway to locate the missing personnel and truck near the landslide area.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Talk tough, act tougher

Despite PM Modi's stern warning to Pakistan, crossborder terrorism is showing no signs of waning

Despite warnings, increased presence of troops and diplomatic manoeuvres cross-border terrorism remains a grim reality. In what must be a grave concern for all, the Indian Army has reported the loss of its 12th soldier this month, further straining the already tense relations between India and Pakistan. Rifleman Mohit Rathour was killed, and a Major along with three other soldiers were wounded in an unprovoked attack by Pakistanis Border Action Team (BAT) on an Indian forward post during an operation against terrorists attempting to cross the LoC at Kamkari in Machhal sector, north Kashmir. BAT, comprising Pakistani military personnel and terrorists, often provides cover fire for intruders crossing the LoC. In this latest assault, Pakistani personnel exploited poor weather and low visibility to attack the Army post with grenades and gunfire, resulting in a prolonged gunfight that critically wounded two soldiers, one of whom later died. In response to the surge in terror attacks, security in J&K



has been tightened, with the Government deploying two BSF battalions, totalling over 2,000 personnel, to the Union territory. The recent attack comes a day after the India Prime Minister warned Pakistan of dire consequences.

On Kargil Vijay Diwas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued a stern warning to Pakistan, asserting that the evil designs of the masters of terror will never succeed and that India will overcome every terror challenge. This strong message came amidst a rise in terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, including a deadly attack on a bus carrying pilgrims. But the PM's warning had little effect on the perpetrators.

The ongoing skirmishes along the Line of Control (LoC) and heightened insurgency activities in Jammu and Kashmir have contributed significantly to these casualties. While Pakistan's alleged support for militant groups continues to stir trouble, India must chalk out a comprehensive strategy to end such activities and ensure the safety of citizens and secure borders. Indeed, it is a tough task, given the difficult terrain but we must show resolve to take on terrorism and give fitting reply when such an incident takes place. Isolating Pakistan on international forums, especially at the UN, can work provided we present our case discreetly with proof. So far, despite the provocations, India has been steadfast in its efforts to normalise the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The Government's approach includes developmental initiatives, infrastructural investments, and engagement with local communities to foster peace and stability. But clearly, it is not enough and terrorists must be dealt with more vigorous force using high-tech solutions. The martyrdom of the soldiers should not go waste and we should strengthen India's resolve to pursue peace and stability in the region. Cross-border terrorism must stop now and we should have zero tolerance towards infiltrators to protect our borders and the people.

PICTALK



'Kanwariyas' gather at Har Ki Pauri ghat to collect 'Ganga jal,' in Haridwar

BRS faces existential crisis as KCR falters

Despite substantial party funds, the BRS now faces an existential crisis, compounded by internal defections and declining support



KALYANI SHANKAR

The Bharatiya Rashtra Samithi, formerly the Telangana Rashtra Samithi, sets itself apart from other declining political parties. Led by the ambitious K. Chandrababu Naidu, or KCR, the party's national expansion has been marked by setbacks, including its failure to retain power in Telangana. This fate is shared by many political parties and their leaders, as most eventually fade away after holding power at a state or national level. The downside continued as BRS suffered a significant and sudden setback with no Lok Sabha seat in 2024. Despite having around Rs 1,000 crore in party funds, KCR's hopes of national expansion were dashed. Rao renamed his party BRS in 2022, dropping the word Telangana, and KCR opened branches in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Those units are defunct now.

This is a stark example of how the political landscape can change instantly. Having lost power in the 2023 Assembly elections to Congress in the wilderness for the past ten years, the BRS is now facing a significant struggle for survival. The BRS has no representation in the Lok Sabha for the first time after the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The party, which dominated Telangana politics for about two decades and ruled the state for almost a decade, has now been voted out of the Lok Sabha in 2024. Just last week, BRS received a further setback. BRS MLA A. Gandhi defected to the ruling Congress, which reflects the party's decline.

The Congress now boasts 75 M.L.A.s, including 65 from Congress, one from C.P.I., and nine former BRS. Members. In 2001, KCR made a historic decision to resign from the Telugu Desam Party (T.D.P.). He believed that creating a separate state was the only way to end the discrimination in the Telangana region, sparking a demand for separation. TRS was formed to achieve separate Telangana, a seemingly impossible regional objective. He was 47 at the time. T.D.P. was the second-largest party in the National Democratic Alliance. In



2004, the TRS. Joined forces with the Congress and secured five Lok Sabha seats. Following this, KCR was appointed the Union Minister for Labour and Employment in the United Progressive Alliance (U.P.A.) government, headed by U.P.A. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. He continued his struggle inside and outside Parliament. In 2009, he initiated a hunger strike to demand the introduction of the Telangana Bill in Parliament.

After a few days, the Centre conceded to his demands. Shortly before the 2014 election, the U.P.A. government announced the formation of Telangana state. The TRS, performed well in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, winning 11 seats, its highest tally. However, it lost power to the Congress in the 2023 Assembly polls. On December 9, 2022, TRS, was officially renamed BRS., indicating KCR's intention to pursue national ambitions.

Now that the BRS, has failed to win even a single Lok Sabha seat in the state and its vote share has dropped to only 16.69%, the party faces a genuine existential crisis. The BRS, lost power last year, with just 35 seats in the Assembly.



UNLIKE CHANDRABABU, WHO HAD THE BACKING OF THE KAMMA COMMUNITY, KCR LACKS SUPPORT FROM ANY CASTE GROUP EXCEPT VELAMAS, A SMALL GROUP

The BRS chief struggled to keep the party together during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. It could not implement plans to field candidates in other states. KCR's attempt to establish a dynastic rule by appointing his son, nephew, and daughter to significant positions has been a point of contention. It was seen as a deviation from the party's founding principles and a sign of increasing autocracy. Secondly, like many dictatorial leaders, Rao failed to develop a second tier of leadership, which is an asset for any political leader except promoting his family. Thirdly, KCR, who rose to power through agitation and protests, steadily withdrew from public spaces. His inaccessibility and his aversion to media have significantly contributed to the disconnect between him and his leaders and workers. Rao surrounded himself with people who lacked substance and only praised him. As a result, he could not see the reality and fell into the trap of his sycophants, who presented false facts. Unlike Chandrababu, who had the backing of the Kamma community, KCR lacks support from any caste group except Velamas, a small group.

This political isolation is a significant factor in his decline. Fifthly, there were allegations of corruption. His daughter Kavitha is now in jail for alleged corruption in the Delhi liquor case. Sixthly, instead of concentrating on the state, KCR began dabbling in national politics and went around the Opposition-ruled states with a naked ambition of becoming Prime Minister. But he failed.

This wavering resulted in BRS. Unable to form the government in the 2024 polls. Seventhly, he thought he and his party were unbeatable and would continue to rule Telangana indefinitely like many other tinpot dictators. Eighthly, BRS. Faced defections.

However, he also induced defections when he was the chief minister. KCR has now joined a group of once-influential leaders such as Sharad Pawar, Lalu Prasad Yadav, Edapadi Palaniswamy, Deve Gowda, Mayawati, Uddhav Thackeray, and others who have previously held power but are now struggling. In politics, it's like playing a game of snakes and ladders.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DO NOT SUBVERT NITI AAYOG

Madam — Boycotting NITI Aayog Meetings Undermines Democratic Processes. Boycotting NITI Aayog meetings by some political parties contradicts the principles of cooperative federalism. With parties from the INDIA bloc attending, it was expected that others, including the Congress party with its significant representation in Lok Sabha, would also participate.

The central government's allocation of more funds to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, seen as politically motivated, should be addressed through dialogue rather than boycotts. Cooperation between the government and opposition is essential for national interest. Opposition parties staying away from NITI Aayog meetings miss the opportunity to voice their concerns and influence critical decisions.

Boycotts serve as ineffective protests, harming democratic processes and national unity. Continuous stalling of official processes by the opposition, since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure began, undermines the democratic framework. For citizens, the concern is about the smooth functioning of democracy. The opposition's confrontational approach hinders cooperative federalism, affecting national interest.

Addressing grievances through participation, not boycotts, ensures a healthier democratic process. Same Old Story Educated middle-class citizens often await the budget with anticipation, only to feel disappointed afterward. The recent budget, though promising in terms of infrastructure, employment, and other areas, fell short of transformational changes, particularly in taxation. The Finance Minister missed an opportunity to significantly alter the taxation structure, leading to disillusionment among the middle class. This cycle of expectation and disappointment continues, echoing Indiana Jones' sentiment: "Same old, same old."

Dorai Ramani Suresh | Ghaziabad

Ensure safety norms at coaching centres



The coaching institutions at Old Rajinder Nagar in Delhi are endangering the lives of UPSC aspirants, who face numerous hardships to pursue their dreams of becoming IAS officers. The recent tragic incident where three aspirants drowned in a basement flooded with rainwater underscores the dire state of India's coaching centers. Previously, such stories were common from Kota, but now Old Rajinder Nagar has also gained

notoriety for exploiting students for profit. This area, known as the UPSC hub, is filled with overpriced, poorly maintained apartments rented out to students from low and middle-income families who struggle to afford them. The Delhi government must take immediate action against negligent property owners and coaching institutions, enforcing strict standards to ensure the safety of the aspirants. These standards should include regulations on the number of students per batch, proper ventilation, parking facilities, and reasonable rent for student accommodations.

Additionally, a toll-free number should be established for students to report grievances related to their living and studying conditions directly to the police, ensuring their safety and empowering them against exploitation. These measures are crucial to protect the lives and aspirations of future officers and uphold societal responsibility.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

CELEBRATING PARENTS DAY

Madam — Parenting responsibilities are a testament to the unconditional love, support, and sacrifices parents make throughout their lives. This day emphasizes the importance of family values, fostering stronger relationships, and promoting gratitude and respect towards parents. Parents guide us with unwavering love and support, enduring countless silent and selfless sacrifices to ensure our happiness.

Despite the challenges of raising children, including teenage tantrums and door slams, their disciplined approach aims to provide us with a better life. As we transition into adulthood, parents continue to support us, often silently, checking on us and ensuring our well-being. Their selfless gestures speak volumes, even if they are not always expressive. It is time to show our appreciation and thankfulness for the support and love parents provide. The young generation must understand that one day they would be parents too!

MR Jayanthi | Mumbai

NAIL THE MYTH

Madam — Scientific facts have broken several myths and misconceptions. Will it put a break to political rhetoric in India which advocates population control based on false assumptions that the minority population is growing at a faster pace than its majority counterparts. Now that the pandemic period is over, the focus must be to release the 2021 census based on latest survey conducted so as to ascertain a clear picture of the socio economic scenario rather than targeting any particular community or area. It is absurd to predict about the future only on narrow rhetoric and political compulsions rather than using the demographic dividend for the progress of the country. So, no single community or religion be held responsible for rising population since it can falsify facts. If the Minority phobia is real or a mechanism to gain political dividends is a million dollar question.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Monsoon mayhem: The pothole predicament

Despite millions being spent annually by road authorities to ensure safe travel, the recurrence of potholes raises serious questions about where the money is going

The arrival of the monsoon season brings relief from the scorching heat, but it also brings along a familiar foe: "Potholes". This issue constantly frustrates commuters and raises doubts about the effectiveness of road maintenance. Every year, the Road Authorities spend millions of rupees to ensure a smooth and secure journey for travellers. However, these hazardous holes continue to deface the roads. All that money—where is it going? The other day I had to take a chance and walk the distance between the Amar Business Zone and the Hinjewadi Bus Stop. The rain was so intense that vehicles and cabs were unavailable, so I had to face it on my own. I prayed while I walked, hoping that I wouldn't hurt myself. The flooded streets and obscured footpaths turned the walk into a risky journey, where every step held the risk of either finding solid ground or plunging into an unseen pothole.



They are on foot or in their vehicles. The unpredictable nature of the road, obscured by the coverings of water, is risky. Potholes, which are frequently hidden beneath murky pools, become silent causes of numerous accidents, damaged vehicles, and occasionally fatal injuries. This issue demands urgent attention and a lasting resolution.

The persistence of potholes is a glaring testament to a systemic failure. Despite the annual financial outlay, the roads remain in a perpetual state of disrepair. One can't help but wonder about the quality of materials used, the thoroughness of the repair work, and the accountability

of the authorities involved. Are these millions being funneled into quick fixes rather than sustainable solutions? Moreover, the economic implications of this issue cannot be ignored. In an inflated world, where every rupee counts, the costs incurred from vehicle repairs, medical bills, and lost productivity due to traffic caused by bad roads are substantial. It's an added burden on the average citizen, who is already grappling with the rising cost of living.

