**OPINION 6** 

**WORLD 8** 

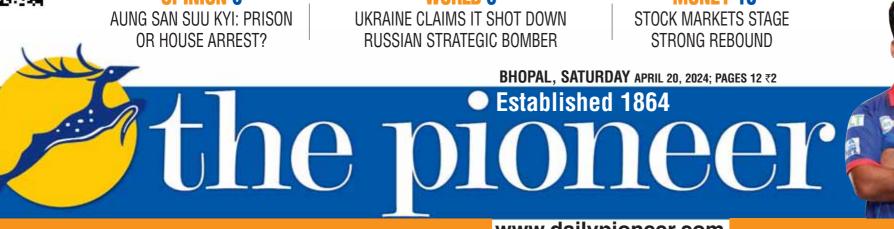
UKRAINE CLAIMS IT SHOT DOWN

DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR

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**RISHABH** PANT SET FOR **HOMECOMING** 12 SPORTS

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## Over 62 per cent polling in 1st phase of LS polls

n a kaleidoscope of democracy in action, voters of all ages — from wheelchair-bound seniors to newlyweds and Great Andamanese Tribe from Strait Island in South Andaman to the world's shortest woman cast their vote on Friday with an estimated 62.37 per cent turnout recorded till 6 pm in the first phase of Lok

Sabha elections. It covered 102 seats across 21 States and Union territories amid sporadic incidents of violence in West Bengal while an accidental

shell in Chhattisgarh left a CRPF jawan dead. The highest voter turnout on the first day of polling under Phase 1 of the Lok Sabha elections was recorded in Tripura at 79.90 percent, followed by West Bengal at 77.57 percent and Assam at 71.38 percent, with Bihar witnessing the lowest turnout at 47.49 percent till 7 pm. According to officials, the prevailing heatwave condition in Bihar could be a possible reason for the low voter turnout.

In strife-torn Manipur, around 68. 62 per cent polling was recorded



amid incidents of shooting, untoward incidents while 58 per damage to electronic voting cent voter turnout was recorded on damage to electronic voting machines (EVMs), threats to voters and polling agents by armed miscreants while voters in six districts of Nagaland stayed indoors following an indefinite shutdown

tribal organisations to press for its demand for a separate state. Tamil Nadu recorded a voter turnout of 72.09 percent in the Lok polls with no major

eight seats of western Uttar Pradesh. According to the Election Commission's Voter Turnout

app, 63.29 per cent voting

reported Saharanpur, 57.83 per cent in Moradabad, 60.39 per cent in Kairana, 59.17 per cent in Nagina, 60.23 per cent in Pilibhit, 54.68 per cent in

Bijnor, 52.42 per cent in Rampur and 54.91 per cent in Muzaffarnagar. These seats fall in started with polling being held in the Jat and sugarcane belt of the 102 constituencies

The commission described the turnout as "high", noting that voting remained "largely peaceful". In the first phase of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the voter turnout was recorded at 69.43 per cent.

different then and the total number of seats which went to polls were 91. Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged voters to exercise their franchise in record numbers as the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls

Some of the constituencies were

#### REPORTS **GROUND ZERO** THE PIONEER FROM

#### **TAMIL NADU**

#### KUMAR CHELLAPPAN CHENNAI

As polling in the first phase of the general election concluded by Friday 6 pm, Tamil Nadu registered a voter turn-out of 63 .2 per cent till 5 pm, according to the Election Commission of India. Final figures would be released by 8 pm, said the ECI officials. Dharmapuri registered 73.51 per cent while Krishnagiri recorded 64.24 per cent (figures recorded till 5 pm). Chennai Central, from Telangana where former

Dr

Sounderarajan was contesting

Governor

recorded 41.47 per cent till 3 pm, according to Satyabrata Sahoo, chief electoral officer. Latha Ravishankar, a BJP activist in Chennai

Central. disappointment written all over her face as voters failed to make it to the polling booths despite lot of cajoling by her and other volunteers.