So, what can be done to address this perennial problem? First and foremost, there needs to be a shift from reactive to proactive maintenance. Regular inspections, especially before the monsoon

season, can help identify potential trouble spots and address them preemptively. Employing advanced materials and technologies in road construction can also play a pivotal role in enhancing durability. Clear records must be kept of how the funds are spent and allocated. Citizens have the right to know where their money is going and, more importantly, to hold the authorities accountable for standard work. It may be worth considering a public-private partnership to enhance the expertise and efficiency in road maintenance.

(The author is a freelance writer and a motivator; views are personal)



RACHNA LAKHPATRI



FIRST COLUMN

THE HIDDEN ENEMY WITHIN

By keeping their ego in check, we can create a positive and productive work environment that will foster innovation and sustained success



SAKSHI SETHI

Today, many of us insist the main impediment to a full, successful life is the outside world. The most common enemy that lies within an individual is the three-letter word 'Ego'. At the beginning of the career, it impedes learning and the cultivation of talent. With the progress, it blinds to their faults and sows future problems and in failure, it magnifies each blow and makes the recovery more difficult. The ego, which is often defined as a person's sense of self-esteem or self-importance, is often viewed as a necessary trait for leaders. However, when ego inflates to unhealthy levels, it becomes a significant obstacle to effective leadership thereby stifling personal growth, distorting decision-making, eroding trust and ultimately jeopardizing the success of an organization. Collaboration is a cornerstone of effective leadership. Great leaders understand the importance of harnessing the collective intelligence and diverse perspectives of their team. Apart from collaboration, Constructive feedback is also essential for personal and professional growth. Leaders who embrace feedback can adapt, learn and improve continuously. While a healthy level of self-confidence is essential for leadership, an inflated ego can have detrimental effects. Leaders with big egos often believe their ideas are superior, which can prevent them from valuing the input of their team. This attitude can stifle creativity and innovation, as team members may feel undervalued and less motivated to share their ideas. Moreover, such leaders may resist feedback, seeing it as a threat to their authority or self-image. This resistance can prevent them from growing and improving, leading to repeated mistakes and missed development opportunities. Above all, ego can erode trust within a team. If team members feel that their leader is self-serving, they may become disengaged and less loyal to the organization. For a high-functioning team, it is the trust, and clear accountability mechanisms, that can allow leaders to build strong relationships with their team members thereby fostering a positive work environment where individuals feel safe, valued and motivated to contribute their best efforts.



The absence of the said factors can lead to a toxic work environment as leaders with large egos may struggle to admit when they are wrong which will ultimately prevent learning from mistakes and perpetuate problems. For an organisation to flourish, it becomes vital to acknowledge the mistakes continuously for continuous improvement and to build a culture of honesty and transparency. There is no denying the fact that leaders with inflated egos may prioritize short-term gains and personal accolades over long-term success and sustainability. This can lead to decisions that provide immediate benefits but can harm the organization in the long run. The only way to mitigate this is by encouraging leaders to engage in self-reflection and seek feedback; creating an environment where open communication is valued and establishing clear accountability mechanisms that can help them become more aware of their ego and its impact.

By addressing and learning from their failures, leaders can drive continuous improvement and inspire their teams to do the same. Moreover, leaders who practice humility and openness, encourage a culture of collaboration, thereby fostering an environment where ideas can flourish and the best solutions can emerge. Remember, ego in the workplace leadership can be a double-edged sword. By promoting self-awareness, fostering a culture of humility, encouraging open communication, setting clear accountability, and leading by example, organizations can mitigate the negative impacts of ego and cultivate more effective and empathetic leaders. In an era that glorifies social media and other forms of shameless self-promotion, the battle against ego must be fought on many fronts. Great leaders recognize the importance of humility, empathy and a commitment to the collective goals of their team and organization.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Equitable revenue sharing is must for fiscal federalism



A S MITTAL

Punjab's declining GDP reflect the broader issue of uneven development. Addressing these disparities is essential for promoting holistic growth and preventing social distress across states



The current state of India's fiscal federalism is significantly detrimental to the states. The system needs to be reoriented to spur a competitive environment across the country, not just within some individual states. The recent union budget was expected to set a comprehensive five-year economic agenda for the country's wholesome growth. In Budget 2024-25, unique packages were granted to Bihar of Rs 26,000 crore and Rs 15,000 crore to Andhra Pradesh in exchange for political support, resulting in an even wider fiscal imbalance. It's essential to ask why a similar approach has yet to be taken to address the economic growth of other financially distressed states. For example, Punjab, as a landlocked border state facing locational disadvantages, requires a fair platform to compete on an equal footing. Once a prosperous and progressive state, Punjab grapples with a significant problem of unchecked unemployment stemming from distressed farming and an imbalanced industrial base dominated by 99.7% of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Punjab accounts for only 5% of industrial units in the country, with a 3.6% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in the industrial sector over the last five fiscal years, ranking 12th. In contrast, the neighbouring state of Haryana has demonstrated higher growth rates at 5.9%. Punjab ranked first in GDP in 1981 and fourth in 2004. In the fiscal year 2023-24, with a GDP of Rs 6.98 lakh crore, the state was ranked 16th. In comparison, the neighbouring state of Haryana's GDP stands at Rs 11.20 lakh crore, ranked 12th. Interestingly, Bihar, once part of the economically challenged states known as 'BIMARU' (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh), is now a fast-growing economy with a growth rate of 10.6% and a GDP of Rs 8.59 crore in FY 2023-24. Allowing lopsided economic development in a sensitive state like Punjab will have serious repercussions. Failing to ensure



ONCE A PROSPEROUS AND PROGRESSIVE STATE, PUNJAB GRAPPLES WITH A SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM OF UNCHECKED UNEMPLOYMENT STEMMING FROM DISTRESSED FARMING AND AN IMBALANCED INDUSTRIAL BASE DOMINATED BY 99.7% OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISE

holistic development will ultimately lead to accusations of inefficiency in managing human resources. Unemployment exacerbates various issues in distressed areas, including mental health, crime, and drug abuse. Substantial evidence links drug abuse and law and order problems directly to unemployment. These issues must be addressed assertively to ensure the overall progress and well-being of Punjab. Economic distress in Punjab has led to unemployment and a significant migration of its human resources to Canada, which has created a breeding ground for radicals and anti-Indian Khalistani extremist activities on Canadian soil; it is a globalised challenge that must be addressed promptly. Secondly, the Pakistan border has been adversely affecting Punjab's economy. This, along with illegal arms supply and drug-related terrorism, has severely impacted Punjab's social fabric and law and order. The central government has not adequately compensated Punjab for its unique challenges compared to other states. The revenue-sharing disparity is a pressing issue causing significant, alarming socio-economic distress in Punjab. The state receives only 51 paise for every rupee it contributes to the Centre's tax pool, compared to states like Bihar, which receive Rs 1.20. This highlights the urgent need for equitable revenue sharing to ensure Punjab's socio-economic well-being. Currently, Punjab's contribution to the country's tax kitty stands at approximately 3%, and it only receives 1.8% of the divisible pool of taxes allocated by the Fifteenth Finance Commission. It

is concerning that Punjab only received 1.8% of the Rs 8,16,649 crore distributed by the Centre to the states during 2022-23. However, the large areas and population figures of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar provide them with additional leverage from the central tax pool. Uttar Pradesh received the highest share at 18% (Rs 1,46,525 crore), and Bihar received the second-highest share of 10%. This highlights why Punjab and other states argue they must receive a fair share of funds despite contributing more to the exchequer. During the fiscal year 2022-23, Punjab contributed Rs 32,800 crore to the central taxes fund, which included CGST, income tax, corporation tax, wealth tax, union excise duty, customs, and service tax. However, in return, the state only received Rs 14,756 crore. Punjab has raised the issue with the Sixteenth Finance Commission, which believes it deserves a fair share of central tax. The Finance Commission recommends the distribution of tax revenues between the Centre and States. Despite recommendations to allocate 42% and 41% of net tax revenue to States, their share of gross tax revenue fell to 35% in 2015-16 and 30% by 2023-24. For 2024-25, the Gross Tax Revenue (GTR) is projected to grow at 11.7%, raising concerns about adequacy in meeting state fiscal needs. The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Act has had significant and varying consequences on fiscal federalism. It has given the Centre more extensive taxation powers, altering the budget landscape and transforming budgetary federal-

ism in the country. While GST has led to revenue growth, it also restricts the financial autonomy of the states. In a recent memorandum submitted to the 16th finance commission chairman, Punjab highlighted the loss on account of GST introduction, indicating that the state would have earned more than Rs 45,000 crore with VAT versus the budgeted GST of Rs 25,750 crore in FY 2024-25. This gap is expected to increase to Rs 95,000 crore with VAT and GST at Rs 47,000 crore by 2030-31. The Way Forward: In the current fiscal federalism, it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive and inclusive approach to budgetary prudence, local employment generation, and social harmony, regardless of demographic and political differences. Devolve more fiscal powers to states, enhancing their flexibility in revenue generation, expenditure planning, and borrowing limits. Reforms are necessary to address imbalances in the revenue transfer system. A Finance Act amendment is still pending to establish fairness and accountability in managing the resource imbalances between the Centre and the States, which has led to growing regional tensions. Ultimately, fair, competitive, and effective fiscal federalism is essential to ensure that resources result in improved services and infrastructure for citizens. (The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views expressed are personal)

India's population: A liability or an untapped asset with immense potential

As the world population nears 8 billion, it becomes imperative to reassess the impact of population dynamics on sustainability and progress.

Much is being written and spoken about India's teeming human population. Huge concerns are being raised on the spectre of the burgeoning population becoming a severe liability for national survival. India's population was 1.44 billion in January 2024 and could be a shade above this at present. This population has been growing at the rate of nearly 1 per cent per year during the last decade. People say that the country cannot progress economically and become a developed nation unless population growth is checked. Or, in other words, a big population is a most severe dampener to national growth and development. How far is this true and is there historical precedence to cor-



ATUL SEHGAL

roborate this concern? The subject of the population needs to be analysed from a larger, global perspective. The population of the world is close to 8 billion today and has trebled over the last 100 years. The core issue regarding population being considered an asset or liability pertains to the current paradigms of tapping and using global material resources and the huge disparity in ownership of those resources. Humans do not and cannot

produce babies at will like goods are produced in a factory. Humans can only cohabit and copulate, like lower animals. This is borne out by the fact of decreasing fertility in many parts of the world despite the professed advancements of modern medical science. Scientists and medical professionals can help with the process of fertilisation of reproductive cells but cannot achieve conception at will. It stands to reason that babies are produced in the factory of nature by the subtle action of a supernatural, omnipotent entity. You can call him Creator or God who is also the controller and regulator of the world and the larger universe. This is a prime scientific fact if science is correctly under-

stood as the systematic and logical treatment of any subject. Hence population growth or decline is a subject more of God than of man. If population growth is high and humans fear that it will make human life unsustainable, their Creator knows better. He makes humans learn and realise their mistakes through natural disasters like climate change, wildfires, cyclones, tornados, earthquakes, floods and epidemics. These serve to balance out the excessive population from time to time. It has to be admitted that modern science has done a lot to conquer life-threatening illnesses and increase the longevity of humans. Average life expectancy globally today is almost double compared to what it was 200



years ago. But this increase has come at the cost of the environment. We have used chemical fertilizers for crops abundantly which have undermined the quality and fertility of soil. We have used chemical, reductionist formulation-based drugs and vaccines aplenty whose serious, sneaky side effects are slowly coming into evidence. But we cannot go on doing it ad infinitum without seriously prejudicing sustainability. Today, humans

are ravaging and pillaging global material resources like never before. They are enhancing human comforts at the cost of the environment. Life expectancy is rising at the cost of life quality. Infectious diseases are being combated through strong chemical formulation drugs, while insidiously inviting chronic diseases and newer ailments unheard of before. Humans are unwittingly proceeding towards a situation of unsustainable existence. Let us go back to the prime metaphysical truths of existence. God regulates all life. He is the source of all knowledge which is enshrined in the divinely revealed scriptures called Vedas. These scriptures are the repository of all knowledge including science and technology.

Vedic hymns declare that each human couple should produce 10 children. The same Vedas exhort humans to live up to at least 100 years, healthy and fit. In the above backdrop, the human population is an asset, not a liability. We should know how to utilise the manpower productively and fruitfully. If we follow the modes of agriculture and food production as per Vedic sciences, using technologies based on such sciences, we will never have to compromise the quality or fertility of the soil and can produce bumper crops season after season. We can achieve this through strictly organic farming and protect our environment and ecosphere. Following assiduously the principles of Ayurveda, we can ensure

sound health and high longevity without recourse to synthetic chemical drugs. All we have to do is change our systems and paradigms of living to reduce the stark wealth disparity witnessed today where 20 per cent of the global population holds 80 per cent of global resources. Our instinct of self-aggrandisement, driven by capitalism based on the banal baser element of greed has led to the present situation. Population needs to be considered an asset and it will be regarded as an asset if we change our living paradigms to align with nature and embrace environment-friendly technologies expounded in our ancient Vedic scriptures. (The author is a management consultant based in New Delhi; views are personal)

Parties indulge in blame game over coaching centre tragedy

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Rau's IAS Study Circle, coaching centre incident has triggered a political blame game in the national capital with sources in Raj Niwas claiming on Monday that Minister in-charge Irrigation and Flood Control Saurabh Bharadwaj is yet to take action on a proposal to tone up flood control measures in the aftermath of the "shameful flooding" in July last year.

According to sources, a file on a proposed comprehensive plan for desilting of drains in the city, prepared by a three-member committee comprising the MCD commissioner, PWD principal secretary and Delhi Jal Board (DJB) CEO, has been pending with Bharadwaj for months.

However, Bharadwaj rejected the claim saying the file has been approved on April 29 this year and will be implemented post Monsoon. He further said the LG does not take action against officials who do not listen to his ministers.

Lt Governor's office also said the latest proposal was sent to the minister in April while Bharadwaj alleged that he wrote several times since February to Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar for chalking out a comprehensive strategy for desilting of drains but he evaded responding to the matter. Atishi also alleged that Chief Secretary has not submitted a report on this incident so far.

The MCD is responsible for the desilting of storm water drains. It has been alleged the drainage system near the coaching cen-



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tre in the Old Rajinder Nagar area was not working properly due to which a large quantity of rainwater got accumulated at the road, and gushed into the basement.

"After sitting on the file for more than 05 months, Bharadwaj sent the file back to the Principal Secretary (I&FC) asking for a meeting of all stakeholders and demanding a Presentation. Thereafter the file was sent back to Bharadwaj on April 08, 2024. Since then the proposal is lying pending with him," Raj Niwas said. Giving details, officials said in the aftermath of the "shameful flooding" in Delhi last year, the Chief Secretary of Delhi had called a workshop of all government departments/agencies on 23.07.2023.

"Based on the deliberations thereafter, a Committee of 03 officers in-charge of drains, sewerage, drainage and desilting in Delhi, viz. Principal Secretary (I&FC), Principal Secretary (PWD) and CEO (DJB) and Commissioner

Order has been issued vide E.16(918)/UD/W/2024/021769 737/2545 - 2575 dated 29 April, 2024 with the Subject as 'Order assigning the responsibility, management and operation of twenty-two (22) open drains which out falls in river Yamuna and I&FC, Department as a single agency'. "And this will be implemented post Monsoons. Right now, respective agencies have to take care of desilting their drains," Bharadwaj posted on X.

The file is about 22 drains falling directly into Yamuna and it was decided that handing over can be done only after Monsoons. This file is not at all related to water logging in the city," Bharadwaj said.

"The LG office should answer why desilting was only done on papers? Why CS did not share the desilting reports with the Government inspite of regular written directions? What was CA Naresh Kumar hiding? Why CS did not conduct a third party audit inspite of written directions of Minister and orders of the High Court?," Bharadwaj questioned.

Bharadwaj further said it was also decided that I&FC department does not have manpower and budget to take up all the drains in this season and it will be taken up in month of September 2024. The CS and all officers know this. The LG saab does not understand Delhi. We are sharing video of Additional Chief Secretary Naveen Chaudhary in presence of CS Naresh Kumar and all top officers where he is explaining that IFC drains have no relation with Waterlogging in the city which is being discussed.

MCD launches sealing drive

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With questions being raised over Rau's coaching centre running its library illegally in the basement which led to the death of three IAS aspirants, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) launched a sealing drive in Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar and old Rajinder Nagar, a hub of UPSC coaching centres in the national Capital. The civic body also suspended Junior Engineer along with the Assistant Engineer and Tent Engineer, who have been terminated.

This comes two days after three civil services aspirants died after a library housed illegally in the basement of their coaching centre, Rau's IAS Study Circle, in central Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar got inundated following heavy rain, and reportedly led to the failure of the single biometric entry and exit point.

In a crackdown, the MCD sealed more than a dozen coaching centres including Drishti IAS coaching centre, a popular destination for civil services aspirants in Mukherjee Nagar. The body put new locks on its doors and a stamped paper at the entrance instructing the office to contact city authorities. Officials stated that the basement classes were illegal and consequently, five rooms were sealed.

"Action is being taken against

establishments illegally using basements in the area," an MCD official said, adding that a similar drive will later be carried out across the city against establishments operating illegally from basements.

Other centres sealed in the old Rajinder Nagar include IAS Gurukul, Chahal Academy, Plutus academy, Sai trading, IAS setu, Topper's academy, Dainik samwad, Civil's daily IAS, Career Power, 99 notes, Vidya Guru, Guidance IAS and Eassy for IAS. Rau's IAS Study Circle, where the three students died on Saturday, has already been sealed by police.

A UPSC aspirant studying at one of the coaching centres in Mukherjee Nagar said libraries at most of the centres have been closed after the Saturday incident. "I have to appear for UPSC Mains in one and a half months and the library at my centre has been closed. My books and all the preparation material are inside the library and now I am not allowed to collect my books," the student said.

"We got a message on Sunday night, saying we should collect our books, etc from the library by 6 am today. I was sleeping so how was I supposed to collect them by morning. Most students here are preparing for UPSC Mains," the student added. Meanwhile, the Delhi Police has written to the MCD seek-

ing status of de-silting of drains near the Rajinder Nagar coaching centre, which was flooded Saturday evening. Police have sought details if any complaint was given against the coaching institute to the civic agency or not. And if the complaint was given, what actions were taken by them.

Due to Rajinder Nagar tragedy, the MCD's House meeting witnessed stormy session as the councillors trooped into the well of the house, demanding resignation of the mayor Dr Shelly Oberoi and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal over the incident. The BJP and Congress councillors also raised slogans and carried posters against the AAP-led Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Amid the ruckus, the mayor adjourned the House even before it could begin and left the House.

After the adjournment, BJP councillors staged a protest on the fourth floor of the agency headquarters, demanding the mayor to resume the House. A heavy deployment of police force was seen at the Civic Centre at the agency headquarters.

The mayor also called an emergency meeting with the MCD commissioner, Chief Executive Officer of Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and Principal Secretary of Public Works Department (PWD).

BJP-AAP stage protest against each other over student deaths

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP and the AAP on Monday staged protests against each other on the deaths of three civil services aspirants who died when the basement of Rau's IAS Study Circle in central Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar was flooded following heavy rain. BJP leaders and workers on Monday staged a protest near the AAP office here, demanding resignation of the Arvind Kejriwal government as Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva termed the deaths of three civil services aspirants at a coaching centre a "murder" while the AAP staged a protest near the LG Secretariat and demanded that officers who allegedly failed to issue directions for desilting of drains in Delhi be sacked.

"Those three students, who were the country's future, died due to corruption of the Aam Aadmi Party that governs Delhi and MCD," Sachdeva said. "This is not an accident, it's murder," alleged Sachdeva during the protest. "Strict action must be taken against officers responsible for the death of these students. Whether they are from the MCD or any other agencies, they should be hanged," Sachdeva said.

BJP conspiring to parch and partition Bengal: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday made it clear that she would never allow the implementation of Teesta Water Agreement with Bangladesh as that would hurt the northern part of her State. Iterating that she loved Bangladesh but would not allow that love to deprive Bengal. "We love Bangladesh. (But) that is a different issue," Banerjee said adding "there is not enough water in the River Teesta to be shared with Bangladesh. People of North Bengal will not have access to drinking water. I will not allow anything like that," the Chief Minister said during his speech in the State assembly.

Reminding how the Centre had put across a number of barrages on the Teesta upstream in Sikkim without consulting Bengal she said, "already there is no water in the River ... there is problem of



drinking water ... I cannot allow more harm."

The Chief Minister earlier said the Centre's lack of attention on Bengal's river issues was causing floods and draught simultaneously. She had raised the issue of Atrerey River in Balurghat district which had dried up because of a barrage built by Bangladesh with the help of China.

Dwelling on the issue she also blamed the Damodar Valley Corporation for not carrying out enough dredging activities in various rivers which was causing floods in southern Bengal.

Outrage over ill-treatment of temple priest in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Underscoring charges made by various organisations that Hindus are not safe in Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram City Police dragged a priest performing puja in a temple, handcuffed him, and forcibly took him to a distant station. "The police did not inform the temple administration about their move to take the priest into custody. Had they told us, we would have made arrangements for the priest to accompany them to the station and also made alternate arrangements for the smooth conduct of the puja," M Nanda Kumar, president of the Manakkadu Muthumari Amman Temple Trust, told *The Pioneer*.

The puja rituals were disrupted due to the high-handed behaviour of the police and could only be completed after the priest performed purification rituals upon his release. However, the police team, led by Circle Inspector Mohammed Nizar, stormed into the sanctum sanctorum, dragged Arun out, handcuffed him, and took him to a distant police station. "The police did not inform the temple administration about their move to take the priest into custody. Had they told us, we would have made arrangements for the priest to accompany them to the station and also made alternate arrangements for the smooth conduct of the puja," M Nanda Kumar, president of the Manakkadu Muthumari Amman Temple Trust, told *The Pioneer*.

US woman found tied to tree in Maha forest

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra police are investigating the mystery surrounding a 50-year-old woman of an Indian origin with a copy of US passport and other documents who was found chained to a tree in the forests of Karadi in Sindhudurg district in Konkarn region during the weekend.

Identified as one Lalita Kayi-Kumari, the woman --wearing brown trousers and a dark windcheater --was found crying for help by a few shepherds who alerted the Banda Police station in Sindhudurg district on Saturday evening. Since she was in a bad shape because of lack of food and water for the past few days, the woman was rushed to the Goa Medical College & Hospital, Bambolim for treatment.

Sridhar honoured as fellow in UK

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Dr Sundergopal Sridhar, a distinguished chemical engineer and chief scientist at CSIR Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Hyderabad, has been honored as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry (FRSC), London, UK. With over 26 years in research, Dr. Sridhar's innovations extend to medical-grade ultrapure water systems for dialysis, atmospheric water generators for arid regions, and cost-effective masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, which benefited over 6 lakh people and generated substantial revenue for NGOs. His career highlights also include pioneering membrane pilot plants for various industrial applications and designing over 75 water purification plants to address water-borne diseases affecting millions.

Demand by students for space to offer Friday prayers resolved amicably

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The demand by Muslim students of Nirmala College, Muvattupuzha in Kerala for separate hall for saying Namaz (Friday prayer) has been resolved 'amicably' on Monday in a conciliation meeting convened by the college authorities. Father Justin Kuriakose, principal of the 71-year-old Catholic Church administered college, told the agitating students that it was not possible to allocate an auditorium/hall exclusively for them to offer Namaz as this would led to students from other communities demanding the same facility. "We told them unambiguously that ours is an institution maintaining high academic standards and secular credentials. They were asked to make use of the mosques nearby for Namaz as the college functions taking into

account the needs of the Muslim community members," said Fr Kuriakose. Students affiliated to Muslim League and the CPI(M) had staged a gherao in front of the Principal's chamber for two hours and this had shocked the college management. Though the CPI(M) affiliated students made a hasty retreat washing their hands off the issue, the news reached across the State upsetting the Christian community. Members of the local Mahul committee and religious police shadowing the students too participated in the discussion. With the College management remaining stubborn in their decision not to allocate hall for Namaz, the Mahul leaders too changed their tact and told media that the students were not right in pressing for a separate Namaz facility in the college premises.

Bulldozer rolls in, five arrested

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

An outrage over the deaths of three IAS aspirants continued, the Delhi Police on Monday arrested five more people. The now infamous locality, Old Rajinder Nagar, witnessed a bulldozer in action, cracking down on encroachments.



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Preliminary investigations by the police have suggested that a Force Gurkha SUV wading through the rainwater was a contributing factor to the flooding of the coaching institute, which claimed three young lives. A viral video showed the speeding vehicle creating ripples in the water, causing it to breach the coaching centre's gates and leading to the sudden flooding of the basement in just a few minutes. "The vehicle owner is a separate individual. He has no connections with anyone from the coaching centre or the owners," said a senior police official, adding that the police are committed to ensuring strict action against all those responsible.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) M Harsha Vardhan said each floor of the building is owned by a different person. "Five more persons have been arrested in connection with the flooding case in Rajinder Nagar. This includes the owner of the basement of Rau coaching and the individual who drove a vehicle which appears to have damaged the gate of the

building (leading to water gushing in the basement)," he said. The owner and coordinator were produced before a magisterial court on Sunday. The number of arrests in the case has increased to seven, including the earlier arrests of the owner, Abhishek Gupta, and the coordinator, Deshpal Singh, of Rau's IAS Study Circle. All the seven people have been sent to 14 days judicial custody.