But the DMK camp sounded positive as the lowturn out is expected to make the prospectus of the party candidates smooth.

State has The constituencies while the neighboring Puducherry has one seat.

TN RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

More than 55 per cent of total 95,54 lakh voters exercised their

franchise in five constituencies that went to polls in the first phase of Lok Sabha polls eastern Maharashtra on Friday, with the naxalite-infested Gadchiroli-Chimur accounting for a maximum of 65 per cent polling. With no untoward incident reported from anywhere, the polling passed off

Bhandara-Gondiya, Ramtek

constituencies, as voters turned out in

large numbers braving harsh

As per the polling percentages put out

by the Chief Election Officer, Maharashtra at 5 pm, an average of

54.85 per cent of the total electorate in

five poll-bound constituencies cast

their votes. The final poll percentages

(as of 5.30 pm) were expected only

after 9.30 pm. The average final

polling percentage in the five

constituencies may be anywhere from

In Nagpur where the two-time sitting MP and Union Minister Nitin

Gadkari is taking on Congress Vikas

Thakre, there was a relatively lowest

turnout of 47.11 per cent of voters.

The polling percentage might have

either touched or barely crossed 50

per cent when the polling ended at

In contrast, the Maoist-infested Gadchiroli-Chimur recorded the

highest poll percentage of 64.95, while

the voter turn-outs reported from three other Lok Sabha constituencies

where the elections were held were: Bhandara-Gondiya-56.87 per cent,

Chandrapur-55.11 per cent and

Nitin Gadkari, his wife Kanchan and

other family members voted at a

Gadchiroli-Chimur

temperatures.

57 to 60 per cent.

5.30 pm.

#### **WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH**

#### VIRENDRA NATH BHATT LUCKNOW

Voter turnout of 57.54 per cent was recorded till 5 pm in all eight parliamentary constituencies of Western Uttar Pradesh where polling was held in first phase of Lok Sabha elections on Friday. Total turnout of voters was expected to be marginally above 60 per

cent. The eight constituencies where polling was held on Friday included Pilibhit, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Kairana, Bijnor, Nagina, Moradabad and Rampur. Of these,

#### Saharanpur, Kairana, Bijnor, Moradabad and Rampur are general constituencies.

Over 25 per cent turnout was recorded till 11 am, and it rose to an average of 37 per cent till 1 pm. By 3 pm over 47.44 per cent voters had cast their votes in the eight constituencies. The voter turnout

was 54.68 per cent in Bijnor, 58.68 per cent in Kairana, 57.65 per cent in Moradabad, 54.91 per cent in Muzaffarnagar, 58.05 per cent in Nagina, 60.23 per cent in Pilibhit, 52.42 per cent in Rampur and 63.29 per cent in Cabarragar. Saharanpur.

SAUGAR SENGUPTA

**KOLKATA** 

There were sufficient Treasons for the Election Commission of India to heave a big sigh of relief as the first round of elections for Bengal's parliamentary three constituencies of Cooch Behar, Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri passed off without any loss of life though reports of "stray incidents of clashes,

Polling passed off nearpeacefully amid stray incidents of violence and complaints of booth capture

stone-pelting or booth

capture," came in from many

#### **WEST BENGAL**

by both the Trinamool Congress and the BJP, sources in the ECI said adding the constituencies three witnessed a brisk polling of about 77.5 percent till 5 pm. The polling percentage was likely to go beyond 82 percent as many voters were still standing in the queue.
While Cooch Behar recorded

comparatively high polling rate of 77.73 percent, about 75.54 percent voters voted at Alipurdar whereas Jalpaiguri

witnessed about 79.33 percent exercising voters their franchise.

#### **NAGALAND & MANIPUR**

#### PTI IMPHAL/KOHIMA

t least four Electronic conflict-hit elections, according to sources.

Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland recorded a voter turnout of over 50 per cent till 4 pm, The polling began at 7 am. The polling was held, amid a call given by the Eastern

Nagaland

over its demand for a separate State. People in the six districts. which have over four lakh votes spread over 738 polling stations, remained indoors in solidarity with the ENPO. long-drawn

districts of the region

Tamilissai



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE PATNA/AURANGABAD/GAYA

Around 46.32 per cent of the 75 lakh voters in four Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar exercised their place at Nawada and Aurangabad,

where altogether eight candidates are in the fray though the contest is primarily between Vivek Thakur, a BIP Rajva Sabha MP seeking entry into the Lok Sabha, and RJD's Shravan Kushwaha. Gaya has 18.18 lakh voters, but the highest number of 14 candidates. Here,

"sensitive" Over 49.95 per cent voters have

former chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi, an NDA ally, who is just a few months shy of turning 80, is making yet another bid to enter Parliament.



Talking to media persons after exercising his franchise, Gadkari expressed that the ruling BJP will cross a winning tally of 400 seats in the country, while he would win the

"We are also targeting a record voting turnout this time, from 54 per cent in 2019 to 75 per cent in 2024. I appeal to all the people to step out and exercise their right to vote, and celebrate the greatest festival of democracy," Gadkari said.

Sarsanghchalak Dr. Mohan Bhagwat cast his vote at a polling booth near

arrive at a polling station and waited for nearly 15 minutes before the polling started, entered to cast his vote and emerged soon thereafter, displaying his inked left-hand forefinger with pride. "I have forefinger with pride. performed my personal duty for the day and I call upon all the people to cast their vote since as citizens it is our right as well as a duty," Dr Bhagwat

Maharashtra Congress president

Nana Patole exercised his franchise along with his family members at

Talking to media persons after he cast his vote, Patole said that the BIP-led government had "cheated" people for 10 years and they were determined to end the 10-year dictatorship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. people of Vidarbha have always stood firmly behind the Congress. We are receiving great support from the people this time as well. I am confident that we will win all the five Lok Sabha seats that went to poll

Barring Nagpur where voter turn-out was the lowest, there was considerable enthusiasm among voters in four poll-constituencies Chandrapur, Bhandara-Gondiya, Ramtek (SC), Gadchiroli-Chimur (ST). Lakhs of people, including large numbers of first-time voters, youth, senior citizens and transgenders,

In a heart-warming sight witnessed in Gadchiroli-Chimur constituency, nine handicapped senior citizens were brought in a 'rath yatra' by people, accompanied by a brass band playing on the roads, to cast their votes at a

#### Organisation (ENPO) to abstain from voting in six

At least four Lice...

Voting Machines were damaged at different polling booths in Manipur on Friday where polling was held in the first phase of Lok Sabha

Meanwhile, the lone the closing time for voting, on Friday, officials said.

Under the shadow of a ethnic conflict, Manipur was set to go to polls on Friday for the two constituencies — Inner and Outer Manipur. Polling is also scheduled in some areas of the Outer Manipur constituency in phase 2 on April 26. People's

#### **BIHAR**



franchise till 5 pm on Friday, officials said. The polling began at 7 am and went on till 6 pm, a senior election official said. The voters will decide the fate of 38 candidates in these four seats. Tight security arrangements were in besides the reserved seats of Gava and Jamui, where a majority of nearly 5,000 polling booths have been marked as

exercised their franchise in Aurangabad Lok Sabha constituency, 48.54 per cent in Gaya, 47.09 per cent in Jamui and 40.20 per cent in Nawada till 5 pm, officials said.

Of the four seats, Nawada has the highest number of 20.06 lakh voters,

## **MAHARASHTRA**



polling station near their residence in

polls from Nagpur by a margin of more than 5 lakh votes

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Reshimbagh in Nagpur.