They were charged under sections 105 (culpable homicide), 106(1) (death of any person by doing any rash or negligent act not amounting to culpable homicide), 115(2) (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), 290 (negligent conduct with respect to pulling down, repairing or constructing buildings) and 35 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The arrested people include four co-owners of the building namely Parvinder Singh, Sarvjit Singh, Harvinder Singh and Tejender Singh and the driver of the SUV identified as

Manoj Kataria. Meanwhile, the old Rajinder Nagar area, which is a hub of UPSC coaching centres, saw a "bulldozer action" cracking down on encroachments on the drains which leads to heavy waterlogging in the area.

Further, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) launched a crackdown with bulldozers employed to clear out encroachments blocking drains. The civic body began a bulldozer operation to clear cement blocks obstructing drains that leave the area chronically waterlogged. The Delhi Fire Services (DFS) also initiated the process of cancelling the NOC (no objection certificate) of the coaching centre. "The fire NOC was issued to the building after it fulfilled all the norms. But there was no system to pump the water out from the basement. We have initiated the process of cancelling the fire NOC," a senior Delhi Fire Services official said, adding that a letter will be issued from the department regarding cancellation of the NOC of the building.

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena visited the coaching hub in the area and interacted with protesting students over the death of their colleague. Officials said the protesting students explained their grievances to the LG who assured them that action will be taken in the matter.

SC refuses to stay Patna HC's order to scrap 65% quota

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a setback to the Bihar Government, the Supreme Court on Monday refused to stay the Patna High Court ruling that set aside the increase in reservation for Backward Classes, Extremely Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/STs) in Bihar from 50 per cent to 65 per cent in public employment and educational institutions.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, however, agreed to hear as many as 10 petitions of the Bihar Government against the Patna HC verdict. The bench, which did not even issue notices on the pleas, granted leave for appeal and said the petitions will be heard in September. "We will list in September. No interim relief [at this stage]," CJI Chandrachud said.

Appearing for the State Government, senior advocate Shyam Divan urged the bench to stay the HC order. He referred to a similar case of Chhattisgarh and said that the top court had stayed the order of the high court in that case. But CJI Chandrachud pointed out that the high court had found that already 68 per cent of the civil services consist of reserved candidates. "We will list the



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matter, but we will not grant any stay (on the HC verdict)," the CJI said. Divan then requested the court to say in the order, no interim relief "at this stage". The bench agreed and accordingly modified the order to say "no interim relief at this stage".

The High Court had on June 20 set aside the law after a batch of petitions filed before it alleged that the quota hike violated the right to equal opportunity for citizens in matters of employment and education. The High Court set aside the Bihar Reservation of Vacancies in Posts and Services (for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes) Amendment Act, 2023 and The Bihar (In admission in Educational Institutions) Reservation (Amendment) Act, 2023 as ultra vires the constitution and violative of equality clause under Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution.

Sabotage hits Paris Olympics again

AP ■ PARIS

The French Government says multiple telecommunications lines have been hit by acts of vandalism, affecting fiber lines and fixed and mobile phone lines as cities around France are hosting events for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The scale of the impact is unclear, as is whether it has affected any Olympic activities. The vandalism came after a rson attacks hit train networks around France on Friday, hours before the Olympics opening ceremony. Marina Ferrarri, secretary of state in charge of digital affairs, posted on X that damage in several regions overnight Sunday to Monday affected telecommunications operators. She said led to localised impact on access to fiber lines and



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fixed and mobile telephone lines. Paris 2024 Olympics organisers would not immediately comment. A French police official said at least six of France's administrative departments were affected, which include the region around the Mediterranean city of

Marseille, hosting Olympic soccer and sailing competitions. Telecom operators Bouygues and Free confirmed their services were affected. French media reports said lines operated by provider SFR also were hit. The parent company of Free said its teams are mobilised to restore services.

Kejriwal booked

From Page 1

The probe agency has alleged that liquor businessman Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy (now a TDP MP) met Kejriwal on March 16, 2021, at his office in the Delhi Secretariat. Reddy allegedly requested Kejriwal to provide support in his liquor business in the national capital by tweaking the Excise Policy 2021-22 which was then in the making, the CBI said in its charge sheet against K Kavitha. Kejriwal assured support to Reddy and asked him to contact the accused K Kavitha as she was working with his team on the Excise Policy of Delhi, the CBI has alleged. The Delhi chief minister, in turn, allegedly

told Reddy to provide funds to his Aam Aadmi Party, the probe agency has alleged. The agency had alleged that these kickbacks are found to have been returned to them subsequently out of the profit margins of wholesalers holding L-1 licenses through different modes, like issuance of excess credit notes, bank transfers, and outstanding amounts left in accounts of the companies controlled, by some conspirators from the South lobby. The CBI had alleged that a cartel was formed between three stakeholders of the said policy -- liquor manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers -- by violating provisions and against the spirit of the policy.

Quad calls for respecting sovereignty of nations

PTI ■ TOKYO

In a loud and clear message to China, the Quad on Monday reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific and resolved to work towards a region where no country dominates others and each state is free from "coercion" in all its forms.

The grouping comprising India, the US, Japan and Australia, after a meeting of their foreign ministers, announced a plan to expand its ambitious Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) programme to the Indian Ocean region that would facilitate monitoring the strategic waters.

The Quad also said that it was working for early operationalisation of its South Asia programme through India's Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region.

The Quad foreign ministerial meeting also called for upholding the free and open rules-based global order and respecting the principle of freedom, human rights, democratic values, sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.

Without directly naming China, the ministers expressed serious concern over the situation in the East and South China Seas and reiterated the Quad's strong opposition to any "unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion."

China accuses Quad of 'inciting' confrontation

Beijing (PTI): China on Monday accused the Quad nations, including the US and India, of "artificially creating tension" and "inciting confrontation" to "contain" the development of other countries in the Asia Pacific region.

Beijing's statement came hours after the foreign ministers of the Quad countries, comprising the US, Japan, India and Australia, in a meeting in Tokyo, reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, vowing to work towards a region where no country dominates others and each state is free from coercion in all its forms.

The Quad was "artificially creating tension, inciting confrontation and containing the

development of other countries", Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said at a press briefing here when asked for his reaction to the joint statement of the foreign ministers of the Quad countries released after the end of their meeting.

This is against the global trend of peace and development and stability in the Asia Pacific, Lin said.

In a loud and clear message to China, the Quad foreign ministers in Tokyo called for upholding the free and open rules-based international order and respecting the principle of freedom, human rights, democratic values, sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.

The meeting was attended by

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Australia's Penny Wong.

Without directly naming China, the four foreign ministers expressed serious concern over the situation in the East and South China Seas and reiterated the Quad's strong opposition to any "unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion".

Lin said China believes cooperation among countries and regional initiatives to be conducive to regional development, stability and prosperity rather than forming small circles harming mutual trust and cooperation.



Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, left, Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyan Jaishankar, second left, and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, second right, arrive for the Quad Ministerial Meeting, at the Foreign Ministry's Iikura guesthouse in Tokyo, Monday. AP/PTI

The meeting was attended by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong.

"All countries have a role in contributing to regional peace, stability, and prosperity, while seeking a region in which no coun-

try dominates and no country is dominated, competition is managed responsibly, and each country is free from coercion in all its forms and can exercise its agency to determine its own future," the ministers said in a joint statement.

It said the Quad continues to advance the development of a "trusted, secure and robust"

telecommunication network, and announced a plan to roll out Open Radio Access Networks (Open RAN) in island nation Palau.

In his remarks at a press conference, Jaishankar said the Quad is not a "talk shop" but a platform that generates practical outcomes.

In their statement, the Quad for-

eign ministers also expressed "deepest concern over the war raging in Ukraine including its terrible and tragic humanitarian consequences."

"We reiterate the need for a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in line with international law, consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, including respect for

sovereignty and territorial integrity," they said.

The Quad foreign ministers also referred to increasing Chinese manoeuvres in the South China Sea, especially the "dangerous use" of coast guard and maritime militia vessels.

"We continue to express our serious concern about the militarisation of disputed features, and coercive and

intimidating manoeuvres in the South China Sea," the joint statement said.

"We also express our serious concern about the dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels, the increasing use of various kinds of dangerous manoeuvres, and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities," it said.

6 UK lawmakers vie for Conservative Party leadership post-election defeat

London (AP): Six British lawmakers have announced they are running to lead the defeated Conservative Party, ahead of a Monday deadline, in a contest that will decide whether the opposition party tacks to the right or steers toward the political centre ground.

Contenders include former Foreign Secretary James Cleverly and lawmaker Tom Tugendhat from the party's centrist grouping, Former Home Secretary Priti Patel and ex-Business Secretary Kemi Badenoch have support from the right of the party. Former immigration minister Robert Jenrick and lawmaker Mel Stride also have secured the required support of 10 Conservative lawmakers before the deadline of 2:30 pm (9:30 am EDT, 13:30 GMT) on Monday. Badenoch, who came third in the party's last leadership election in 2022, was the early favorite with bookmakers. She said the party should lead "a renewal for capitalism" built around a smaller state and seek to persuade voters "why conservatism should matter".

In the wake of the party's defeat this month, Conservatives are split between moderates and hard-liners who want tougher migration and law and order policies to regain political territory lost to the Reform UK party led by anti-immigration firebrand Nigel Farage.

Maduro wins Venezuela's presidential election

AP ■ CARACAS

Nicolas Maduro was declared the winner in Venezuela's presidential election Sunday, even as his opponents were preparing to dispute the results, setting up a high-stakes showdown that will determine whether the South American nation transitions away from one party rule.

Shortly after midnight, the National Electoral Council said Maduro secured 51% of the vote, overcoming the main opposition candidate, Edmundo González, who garnered 44%.

But the electoral authority, which is controlled by Maduro loyalists, didn't immediately release the tallies from each of the 30,000 polling booths nationwide, hampering the opposition's ability to challenge the results after claiming it had data for only 30% of the



ballot boxes.

Foreign leaders held off recognizing the results as the electoral council promised to release official tallies in the "coming hours."

"The Maduro regime should understand that the results it

published are difficult to believe," said Gabriel Boric, the leftist leader of Chile. "We won't recognize any result that is not verifiable."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the U.S. has "serious concerns that the result

Vandalism hits communication lines in France

Paris (AP) The French government says multiple telecommunications lines have been hit by acts of vandalism, affecting fiber lines and fixed and mobile phone lines as cities around France are hosting events for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The scale of the impact is unclear, as is whether it has affected any Olympic activities. The vandalism came after a ransom attacks hit train networks around France on Friday, hours before the Olympics opening ceremony.

Marina Ferrari, secretary of state in charge of digital affairs, posted on X that damage in several regions overnight Sunday to Monday affected telecommunications operators. She said that led to localized impact on access to fiber lines and fixed and mobile telephone lines.

Israeli military detains 9 soldiers for alleged detainee abuse

Tel Aviv (AP) The Israeli military said Monday it was holding nine soldiers for questioning following allegations of "substantial abuse" of a detainee at a shadowy facility where Israel has held Palestinian prisoners throughout the war in Gaza.

The military did not disclose additional details surrounding the alleged abuse, saying only that its top legal official had launched a probe. An investigation by The Associated Press and reports by rights groups have exposed abysmal conditions at the Sde Teiman facility, the country's largest detention centre.

A report by the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, earlier this year said that detainees alleged they were subjected to ill-treatment and abuse while in Israeli custody, without specifying the facility.



A heated argument erupts between soldiers at the Sde Teiman detention facility in southern Israel after Military Police investigators arrived to detain suspects for questioning. AP/PTI

The military has generally denied ill-treatment of detainees. Following the accusations of harsh treatment, Israel has said it is transferring the bulk of Palestinian

detainees out of Sde Teiman and upgrading it.

Israeli media reported that military police officers who arrived at Sde Teiman in southern Israel to detain the soldiers

were met with protests and scuffles. The detentions of soldiers prompted an outcry among members of Israel's far-right government, who condemned the investigation into their conduct, saying it was an affront to their service.

Israel has detained thousands of Palestinians since the Oct 7 Hamas attack that sparked the war in Gaza, according to official figures, though hundreds were released after the military determined they were not affiliated with Hamas.

Israeli human rights groups say the majority of detainees have at some point passed through Sde Teiman.

International mediators are trying to bring Hamas and Israel to agree to a cease-fire deal that would wind down the war in Gaza and free the remaining 110 hostages held there.

Absolutely no reason why Kamala Harris should not win: Rushdie

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Mumbai-born author Salman Rushdie has endorsed Kamala Harris's candidacy for the US presidency and said he believes she is the person who can prevent former president Donald Trump from dragging the country towards authoritarianism.

Rushdie on Sunday extended his support and endorsement of US Vice President Harris during a virtual 'South Asian Men for Harris' event attended by scores of leading names from the Indian-American community, including prominent lawmakers, authors, policy experts, entrepreneurs and diaspora organisations. "It's a critical moment. I'm a boy from Bombay and it's great to see an Indian woman running for the White House. And my wife is African-American, so we like the fact

that a Black and Indian woman is running for the White House," Rushdie said.