Dr Bhagaat was among the earliest to

Sukli village in Bhandara district.

today," he said.

exercised their voting rights.

polling station.



An eldery woman along with others waits to cast votes for the first phase of Lok Sabha polls, in Sivasagar, Assam, on

#### oodle salutes Indian Google

#### ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

s India's much-awaited 2024 ALok Sabha elections' first phase unfolded on Friday, Google's iconic Doodle joined the country's democratic journey by featuring the iconic ink mark on the index finger, a hallmark of Indian democracy. A click on the Google Doodle

takes the users, from across the globe, to witness the monumental scale of India's vibrant democratic process being held in the seven phases from April 19 to June 1 in the country.

In the first phase, starting on Friday a total of 102 world's largest elections in which constituencies in 21 States have nearly one billion people are gone to vote, including 5 eligible to vote. "The first phase

constituencies from Phase 2 of the polls will be held next week on April 26, and 89 constituencies in 13 States will be voting, including five Assam constituencies. Social media platforms were

Ramtek-52.38 per cent.

already buzzing with excitement as users shared the Doodle online and expressed their thoughts on significant moment. @RT\_India\_news posted on X, "Google Doodle Salutes Indian Elections - Democracy's Biggest Dance. Friday's illustration depicts a hand with the index finger marked with ink, symbolising the start of the handle termed Google's move as "pretty cool" @virgojyoti02 found the move



elections is currently underway, with significant participation multiple regions," it posted. Stella Paul with @stellasglobe

while one

democracy begin!!! Google doodle". Naveen Athresh, having twitter handle @naveenathresh said, "Google Doodle with our Indian elections voting to push people to vote. A nice touch. Pritansu Privadarsini Biswal

from Bhubaneswar in Odisha too

was excited at Google's innovative

Jagdish Kaur, founder of the WILGA, an NGO engaged in empowerment of women shared that, "Through this Doodle, Google aims to educate people about the importance of voting and to highlight the significance of democracy. This also shows how our democracy has become

stronger every passing year." 'I think the vibrancy of any democracy lies in the power of an individual vote which decides the future of any powerful country exciting "Let the festival of idea saying that, as citizens across like ours. It is a welcoming move

the country exercise their right to

vote, Google Doodle stands as a

virtual companion, reminding us

of the significance of our

collective journey towards a more

inclusive and democratic society."

only country with 1.4 strong population to create awareness about elections," added Dr Rahul Bhargava, a bone marrow transplant specialist haematologist at Fortis Hospital, Gurgaon echoed similar sentiments. For Sanjay Ojha, Corporate

by Google which is presently the

Communication head at the ACME Green Solutions, it was like a significant moment for India. The Google Doodle seems like a thoughtful way to commemorate the start of such an important event. It's great to hear about the high level of participation in the elections. The democratic process is a vital aspect of any nation's Election Office informed that the classic symbol of Indian polls will be visible everywhere hand with only its index finger extended, marked by a purpleblack indelible ink. Devised as a method to prevent a person from casting more than

senior official from Delhi

governance."

one vote, to preserve the principle of "one man, one vote", the ink manufactured by Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd, a Karnataka Government Undertaking has been used in Indian elections for decades. The ink manufactured in India has also travelled to other parts of the world to be used in other elections.

## India set to export BrahMos missiles to Philippines: Modi

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ BHOPAL

uring his election rally in Madhya Pradesh's Damoh, ' Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that India is set to export BrahMos missiles to the Philippines. He said, "Now we are also exporting BrahMos missiles. The first batch of this missile is going to the Philippines today. I congratulate all my countrymen on this." India is set to deliver the first batch of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines on Friday. This comes two years after inking a \$375 million deal to supply the weapon systems with the Southeast Asian country. India on April 19 delivered BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines. The two coun-

Indian Air Force's C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft landed at Clark Airbase in the Philippines today morning with the first batch of Made-in-India BrahMos missiles.

In January 2022, India sealed a deal with the Philippines to supply three batteries of the missile. This was the first export of the BrahMos missile by India. A few other countries including Argentina have also shown interest in procuring BrahMos missiles from India. BrahMos Aerospace Pvt Ltd, an India-Russian joint venture, produces supersonic cruise missiles that can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft, or land platforms. BrahMos missile flies at a three times the speed of sound.

Modi today addressed a huge

The Prime Minister said that

public meeting organized in Damoh, Madhya Pradesh on Friday and appealed to the people of Madhya Pradesh to vote with a huge majority in every seat of the state this time. State BJP President and Khajuraho Lok Sabha candidate Mr. Vishnu Dutt Sharma and Damoh Lok Sabha candidate Mr. Rahul Lodhi and other senior leaders were present on the stage in the pro-

Modi underlined the important achievements of the BJP government in the last 10 years and once again formed the Bharatiya Janata Party government with a huge majority in the country and fiercely targeted the Indian alliance and the Congress, accusing them of speed of 2.8 Mach or almost being anti-Sanatan and cor-

the 2024 Lok Sabha elections are not just to elect MPs, but to ensure the future of the country's future generations. This election is to make India a big power in the world in the coming 5 years.

When there is an atmosphere of war in the world, it is necessary to have a strong gov-ernment in India working on a war footing. Only the Bharatiya Janata Party government with absolute majority can do this work. In the last 10 years, the coun-

try has seen that a stable government can work efficiently even in adverse circumstances. There was an outcry in the whole world during the Corona period, but the strong BJP government of the country brought Indians back to the country safely from all over the world. The BJP government

of Indians and also administered vaccine doses to protect against Corona.

Today there is such a strong and stable government in the country, which neither fears anyone nor bows down before anyone. Bharatiya Janata Party, working on the principle of Nation First, has taken many important decisions in the

important decisions in the interest of the country.

The BJP government provided free ration to crores of Indians and also administered vaccine doses to protect them from Corona. Today there is such a strong and stable government in the country, which neither fears anyone nor bows down before anyone. Bharatiya Janata Party, working on the principle of Nation First, has taken many important decisions in the interest of the country.



People stand in a queue to cast their votes during the first phase of voting for Lok Sabha election, in Chhindwara, Madhya

Ratlam, Khajuraho and

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ BHOPAL

tries had signed a deal worth

⊣he Bhopal district administration has banned the tube well mining (boring) till June 30. Now people will not be able to dig new tube wells. The order has been implemented with immediate effect. In view of the falling

groundwater level. Collector Kaushlendra Vikram Singh has taken this decision.

Under Section 6 (1) of the Madhya Pradesh Drinking Water Preservation Act, a ban has been imposed on mining of non-government and private tube wells in the entire district till June 30, 2024.

Collector Singh said, tube wells and boring machines will neither enter nor mine tube wells in the district without the permission of the concerned SDM.

exempted. Collector Singh said, the concerned SDM and police officers have the right to seize such boring machines which enter restricted places in the district illegally, or attempt to mine or bore tube wells, and register an FIR in the concerned police station area. will be. According to the order, there is a provision to punish the violation with a fine of Rs 2,000 or imprisonment up to two years or both. This order will not apply to tube well excavation done under govern-ment schemes. Tube well mining work can be done under the work plan by PHE. There will be no need for permission in

Ground water sources are being over-exploited for during summers.