Harris, 59, is the presumptive presidential nominee of the Democratic Party. She officially declared her candidacy after incumbent President Joe Biden withdrew from the race for a second term on July 20. She is expected to be officially declared as the presidential candidate by the Democrats next month.

The 77-year-old British-American novelist also noted that ethnicity itself is not enough. "We would not be gathering in this way let's say for Usha Vance or Nikki Haley," he said, referring to the Indian-American wife of Republican Vice Presidential nominee JD Vance and the Indian-American former South Carolina governor. Rushdie emphasised that the momentum is because something "very extraordinary,

transformative has happened in American politics" in just under one week. "The conversation has entirely changed with the arrival of Kamala Harris's candidacy and it's changed most joyfully, a way of optimism and positive, forward-thinking," he said.

Rushdie underscored that the community has to make that work because "we can't allow the alternative to happen." "This hollow man without a single noble quality, trying to drag this country towards authoritarianism. That cannot happen," he said, referring to 78-year-old Trump, a Republican. Rushdie voiced his confidence that Harris "is the person who can prevent it. And so I'm right in 1,000 per cent in for her." He added that star power matters in America and one could argue that Trump's celebrity status from being on TV for many years helped him get elected to the

White House in 2016. "Well, right now, he doesn't look like the star. He looks like the old, fat guy. Kamala looks like the superstar. And I think the charisma she brings to the campaign could be critical in the weeks ahead," he said.

In response to a question that there are sceptics in the country who believe that America would not elect a woman with Black and Indian heritage as President, Rushdie said this may well have been an argument even as recently as maybe a decade but the times have changed. "I think the way in which women's leadership is viewed now is different. The way in which the race issue can be made a positive is a new thing. And so I think there's absolutely no reason why Kamala Harris should not win and actually win it quite handily," Rushdie said.

150 killed in unrest, B'desh announces mourning

PTI ■ DHAKA

For the first time, the Bangladesh government on Monday officially acknowledged that 150 people were killed across the country during the students' unrest over the quota system. Violence gripped Bangladesh recently and the government called in the army to quell protests against job quotas. The protests, which started in universities and colleges earlier this month, quickly turned into a more widespread agitation against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government. The unrest has left several thousand people, including policemen, wounded and major government installations damaged.

"The government has decided that a nationwide mourning will be observed tomorrow... People

have been urged to wear black badges to mourn the deaths (during the violence)." Cabinet Secretary Mahub Hossain told a media briefing after a meeting chaired by Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

He said mosques, temples, pagodas and churches across the country were also urged to offer prayers for the departed souls and the wounded people. The top bureaucrat said Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal presented a report at the meeting about the overall situation and confirmed 150 deaths in clashes across the country. The announcement came on a day when the military and paramilitary troops patrolled the streets of the capital Dhaka while police in riot gear enforced a strict vigil as a faction of the protesting students overnight called a new round of

protests.

The group called the new protest after six of their coordinators announced the withdrawal of the demonstrations, which the protestors said was obtained under duress in police custody.

The six student leaders in an appearance before the media overnight announced the withdrawal of the street demonstrations as their demand for reforms in the quota system was met by the government following a Supreme Court order.

"We have mobilised forces to prevent fresh violence," a police official said. Witnesses and live TV footage showed the security forces guarding major points in the capital with military and police armoured personnel carriers patrolling the streets alongside the paramilitary Border Guard Bangladesh.

Firefighters make progress amid wildfires spreading smoke across US West

Forest Ranch (US) (AP): Firefighters made progress and were aided by improving weather over the weekend in the battle against wildfires covering massive areas and leaving a trail of damage in the western United States, but further evacuations and resources have been necessary as thousands of personnel tackle the flames.

The so-called Park Fire, the largest wildfire in California this year, was one of more than 100 blazes burning in the US on Sunday, according to the National Interagency Fire Centre. Some were sparked by the weather, with climate change increasing the frequency of lightning strikes as the western US endures blistering heat and bone-dry conditions.

The Park Fire had scorched an area greater than the city of Los Angeles as of Monday, darkening the sky with smoke and engaging thousands of firefighters. The blaze spanned more than 562 square miles (1,455 sq km) of inland Northern California.

Winds and temperatures were expected to increase slightly amid a drop in humidity, officials said in an update early Monday. Air quality alerts were issued for Monday in the northwestern US and western Canada.

The Park Fire started Wednesday, when authorities say a man pushed a burning car into a gully in Chico and then fled. A man accused of setting the fire was arrested Thursday and is due in court Monday. Firefighters increased containment to 12% on Saturday, aided by cooler temperatures and more humidity, officials said.

Amitabh Bachchan statue in US listed as tourist attraction on Google Maps

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A life-size statue of Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan installed by an Indian-American businessman outside his New Jersey residence in the US has now been listed by Google as a tourist attraction.

Gopi Seth installed Bachchan's life-size statue in August 2022 outside his residence in Edison city, about 35 kilometres south of Manhattan in New York.

"Our home has become one of the most popular tourist attractions, thanks to the Amitabh Bachchan statue. Recognised by Google Search, this site attracts a growing number of visitors each day," Seth told PTI



on Sunday. In two years since then, fans of the Indian superstar have been coming to this place, taking pictures and selfies, with many of them posting on social media platforms like Instagram and X.

"Fans of Mr Bachchan from all around the world travel to see the statue, with 20 to 25 cars of families arriving daily. Visitors often leave greeting cards and letters, expressing their admiration for the legendary actor," Seth said, sharing some of the videos of the fans visiting the statue.

Seth said the popularity of his home extends far beyond in-person visits. "Enthusiastic fans post videos, photos, and tweets about their experiences, flooding social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. These posts have garnered significant attention, further boosted the site's fame and made it a trending destination on the internet," he said.

Social media hinders teens' self-discovery

AP ■ SUNSHINE COAST

Over recent months, a number of politicians have supported calls to ban social media for children under 16 in Australia. Currently, kids under 13 are not allowed to use social media.

There's some research that suggests social media can be helpful for certain young people by, for example, connecting them with like-minded peers. That said, there are a raft of reasons for this proposed change. The most compelling is evidence showing inappropriate screen time and social media use are linked to poor mental health in children and young people, including depression and anxiety.

Overuse or misuse of social

media can damage many areas of psychological wellbeing. But, as an expert in adolescent development, I've been exploring one that's not often considered: identity development.

Identity development has long been regarded as the core psychological business of adolescence. You decide who you are, what you want to become, what underlying values you stand for and what you want out of life as you move toward adulthood. But might social media risk thwarting this process?

Between the ages of about 11 and 15, the human brain becomes increasingly sensitive to attention and feedback from peers. The parts of the brain responsible for developing perspective, judgment, critical thinking and self-control will

not fully mature until a person's early to mid 20s.

Teenagers have always compared themselves to others. They seek validation from peers as they explore their values, develop their personalities and seek to express themselves. But social media have provided a platform for adolescents – particularly those high in FOMO, or fear of missing out – to obsess over how they compare to many more people, including aptly named "influencers".

It can be difficult for a young person to develop a clear sense of self when they're constantly comparing themselves to and following others.

Similarly, young people are developing many of their opinions based on what they see on social media. An individual's

tendency to conform to other people's opinions is sometimes called the "bandwagon effect". While plenty of social media content can be harmless enough, social media – like the real world – are becoming increasingly political and polarised, with little tolerance for opposing ideas. Some teens may find themselves latching onto ideologies fed to them via marketing algorithms. And we know young people can become radicalised through social media. How do you see yourself? Are you the same person in public, in private, with friends, family or at work? Would you honestly admit some of your deepest feelings to your work colleague, friend, or even your partner? How about to yourself?

Govt's debt set to rise to ₹185 lakh cr in FY25

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government estimates its debt, including external borrowing, valued at current exchange rate and public account and other liabilities will increase to Rs 185 lakh crore, or 56.8 per cent of the GDP, during the current fiscal year.

The total debt stood at Rs 171.78 lakh crore, or 58.2 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), at the end of March 2024, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha on Monday.

As per the International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook, April 2024, India's Gross Domestic Product at current prices has already reached USD 3.57 trillion in 2023-24, he said.

Replying to another question, Chaudhary said the growth rate of the private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) at constant prices in



2022-23 and 2023-24 is 6.8 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively, he said, quoting provisional GDP estimates for 2023-24 released by the National Statistical Office. The growth rate of PFCE at current prices in 2022-23 and 2023-24 is 14.2 per cent and 8.5 per cent, respectively, he said, adding that the ratio of PFCE to the GDP at current prices in 2023-24 is 60.3 per cent.

In response to another question, Chaudhary said the normal net borrowing ceiling (NBC) of the states for 2021-

22 was fixed at 4 per cent of gross state domestic product (GSDP) as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission. Of the normal NBC of 4 per cent of projected GSDP for 2021-22, the borrowing ceiling of 0.50 per cent of the projected GSDP was earmarked for the incremental capital expenditure incurred by states during 2021-22, for which, a target for capital expenditure was fixed for each state, he said.

In another reply, he said the

Union government under the head 'Special Assistance' under Demands for Grants 'Transfers to States' provide grants-in-aid to states for spill-over committed liabilities for which Budget provision is not made and for other need-based assistance to states.

Further, NITI Aayog, in its report titled 'Report on Developmental Support to the Successor State of Andhra Pradesh under Andhra Pradesh Re-organization Act (APRA), 2014' dated December 1, 2015, has recommended "...A total assistance of Rs 2,100 crore for the seven backward districts of Andhra Pradesh at the rate of Rs 300 crore per district. Based on recommendations of NITI Aayog, he said the Department of Expenditure has released an amount of Rs 1,750 crore so far under the APRA, 2014 for development of seven backward districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Digitalisation in finance paving way for next-generation banking: RBI Gov

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Digitalisation in finance is paving the way for next-generation banking and improving access to financial services at affordable cost, said Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday. In the foreword of the Report on Currency and Finance (RCF) for 2023-24, the Governor also said the flagship Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has revolutionised the retail payment experience for end-users, making transactions faster and more convenient. In the digital currency arena, the Reserve Bank is at the forefront with pilot runs of the e-rupee, the central bank digital currency (CBDC). The digital lending ecosystem is becoming vibrant with initiatives such as Open Credit Enablement Network, Open Network for Digital Commerce and the Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit.

He said fintechs are collaborating with banks and non-banking financial



companies (NBFCs) as lending service providers. They are also operating platforms to facilitate digital credit. BigTechs are backing payment apps and lending products as third-party service providers. "Digitalisation in finance is paving the way for next-generation banking; improving access to financial services at affordable costs; and enhancing the impact of direct benefit transfers by effective targeting of beneficiaries in a cost-efficient manner," Das said. He noted that loans in the

retail segment are being enabled by online payments and innovative credit assessment models with instant disbursements. Also, e-commerce is being boosted through embedded finance. "All these innovations are making financial markets more efficient and integrated," the Governor said. At the same time, Das said digitalisation also presents challenges related to cybersecurity, data privacy, data bias, vendor and third-party risks, and customer protection.

"Increased inter-connectedness may lead to systemic risks. Additionally, emerging technologies can introduce complex products and business models with risks that users may not fully understand, including the proliferation of fraudulent apps and mis-selling through dark patterns," he said. Das further said digitalisation may induce human resource challenges in the financial sector, necessitating strategic investments in upskilling and reskilling. Taking stock of India's digital journey so far, the report explores emerging opportunities and challenges, supported by surveys of key stakeholders and data analytics. It finds empirical support for a positive role of the regulatory framework in increasing the confidence of consumers in digital financial products, boosting operating and technical efficiencies of financial institutions and engendering more liquid and integrated financial markets.

India's power generation capacity rises to 4.46 GW in 10 years: MoS Power

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's total installed power generation capacity has grown around 80 per cent over the last 10 years to 4,46,190 MW (4.46 GW) in June 2024, Parliament was informed on Monday.

The installed capacity, which was 2,48,554 MW in March 2014, reached 4,46,190 MW in June, the Union Minister of State for Power Shripad Naik said.

In a reply to the Rajya Sabha, he said the installed capacity of coal-based power has increased from 1,39,663 MW in March 2014 to 2,10,969 MW in June 2024.

While the installed capacity of renewable sector has increased from 75,519 MW in March 2014 to 1,95,013 MW in June 2024, the minister added.

The Government of India proposes to set up an additional minimum 80 GW coal-based capacity by 2031-32, Naik said.

He further said 1,95,181 circuit kilometer (ckm) of transmission lines, 7,30,794



MVA of transformation capacity and 82,790 MW of inter-regional capacity have been added, connecting the whole country into one grid running on one frequency with the capability of transferring 1,18,740 MW from one corner of the country to another.

"India's grid has emerged as one of the largest unified grids in the world. Connecting the whole country into one grid has transformed the country into one unified power market," he added.

Now, the distribution companies (discoms) can buy power at cheapest available

rates from any generator in any corner of the country, thereby enabling cheaper electricity tariffs for consumers.

Besides, 2,927 new substations have been added, upgrade of 3,965 existing sub stations has been carried out and 8.5 lakh ckm of high tension and low tension lines have been added/upgraded, the MoS said.

As a result of these measures, the availability of power in rural areas has increased from 12.5 hours in 2015 to 21.9 hours in 2024, Naik said, adding that the availability of power in urban areas is 23.4 hours.

Rupee settles flat at 83.73 against US dollar in restricted trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee moved in a narrow range before settling flat at 83.73 (provisional) against US dollar on Monday as a firm American currency in overseas markets offset the gains from weak crude oil prices.

Forex traders said a recovery in the US dollar and dollar demand from importers restricted gains for the domestic unit.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.70 and touched a low of 83.74 against the dollar during the trading session.

It finally settled at 83.73 (provisional) against the American currency, unchanged from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee recovered from its all-time low level and appreciated 5 paise to 83.73 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on



month-end dollar demand from importers and oil marketing companies. A recovery in the US Dollar ahead of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting this week may also weigh on the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Choudhary further noted that "a positive tone in the domestic markets and fresh foreign fund inflows may support the rupee at lower levels. Investors may remain cautious ahead of the FOMC, Bank of England (BoE) and Bank of Japan (BoJ) meeting this week.

Sensex, Nifty settle flat after hitting fresh all-time high levels

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty hit intra-day record high levels before closing almost flat on Monday due to profit-taking in FMCG and IT shares by cautious investors ahead of the key US Fed interest rate decision later this week.

The 30-share BSE Sensex closed higher by 23.12 points or 0.03 per cent at 81,355.84 - its all time closing high -- with 16 of its components advancing and 14 ending lower. The index opened higher and jumped 57.71 points or 0.70 per cent to hit a new intra-day record peak of 81,908.43 in late morning deals following a decline in US bond yields. However, investors preferred to book profits at record high levels amid high volatility dragging the index down.

The NSE Nifty ended marginally up 1.25 points or 0.01 per cent at an all-time closing high of 24,836.10. During the day, it surged 164.9 points or 0.66 per cent



to hit a fresh lifetime peak of 24,999.75.

From the Sensex pack, Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries and Sun Pharma were among the biggest gainers.

Bharti Airtel, Titan, ITC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tech Mahindra and HDFC Bank were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong settled in the positive territory.

European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets rallied on Friday. "An ease in the US personal consumption expenditure to 2.5% and the subsequent drop in the US 10-year yield have fuelled optimism that the Fed might cut rates in September, leading to a global rally. However, profit-booking was triggered in the domestic market given trading in the overbought territory and closed flat," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,546.38 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.31 per cent to USD 80.88 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark jumped 1,292.92 points or 1.62 per cent to settle at 81,332.72 on Friday.

The NSE Nifty surged 428.75 points or 1.76 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 24,834.85.

IN BRIEF

NTPC DECLARES Q1 FY25 UNAUDITED RESULTS

New Delhi: The country's largest integrated power utility- NTPC Ltd., with a group installed capacity of more than 76GW, declared unaudited financial results for Q1 FY25 on July 27, 2024. NTPC Group generated ₹114 Billion Units in Q1 FY25 as compared to ₹104 billion units in Q1 FY24. NTPC's standalone gross generation in Q1 FY25 is ₹98 billion units as compared to ₹88 billion units in the corresponding previous period.



INTEGRATION OF AI INTO DENTAL EDUCATION

New Delhi: A high-level stakeholders meeting was held at GGSIPU to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) into dental education. As per the WHO Global Oral Health Status report, oral diseases affect 3.5 billion individuals globally. To tackle this case load, the academic experts feel AI can play a vital role. The technology enhances diagnostic accuracy, treatment planning, and patient care in dentistry.



JUNCKERS' OAK NATURE LAUNCHED

New Delhi: Freddy Svane, the Ambassador at the Royal Danish Embassy in New Delhi launched "Oak Nature" by Junckers, Europe's leading manufacturer of premium solid wood flooring for sports, residential, and commercial uses. The launching was celebrated the Junckers' 25 successful years in India, marking significant growth in the industry. The launch event, titled "Discover Junckers: A Night of Art and Design," was held at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) in Saket highlighting Danish craftsmanship in an Indian setting.

LOHIA LAUNCHES ELECTRIC 3-WHEELER MODELS

New Delhi: Lohia, one of India's largest electric automobile manufacturers, has announced the launch of new electric three-wheeler (E3W) models, signalling a renewed focus on this segment. This strategic move aims to revolutionise the EV market with innovative, sustainable solutions, offering a wide range of electric rickshaws and three-wheelers to meet diverse customer needs.

REC DECLARES 1ST INTERIM DIVIDEND OF 3.50 PER SHARE

New Delhi: The Board of Directors of REC Limited, today approved the limited reviewed standalone and consolidated financial results for the quarter ended 30th June 2024.



INTER-SCHOOL AQUATIC MEET HELD

New Delhi: LPS Global School hosted the Inter-school Aquatic Meet, Nautica, on July 26, 2024, welcoming 233 participants from 22 prestigious schools across the region. The event, held at LPS Global School, showcased spirited competition and camaraderie among young athletes passionate about aquatic sports.



Report flags employer-employee expectations mismatch

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Around 34 per cent of organisations in the country struggle to find the right talent and one in three grapples with retaining existing employees as the gap between employer expectations and employee realities regarding hiring and retention continues to grow, according to a report.

Even as employers and job seekers agree that flexibility, higher salaries and career progression are top priorities, employees value company culture and ethics more than the organisations realise while organisations overvalue the importance of brand and incentives, said Michael Page "Talent Trends 2024 - India Expectation Gap" report. Coming out of the pandemic, a convergence of factors resulted in a subtle but



transformative change in workplace dynamics, with people thinking more holistically about the value their job gives to their lives, said Nicolas Dumoulin, Michael Page Senior Managing Director for India, Thailand, Philippines, and Vietnam.

Michael Page "Talent Trends 2024 - India Expectation Gap" report is based on interviews among 3,087 respondents across India.

The report further revealed that, on one hand, companies struggle to meet salary expectations, while on the other hand, they face a scarcity of applicants with the required skills who also align with the organisation's culture.

Meanwhile, the report found that most employees are open to new careers and job roles in 2024 compared to last year and 94 per cent of respondents were open to exploring different roles this year, according to the report. Though openness to new roles has varied slightly across demographics, this shift has endured since 2022, during the great resignation, it added.

The report also revealed that 41 per cent of respondents in India would refuse a promotion to maintain well-being.

When it came to workplace discrimination, the report found that in India 47 per cent of employees report workplace discrimination, which is higher than the Asia Pacific average of 31 per cent. However, 45 per cent of the Indian employees who experienced discrimination still face barriers in formally reporting such incidents, it added.

"Discrimination remains a pervasive issue in India's workplaces, as highlighted in our 'Talent Trends 2024 - India Expectation Gap' report. This has created an urgent need for comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives to address systematic bias and foster a more inclusive environment...," Michael Page India Managing Director Anshul Lodha told.

Indian economy likely to record over 7% growth: NCAER

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian economy could grow higher than 7 per cent and possibly closer to 7.5 per cent in the current fiscal on the back of normal monsoon and receded electoral uncertainty, economic think tank NCAER has said. In its July 2024 issue of Monthly Economic Review (MER), NCAER said real GDP grew by 8.2 per cent in FY2023-24, driven by stable consumption demand and steadily improving investment demand.

"Based on the momentum in the high-frequency indicators, normalised monsoon, a relatively benign global outlook and receded electoral uncertainty, both in India and in the rest of the world, growth will likely turn out to be higher than 7 per cent, and possibly closer to 7.5 per cent," NCAER director general Poonam

Gupta said. Gupta said the Union Budget 2024-25 lived up to the expectations of unwavering commitment to fiscal consolidation, prudence, and quality. The Budget has kept the fiscal deficit target at 4.9 per cent of GDP and capital expenditure at 2.4 per cent of GDP during 2024-25.

According to the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), the short to medium-term growth strategy is based on six key areas — private sector capital formation, green transition financing, MSME development, agricultural transformation, Education and skill development, and enhanced state capacity.

The NCAER-NSE business confidence index (BCI) increased to 149.8 in the first quarter (Q1) of FY25, up from 138.2 in the fourth quarter (Q4) of

FY24, indicating an improvement in business sentiments.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) revised its growth projection for India upward to 7 per cent, while the Asian Development Bank (ADB) maintained its projection at 7 per cent as of July 2024 for FY2024-25. The range of projections for India for the current fiscal year is between 6.6 to 7.2 per cent.

As per the Economic Survey 2023-24, India's real GDP grew by 8.2 per cent in FY2023-24 due to stable consumption and improving investment demand, and it is projected to grow between 6.5-7 per cent in FY2024-25.

The Union Budget for FY2024-25 emphasised fiscal prudence and capex. Nominal GDP is projected to grow at 10.5 per cent in FY2024-25; while the fiscal deficit is budgeted at 4.9 per cent of GDP.

Vedanta Nico signs pact for supplying nickel to US-based AEsir Technologies



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vedanta Nico, a subsidiary of Vedanta Ltd, on Monday said it has entered into a pact with US-based AEsir Technologies for the supply of nickel, a critical component for next-generation batteries.

Nickel plays an important role in EV battery technology, particularly in the cathode, where it enhances energy density, power output, and battery lifespan. Nickel-rich batteries, such as nickel-zinc variants, offer fast charging, reduce reliance on cobalt, and improve the overall electric vehicle (EV) value proposition.

The global demand for nickel in batteries is projected to reach 500,000 tonnes by 2025 from 150,000 tonnes in 2020 due to the expanding EV market adoption. The International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts that the number of electric cars will rise from over 10 million in 2020 to 145 million by 2030, spurred by larger battery capacities, faster charging, and advancements in reducing cobalt use.

"Vedanta Nico, India's primary nickel producer, has signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with AEsir Technologies, Inc, a US-based innovator in advanced battery technologies," Vedanta Nico said in a statement.

Vedanta Nico has now joined forces to develop and commercialise cutting-edge nickel-zinc batteries for critical infrastructure, 5G telecom, and electric vehicle chargers, it said.

"We are thrilled to partner with AEsir Technologies to create a game-changing battery solution for the critical infrastructure, 5G telecom, and EV market. Our expertise in nickel production, coupled with AEsir's innovative zinc battery technology, positions us to deliver a product that meets the evolving needs of the industry.

This collaboration aligns with our vision of contributing to a sustainable future through responsible mining and value-added products," Vedanta Nico COO Prashuk Jain said.



Manu-Sarabjot duo enters bronze medal round; Ramita finishes seventh

PTI ■ CHATEAUXROUX

Confident Manu Bhaker placed herself in contention for a second Olympic medal as she combined with Sarabjot Singh to make the bronze playoff in the 10m air pistol mixed team event but Ramita Jindal ended seventh in the 10m air rifle women's competition here on Monday.

Sarabjot finished with a total of 580 to make the medal round to be held on Tuesday. The Indians will face Koreans Oh Ye Jin and Lee Wonho, who shot 579, in the bronze-medal match. The other Indian pair of Rhythm Sangwan and Arjun Singh Cheema finished 10th with a score of 576 and failed to make it to the medal rounds. Turkiye, who equalled Qualification Olympic Record with 582, and Serbia (581), who finished second, respectively, will contest the gold-medal match. Bhaker was sensational with her 98s in the first two series,

but a 95 in the third set pulled the team down a bit. However, the pair did enough to make the medal round in the end. Sarabjot, who missed out on gaining a spot in the finals of the men's 10m air pistol event by a whisker, shot 97 in the second and third, after a 95 in the first. **RAMITA FACES TOUGH COMPETITION:** Young Indian shooter Ramita's score was 145.3 when she bowed of the high-quality eight-women final. She was placed seventh after 10 shots (104.0), when the elimination began. In danger of being eliminated,

a 10.5 pushed Ramita to sixth place even as Norway's Hegg Jeanette Duestad made an exit. But the Indian could not save herself after that. She was placed fourth at one point but failed to maintain the momentum. In the qualifications on Sunday, she performed exceedingly well to make the final in the fifth place. Ramita, the Hangzhou Asian Games bronze-medallist in the event, beat World Championship medallist Mehuli Ghosh and Tilottama Sen at the domestic trials to make it to Paris Games.

Refugee athletes want more of them to compete at Olympics as migration takes global focus

AP ■ PARIS

The first time Perina Lokure Nakang began to run for sport, she ran 9 miles (14 kilometers) along the road near her refugee camp in northwestern Kenya. Now, the 21-year-old South Sudanese runner is competing in the Paris Olympics, among many of the 37 athletes on the Olympic refugee team who are pushing to see more refugees like her able to compete in the Games.