Tube well digging banned in Bhopal till June 30 Machines passing through agricultural and commer-public roads will be cial purposes in Bhopal cial purposes in Bhopal district. Due to this, the water level of drinking water sources and tube wells is falling rapidly. Keeping in view the situation of drinking water crisis in the entire district in the coming summer due to falling ground water level, it is necessary to impose a ban on digging of new private tube wells for purposes other than drinking water in the entire district under the Madhya Pradesh Drinking War Preservation Act 1986. Water

The Collector said, after examining the situation of drinking water crisis, it was revealed that if a ban is not imposed on mining of private tube wells in the district, then a situation of serious drinking water crisis may arise in the district

## Temperature crosses 40 degree in 19 cities of Madhya Pradesh the mercury also crossed 41

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ BHOPAL

midst the scorching heat in Madhya Pradesh, there was a period of thunderstorm and rain on Friday. The day temperature crossed 40 degrees in 19 cities of the state including Khandwa and Malajkhand while, it rained in Shajapur in the evening. The weather also changed in Ujjain, Agar, Rajgarh, Guna and Vidisha. Malajkhand and Khandwa remained the hottest. The temperature here remained at 42 degrees.

According to the Meteorological Department, the mercury also crossed 41 degrees in Jabalpur, Narmadapuram, Shivpuri, Khajuraho, Khargone, Satna, Damoh and Rewa. Betul, Seoni,

degrees in Jabalpur, Narmadapuram, Shivpuri, Khajuraho, Khargone, Satna, **Damoh and Rewa** 

Narsinghpur, Guna, Sagar, Umaria and Naugaon recorded temperatures of 40 degrees or more. It is expected to rain for the next 3 days from April 21. Met has issued alert of stormy winds and thunder storms in Dhar, Ujjain, Indore, Agar-Malwa, Rajgarh, Guna, Asok Nagar districts.

According to the Meteorological Department, Western Disturbance is becoming active in the next two days. Which will have an impact in the state. Due to this, Damoh, Ujjain, Rewa, get drenched again from Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur, Mandla, Malajkhand, April 21.

**STAFF REPORTER** BHOPAL

two-day workshop on

ISN evidence synthesis A ISN evidence syntnesis and meta-analysis was Gwalior and Ujjain will also get drenched.

Earlier, on Thursday, for the first time in the season, there was intense heat in the state. Was the hottest stream. Naugaon, Guna, Shivpuri and Dhar were the hottest. The temperature here remained more than 41 degrees. Dhar recorded the highest of 41.4 degrees Celsius. The temperature remained more than 40 degrees in Betul, Sagar, Gwalior, Jabalpur, Indore, Khargone, Satna, Shajapur,

Workshop on ISN Evidence Synthesis and Meta-Analysis

Narmadapurám. In the next two days rainfall would be witnessed in Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur, Barwani, Khargone, Burhanpur, Khandwa, Harda, Dewas, Sehore, Vidisha, Raisen, Narmadapuram, Betul, Pandhurna, Chhindwara,

Narsinghpur, Sagar, Damoh, Katni, Mandla, Balaghat and Dindori districts. Many rainfall records were broken in April. About two and a half inches of

rain fell in Bhopal. At the same time, a record has also been made that it rained for 11 consecutive days in April. There has been continuous rain in the state from April 7 to April 17. Now the state will

Garg appoointed Chief Advisor to Agrawal



**STAFF REPORTER** ■ BHOPAL

adhya Agarwal Mahasabha State President D.P. goyal has appointed Senior social worker and Chairman of Shree Ram Advertising Agency Sunil Garg as the Chief Advisor to the Mahasabha.

His tenure will last till Garg's presidential term. Goyal has urged all the members of the Mahasabha that if they have any important social problem, they should contact Sunil Garg.