"I told myself if I continue running this, it is going to change my life," she said. "In the Olympics, everyone is looking to me to represent them." They are getting support from former refugee Olympians and U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, who told The Associated Press in an interview Sunday that the team is "a symbol of inclusion, of equality, of achievement for a large community around the world of refugees and displaced people."

The Olympic refugee team was born at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, a collaboration between the International Olympic Committee and UNHCR, with just 10 athletes from four different countries.

Now, it has expanded to dozens of athletes that have fled 11 countries - ranging from Cuba to Afghanistan and South Sudan like Nakang, who escaped war when she was 7. The refugee team has spurred hope by many to recover their dreams that were lost when they left their lives behind to start from scratch in a new country. These athletes have taken center stage in the Paris Olympics, a competition that has underscored themes like diversity and inclusion at a time of historic global migration.

In Friday's opening ceremonies, Grandi was honored with the Olympic laurel for his support of the Olympic refugee team and "his dedication to support refugees recognizing the power of sport." "It is a moment in which people that have



often lost everything can gain back dignity, identity and give back to the communities hosting them," Grandi told the AP. "And they're not the objects of charity in a way, but are actors and the active participants in their communities." The Olympics are set during a tense time in France: The country's far-right party has made political gains in recent elections while focusing on anti-immigration policies.

French and local authorities in Paris also have come under fire for breaking up homeless camps largely made up of migrants from African countries once colonized by the French, including Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Senegal. Migrants have been loaded up on buses and taken out of the city in an effort by authorities to clean up the streets during the Olympics.

"We understand the city needs to manage itself," Grandi said. But especially with asylum-seekers, finding "solutions that are humane is very important. And this is a

message that goes far beyond the Olympics. This is a message that goes far beyond the French government."

Still, many current and former refugee athletes like Yiech Pur Biel see the platform offered by the Olympics as crucial in a larger push to humanize refugees and people fleeing their homes as nations around the world clamp down on access to asylum.

Another South Sudanese runner, the 29-year-old Biel was among the first 10 athletes to compete on the Olympic refugee team in 2016. Now living in Nebraska and working with UNHCR, Biel said he hopes the team can "bring back the dream of refugees" and "showing what refugees can do."

With growing representation of refugees in the Olympics, he said he hopes to reduce the need for there to be a refugee team at the Games.

"The team will grow. We don't want to see (refugee populations) growing, but no one can control what is happening in the world," Biel said.

Afghan judoka traverses five countries before realising Paris dream

PTI ■ CHATEAUXROUX (FRANCE)

For most athletes, a journey to Olympics under normal circumstances involves gruelling training, discipline and some perseverance but when the aspirant hails from war-torn Afghanistan, it ends up being a 6000km voyage to safety and sporting opportunities.

Afghan judoka Sibghatullah Arab fled Taliban in 2021, took refuge in five different countries before settling in Germany, covering 6000km. Arab will be representing the IOC (International Olympic Committee) refugee team in the men's 81kg category at the Paris Olympics. He as learned many things from judo, a sport he came to love after watching the world championships on television at home in the rural north of his native Afghanistan.

But nothing could prepare him for what happened in 2021 when, with the Taliban regaining huge swathes of territory in and around his home province of Kunduz, he fled to Europe. Arab was merely 19 and had just broken into the Afghan judo team at that time. "When I left Afghanistan, there were many problems, I did not know if I would be alive and if I would arrive," he said.

After nine months of travelling through countries including Iran, Turkiye, Greece, Bosnia and Slovenia, he settled in Germany. The journey full of risks had an adverse impact on



his health. "I had many problems on the way, there was stress, my health was not good," he said, not wanting to go into the details.

After his lengthy journey, he first arrived in Kamen, a small town to the east of Dortmund, and was placed in a refugee centre. This proved to be a turning point in his judo career. "There was a guy who told me I can go to a judo club in Monchengladbach - that's how I found my coach, who is from Iran and could speak Persian with me. He helped me so much." Despite his new surroundings, Arab regained his strength and settled into a new routine under the guidance of Vahid Sarlak, who is the IOC refugee team coach in Paris. He is himself exiled from the country of his birth -- Iran. "The first time I came into the gym in the judo club, I had more stress and did not see a way for my future," the now 23-year-old said.

"I did not know what would happen, if I can continue this way or not. But after a time, I

found my way and I thought I can follow it. I am going to the gym every day now," he added. The hard work began to pay off with a seventh-place finish at the European Open in Madrid in 2023 offering some encouragement. Aside from becoming an Olympian, Arab says his parents, who are still in Afghanistan, remain one of his biggest sources of motivation. "My family calls me every day, especially my mother and my brother, who encourage me to have a good programme for eating, sleeping and training. This is very important because I will be a member of the refugee team in Paris. They give me advice every day," he said.

On his selection in the refugee squad, he added: "When I heard I will be part of the team, I was nervous but then I thought, 'Now I am responsible to do more.' "This is an important duty for me and I am trying to do everything for myself and my team. I am ready for the tournament. All I am thinking about are my goals and my time in Paris," Arab added.

Nemour impresses with her bars routine at Olympics

AP ■ PARIS

When Kaylia Nemour competes alongside Simone Biles and her gymnastics rivals at the Paris Olympics, she feels right at home. The 17-year-old athlete, one of the best in the world on uneven bars, was born in France. She grew up here, and still trains here.

She posted the best score on her favorite apparatus during Sunday's women's team qualifications and will be aiming for the gold medal in that discipline. Too bad for the Olympics host country, she competes for Algeria. The situation is due to a dispute between the French gymnastics federation and Nemour's club

of Avoine Beaumont, which has led the gymnast to embrace her father's Algerian nationality. The long-lasting crisis was settled after the French minister for Sport intervened following an initial refusal from the federation to release the gymnast that could have jeopardized her presence in Paris.

Nemour's massive score of 15.600 on Sunday was unmatched by any of her rivals. It was the second highest score of the day on any apparatus, bettered only by Biles' first vault score of 15.800. Nemour was consistent on all four events and also qualified in fifth place for the all-around final, where no French athlete will be



represented. "I'm in the mix with the best, and I can improve things, I have some time left to work," she said. The conflict between Nemour - who holds dual citizenship -

and the French federation started after Nemour suffered from a bone and cartilage condition and had to undergo surgery on both knees in 2021. The federation thought her problems were the result of

overtraining during a time her body was growing up and decided to postpone the moment she would return to competition, despite her surgeon giving a go-ahead.

The long dispute ended last year as she was finally authorized to put on an Algerian leotard. Since she switched, Nemour has been on a high-speed ride to success.

At last year's world championships, she won a silver medal on uneven bars, the first World medal by a gymnast representing an African nation. She is also an African all-around champion and has an element named after her in the Code of Points.

AP ■ MARSEILLE (FRANCE)

Embattled Canada women's soccer coach Bev Priestman apologized to her players and pledged to cooperate with an investigation into the drone-spying scandal at the Paris Olympics.

The team was deducted six points and Priestman was banned for a year after two of her assistants were caught using drones to spy on New Zealand's practices before their opening game Wednesday. "I am absolutely heartbroken for the players, and I would like to apologize from the bottom of my heart for the impact this situation has had on all of them," Priestman said in a statement. "As the leader of the team on the field, I want to take accountability, and I plan to fully cooperate with the investigation."

Canada kept alive its hopes of advancing despite the sanction by beating France 2-1 Sunday after Vanessa Gilles's winner in

Banned coach Bev heartbroken, apologises in Canada drone-spying scandal at Olympics

the 12th minute of added time in Saint-Etienne. But the win still left the defending Olympic champion pointless and in need of victory against Colombia in its final Group A game.

Canada's players celebrated wildly after the winning goal - likely in response to the pressure the team has felt after a turbulent first week at the Games.

Priestman led Canada to the Olympic title in Tokyo in 2021, but her reputation has been marred by the scandal, which has raised questions about the practices of the country's men's and women's soccer teams and how widespread the issue could be. She also apologized to Canada as a nation, but appeared to try to defend her legacy.

"This program and team have allowed this country to reach the pinnacle of women's soccer, and their winning of the gold medal was earned through sheer grit and determination, despite reports to the contrary," she said. "I fought with every ounce of my being to make this program better, much of which will never be known or understood. I wish I could say more, but I will refrain at this time, given the appeals process and the ongoing investigation." It has emerged that a complaint against the women's team for filming an opponent's training session was made at the 2022 CONCACAF W Championship, which served as a qualification tournament for last summer's Women's World Cup.



The revelation is part of the fallout of the drone scandal. FIFA banned Priestman - who had already been sent home

from France - and two of her coaches and imposed a hefty \$226,000 fine on Canada Soccer.

There was little sympathy from Germany coach Horst Hrubesch, who said Canada's behavior was "stupidity."

Canada was looking into an appeal, but said they suspected a "systemic ethical shortcoming." Also Sunday, Canada sports minister Carla Qualtrough said the government will withhold funding "relating to suspended Canada Soccer officials for the duration of their FIFA sanction." Drone surveillance of a closed practice, she said, "is cheating." She called the episode a "significant distraction and embarrassment" for all Canadians.

Canada Soccer CEO and general secretary Kevin Blue said this week he learned of a possible drone incident

involving the men's national team at the recent Copa America.

He said it was his understanding that it did not have an impact on the competitive integrity of the tournament but would not offer details.

Asked whether men's coach Jesse Marsch was aware of possible drone usage at that tournament that ended this month in the United States, Blue said Marsch was aware after the fact and has "denounced it as a practice to his staff." Canada lost in the Copa semifinals to Argentina 2-0.

A CONCACAF official confirmed a complaint at the 2022 W Championship but offered few details. The United States defeated Canada in the

tournament final in Mexico, with both countries earning a berth in the Women's World Cup and Olympics.

The Sports Network in Canada reported other incidents of surveillance, including at the Tokyo Games, citing unnamed sources with knowledge of the filming. FIFA declined comment when asked by the AP if the matter would lead to a wider investigation into drone spying in soccer.

The case is an embarrassment for the Canadian federation, which is teaming with the United States and Mexico to host the 2026 men's World Cup across North America. Meanwhile, Canada's sanctions are likely heading for the Court of Arbitration for Sport's special Olympic court in Paris. Canada Soccer and the Canadian Olympic Committee said late Saturday that they planned to appeal the points deduction, which makes it difficult, but not impossible for Canada's women to advance to the knockout round.



Rohit, Kohli among India players to train ahead of ODIs against Sri Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO

India skipper Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and a few other players will start their training from Monday ahead of the three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka starting August 2. While the Indian T20I team under Suryakumar Yadav will

play the third and final match on Tuesday in Pallekele, Rohit, Kohli and a few others like rookie Harshit Rana will train in Colombo after reaching the island nation's capital on Sunday. Rohit, Kohli and Kuldeep Yadav will hit the ground running nearly a month after they helped India win the T20 World Cup in the

Americas for the second time. The ODIs against Sri Lanka will also mark the return of Shreyas Iyer into the national side. It was in late 2023 that Iyer last played a limited-overs match for India, against South Africa in December. The squad also features Delhi all-rounder Rana, who was a member of the IPL-winning

Kolkata Knight Riders' team earlier this year. These players will train under India assistant coach Abhishek Nayar in Colombo. Each of the three ODIs will be played at the R Premadasa Stadium here. While the first match is on August 2, the second and third ODIs are on August 4 and 7 respectively.

Players will fight tooth and nail to be there: Dravid on cricket's Olympic debut at LA 2028

PTI ■ PARIS

An ardent supporter of cricket's inclusion in the Olympics, former India head coach and batting legend Rahul Dravid says the "serious dressing room conversations" that he has heard indicate that players are going to "fight tooth and nail" to be there at the world's biggest sporting event. Dravid was in the French capital on Sunday to attend a panel discussion on 'Cricket at the Olympics: Dawn of a New Era', celebrating the sport's inclusion in the 2028 Los Angeles Games, at the recently inaugurated India House.

"I've already heard a few conversations in the dressing room. People are talking about the 2026 T20 World Cup, there is an ODI World Cup in 2027, and you hear people saying there is the Olympics in 2028," Dravid, who also caught up on some tennis action at the Games before coming for the event, said during the discussion.

"People are going to want to win that gold medal, stand on the podium, and be a part of the Games Village, a great sporting event, and interact with so many athletes. As you get closer, I have no doubt that teams will be preparing and checking out facilities. They will take this seriously, and players will fight



tooth and nail to be out there," he added. The Test great had ICC CEO Geoff Allardice for company during the discussion at India House here. "You grow up watching the Olympics, seeing Carl Lewis winning the gold medal, watching the great athletes perform. You always want to be part of great events like this. The environment, the energy -- it's a dream come true." Dravid hoped that India would win both the men's and women's gold medals at the LA Games. "The dream for me to have a fantastic cricket tournament, hopefully Indian men and women winning the gold which would be nice.

"Unfortunately, I won't be able to play, but I will make every effort to be in LA in some capacity or another. If not anything else, I will try to get a media job," joked Dravid, who ended his tenure as India head coach after the recent T20 World Cup triumph in the West Indies. The men's and women's cricket competitions will run concurrently at the LA Olympics. As far as Allardice is concerned, he said cricket will be one of the "star attractions" in LA four years from now. "It's quite surreal to be here in Paris, seeing the energy around sport and how it's getting together. Cricket is setting the dawn on the global sporting

community. "I think cricket will be one of the star attractions in Los Angeles...When you see global stars of big sports around the world competing in one city at a time -- watching Rafael Nadal at tennis this afternoon -- and then if you are in LA, you can watch the best tennis players, best golfers, and the best cricketers. "We are going to be very, very strong come 2028," he said. **WOMEN'S CRICKET IS GOING FORWARD:** Dravid also shared his thoughts on the growth of women's cricket, saying it is progressing well and increasing participation by young players is making the sport more inclusive and attractive. "Women's cricket is already going forward. I don't think it needs anything else. It's fantastic to have it going on concurrently. Even when you talk to people at the grassroots level, to coaches, one of the things they constantly tell you is the level of participation from young girls. "Every year in every academy, the percentage is growing exponentially, sometimes even more than the boys. Cricket is becoming a lot more inclusive and attractive. This could potentially be a career. You would not have said that five or six years ago. That's what we want to see."

Clinical India eye series whitewash against wobbly Lanka in third T20I

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

There will be no let-up in intensity as a ruthless India, under the leadership of new coach Gautam Gambhir and captain Suryakumar Yadav, seek to exploit Sri Lanka's weaknesses and push for a series whitewash in the inconsequential third and final T20I here on Tuesday.

The fate of the series was decided after India swept aside Sri Lanka in the first two games, leaving the possibility of an embarrassing whitewash hanging over the hosts' heads. India secured a seven-wicket victory on Sunday in a rain-shortened match in the second T20I, thwarting Sri Lanka's charge once again.

Despite the hosts' flying start, their fight fizzled out for the second consecutive game due to subpar batting. On the same day, the Sri Lankan women's team beat tournament-favourites India in the final for their maiden Women's T20 Asia Cup title in Dambulla but it seemed to have no impact on the men's side which continued to grapple with existing issues.

Sri Lanka's embarrassing batting collapses in the middle overs is the prime reason of their undoing in this series so far, while India have gone about their business like a true world champion side. India has proven to be the superior side by a significant



margin, demonstrating greater confidence in their plans, skills, and execution, and never faltering under pressure. There have been moments when Sri Lanka have appeared to be running away with the contest but each time India has found their way back, particularly with their incisive bowling, to keep their upper hand. The 'bowlers' captain' Suryakumar has not only marshalled his troops with precision to make effective bowling changes, but he has looked to lead from front with the bat having scored 58 and 26 in the two outings so far. India have remained aggressive right from the word go to reap

rich benefits, putting a 200 plus score in the opener. In the second game, a slight change in the batting line-up delivered a seven-wicket win which helped them seal the series. It remains to be seen if vice-captain and opener Shubman Gill is fit in time for this contest after he missed the second game due to a stiff neck. His replacement, Sanju Samson had to wait for over an hour to face his first ball due to a rain break and when his chance arrived, the right-hander missed one from Maheesh Theekshana for a golden duck. Samson and India will be seeking improved

performances from the batter, who has been a fixture around the T20I squad for some time, including serving as a non-playing member of the World Cup-winning team. But at the other end, Yashvini Jaiswal has looked to go all-out with his attacking game to rake up 70 runs in two outings and he remains one of the biggest threats for the Lankans. For the hosts, Pathum Nissanka (111 runs) and Kusal Perera (73) have provided the fireworks at the top but Sri Lanka's middle-overs struggles have led to their downfall. India spinner Ravi Bishnoi, who helped script a win in the second game with 3/26, highlighted Sri Lankan batters'

inability to navigate spin bowling in the series. "They play spin really well but I do not know what (has) happened, they are collapsing in the middle overs," Bishnoi said after the second T20I. "They are known as a good spin-batting team but I think something has gone wrong," said Bishnoi, possibly hinting at the lack of skills and aptitude among Sri Lankan players generally which has led to their struggles across formats. With the ball, Matheesha Pathirana returned an expensive 4/40 in the opening game but Sri Lanka will want a lot more from their bowlers.

TEAMS (FROM):
India: Suryakumar Yadav (c), Shubman Gill, Yashvini Jaiswal, Rinku Singh, Riyan Parag, Rishabh Pant (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Khaleel Ahmed, Mohammed Siraj.
Sri Lanka: Dinesh Chandimal, Avishka Fernando, Kusal Mendis (wk), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Perera, Charith Asalanka (c), Wanindu Hasaranga, Kamindu Mendis, Dasun Shanaka, Chaminda Wickramasinghe, Binura Fernando, Asitha Fernando, Dilshan Madushanka, Matheesha Pathirana, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunith Welelage.

Covering 22,000 kms in 2 years, Kerala cyclist reaches Paris to cheer for Neeraj

PTI ■ PARIS

India's star athlete Neeraj Chopra will have a special supporter at the Paris Olympics: a Kerala cyclist who has travelled all the way from Calicut, riding more than 22,000 kilometers over two years.

Fayis Asraf Ali's arrival in the French capital was the culmination of a long journey on his Surly bicycle that took him across 30 countries, beginning on August 15, 2022. Ali set off with a mission to cycle from "India to London to spread peace and unity". Having cycled across 17 countries, he stopped in Budapest one August afternoon last year, when he came to know that the Tokyo Olympics gold medalist was staying across the street.

The ace javelin thrower with the athletics contingent for the World Championships in which claimed another historic win. A few hurried calls to a "Kerala coach" led to a "dream meeting" with his sporting idol. "I got a few minutes to talk to the Indian athletes and Neeraj told me since 'you are going to London why don't you come to Paris for the Olympics,'" Ali told PTI during an interaction after

ending his journey at India House here on Sunday. "I thought it would be a wonderful opportunity to see him again in Paris so I altered my plan a bit and procured the required visa and cycled to the UK before ending my journey here. "I am so excited to meet him again. I've requested PT Usha ma'am (IOA chief). I'm here to see him create history again. We will cheer for him (on August 8)," he added. He carries four pairs of clothes, a tent, a sleeping bag and a mat that takes the total weight of the cycle to 50kgs.

"I never stay in a hotel and get some sponsors on the way and that's it. In between twice, I flew to Kerala to arrange visas. "Visa is all you need to cross the border, a cyclist does not need any other documentation," he added. Is he not tired or facing any health issues? "No, never. The love of the people and the warm reception I get everywhere keeps me going. I'm here and so excited," added Ali, who was greeted by star cricketers Chris Gayle, Harbhajan Singh and Suresh Raina while he was in the UK. An engineer by profession, Ali was into his fourth year in Saudi Arabia when his

father was diagnosed with a heart ailment in 2015. His father died in 2018. Being the only son, he had to return to India to look after his father. He had quit his job and was back home in Calicut. His wife is a medical professional and he has two sons. He also has a thyroid issue that makes him put on weight. "Those three years made me realise that health is the most important thing in life, not money. One fine morning I saw a couple of cyclists touring and thought of starting riding," he recalled. He first bought a Rs 13K bicycle to get used to riding and then chalked out plans for his maiden solo ride: Calicut to Singapore. Then he upgraded it to a Rs 1 lakh cycle, especially designed for long trips. For the trip to Paris, he had to buy a more advanced bicycle, costing Rs 2.5 lakh. He set out on his first trip on August 7, 2019 and reached Singapore on November 21, clocking 8000kms across seven countries. "Rotary arranged my trip and I got a few sponsors. But my biggest supporter was my wife who took care of both my kids and the family. So I just had to embark on my journey," he said.

India's tennis campaign at Olympics ends in single day

PTI ■ PARIS

India's tennis campaign at the Paris Olympics lasted just one day as Sumit Nagal and the men's doubles pair of Rohan Bopanna and N Sriram Balaji bowed out after losing their respective opening matches to French challengers, here Sunday.

Nagal was first to take court, but his strong baseline game didn't seem to be enough against mercurial Corentin Moutet, who earned a stylish three-set win. In his second appearance at the Olympic Games, Nagal bounced back after losing the first set but fell 2-6 6-4 5-7 in two hours and 28 minutes at a packed court seven at the Roland Garros.

In the Tokyo Games, Nagal had lost in the second round to Russian Daniil Medvedev but could not make the most of a manageable opener today. He was up 2-0 in the decider with

an early break but allowed Moutet to claw his way back and win. Later in the day, Bopanna and Balaji went down fighting 5-7 2-6 against Edouard Roger-Vasselin and Gael Monfils, who replaced injured Fabien Reboul in the home team at the last minute.

India have won only one Olympic medal in tennis, when Leander Paes bagged a bronze in the 1996 Atlanta Games. Monfils' big-hitting helped the home team that was edged on by the partisan crowd. It was probably the last time Bopanna represented India in a multi-sport event. The 44-year-old has already announced his retirement from Davis Cup. The doubles match featured several fiery baseline exchanges between Bopanna and both the French players. The French ploy of engaging Bopanna in long rallies from

the back took Balaji out of the picture on many points, and it largely denied the debutant opportunity of a quick finish at the net. The Indians dropped serve first when Bopanna went down 0-40 in game six following a long rally that ended with Indian team's unforced error.

Bopanna and Balaji though got the break back in the next game on Roger-Vasselin's serve. Down by a breakpoint, Monfils could not put away a volley. The match was back on serve. Eventually, Balaji came out to serve at 5-6 to stay in the set. Feeling the nerves, he struggled to put first serves in and committed a double fault to get to 15-30. A long rally ensued, which ended in home team's favour. At second set point, Bopanna netted a backhand volley. Balaji could not hold serve in the second set, as Bopanna too

struggled to cope with the powerful strokes of the French players. The match ended with Indian team's unforced error. It has always been a battle of attrition between Nagal and Moutet with three of their last four outings being three-set affairs and it was no different today.

Nagal had got the better of Moutet in their last meeting in Grand Prix of Hassan in the Moroccan city of Marrakech in April this year. Nagal didn't seem to have a plan B but Moutet had a few tricks in his bag to unsettle his rival. He served underarm a number of times and used the drop shots, the forehand slice and the backhand slice very effectively. The chants of Coco-Coco, Aaale-Aaale and Moutet-Moutet certainly gave the home player the energy required in such a slugfest. Nagal had a nervy start with a

boisterous crowd behind Moutet. A drop volley error at 30-all put him down by a break point. Another unforced error cost him the opening game. The French player began with an underarm serve, much to the amusement of the home fans. He, however, ended up serving a double fault. It was an easy hold for the southpaw even as Nagal also bounced back with a hold at love.

Nagal said he was expecting underarm serves from him but obviously didn't appreciate that. Moutet struggled a bit with his first serve but fed Nagal a lot of high balls and attacked his backhand more to build on the break. Nagal had his chances to get the break back in game four but squandered four breakpoints. He was down by another break point in game five but saved and held when Moutet just missed the line with his return.

The crowd favourite again amused the gathered supporters at court seven as he crossed over the court to check the spot if the ball landed inside the line. It was crucial for Nagal to hold serve after falling behind 2-4 but he erred on overhead volley at breakpoint. Moutet pocketed the opening set when Nagal's forehand return soared over the baseline.

The second set was not a one-way traffic with Nagal finding his rhythm. The free points were not given. The set remained in serve till game five. After playing two deuce points, Moutet again served underarm, and this time he got the point as Nagal netted the return. Nagal was furious but the crowd loved the moment. Nagal finally had his first break of the match when Moutet's dropped shot crashed into the net.

NOTICE FOR CANCELLATION OF TENDER

No. E-499218/302 Date : 27.07.2024

Due to insufficient participation of bidders in the e-tender invited vide NIT No. E-499218/3 dated 11 June 2024, are cancelled and re-tender is invited. The detailed notice inviting re-tender is available in the website www.assamtenders.gov.in.

Sd/- Mission Director,
Samagra Shiksha Axom
Kahilpara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/CF/992/24/30-JUL-24

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

No. E-499218/301 Date : 27.07.2024

The Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, invites bids from registered appropriate class of contractor for 8 group of building works in different schools as per the detailed notice inviting tender which can be downloaded from the website <https://www.assamtenders.gov.in>.

The last date of submission of tender is 19-08-2024 upto 2:00 PM.

Sd/- Mission Director,
Samagra Shiksha Axom
Kahilpara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/CF/992/24/30-JUL-24