# मुख्य अतिथि ister Narendra Modi during Vijay Sankalp Rally ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in Damoh, Madhya Pradesh on Friday

inaugurated today by Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal, who emphasized the paramount importance of evidence-based medicine in the current medical landscape. In his address, Prof Singh underscored the critical role of systematic reviews and meta-analysis in advancing medical research and clinical practice. "Systematic reviews structured approach to distill and synthesize disparate research findings, empowering healthcare professionals to deliver optimal patient care grounded in the best available evidence" he added. Prof Singh also highlighted the commitment of the research cell at AIIMS

Bhopal to promote rigorous She stressed the imperative research in this domain, rec- for healthcare professionals enhancing healthcare out-

Joining the inaugural session virtually, Prof. (Dr) Meenu Singh, Executive Director of AIIMS Rishikesh, emphasized the evolving significance of systematic reviews and meta-analysis over the past two decades.

ologies effectively in their practice, aligning with contemporary advancements. Prior to the inauguration, Prof. (Dr)

medical Shikha Malik, in her welcoming address, unveiled plans for new courses to be initiated soon within the pediatric department. She

expressed gratitude for the unwavering support and motivation provided by Prof. (Dr) Ajai Singh, which will catalyze increased research activities within the institution.

The workshop is organized by department of Pediatrics, AIIMS Bhopal in association with International Society

of Nephrology. In the ever-evolving land-scape of medicine, evidence synthesis and meta-analysis have emerged as indispensable tools for healthcare professionals seeking to navigate the vast expanse of medical evidence to inform clinical decision-making. Delegates from different parts of the country including AIIMS Bhopal and various medical colleges across the state are participating, reflecting a collective commitment to advancing medical research and practice.

#### Collector imposes fine of Rs 2 lakh each on 16 pvt schools in Ujjain

PNS ■ UJJAIN

jjain district Collector Neeraj Kumar Singh has taken major action against 16 private schools of the district for violating orders under Section 144 issued by the Madhya Pradesh Government Education Department and school operations. A fine of Rs 2 lakh each has been imposed on these 16 private schools. The directors/ principals of private schools will deposit the amount through challan in the treasury within seven days and ensure that the receipt is given to the office of the District Education Officer.

has issued orders, under which, as per the instructions of the Collector, surprise inspection of private schools was conducted by the flying squads formed. During inspection, various shortcomings were found in private schools. On the basis of the report presented by the flying squad, a show cause notice letter was issued to the directors/principals of private schools through the District Education Officer, in response to which the directors/principals of private schools were pre-

Collector Neeraj Kumar Singh

The response submitted was reviewed/examined by the District Committee. Since the response after testing was not found completely satisfactory, the District Committee has imposed a penalty of Rs 2 lakh each on the directors/principals of 16 private schools in the dis-

Among the private schools on which a penalty of Rs 2 lakh each has been imposed on Gyan Sagar Academy Dewas Road Ujjain, Gyan Global Academy Chintaman Road Ujjain, St. Mary's Convent H. S School Dewas Road, Christ Jyoti Convent School Malanwasa, Nirmala Convent Haase School Prem Nagar Dewas Road, St. Paul Convent High School Panchkroshi Marg Agar Road, Oxford Junior College Ujjain, St. Thomas School Panwasa Maxi Road, Carmel Convent Chakkamed Tehsil Ghatiya, St. Thomas Haase School Badnagar, Master Mind International School Tarana, Dinah Convent School Tarana, Jeendatta Institute of Education Narayana Tehsil Mahidpur, MPS Academy

International School Khachrod

and St. Martin's School

Imperial

Mahidpur,

Badnagar.

#### | Models United Nations best way

**Indorel:** Models United Nations is the best way to understand the activities of the United Nations. India's opinion is now given due importance on any issue in the United Nations, said Indore Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the three-day Prestige Model United Nations organized by Prestige Institute of Management and Research here

Bhargav said there are many programmes to understand the UN, but the Kashmir issue is the most important to understand the United Nations. Describing the abrogation of Article 370 from Kashmir as a significant event, he said that the biggest change that came after its abrogation was the freedom to hoist the tricolor anywhere in Kashmir, which could not have been imagined before 2019.

Social worker Mala Singh Thakur said that India not only talks about 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' but also practices it. While every country considers other countries as business, India considers every country as a family, she said, asking students to work towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as set by the United Nations. Senior advocate Pankai Wadhavani also expressed his views on this occasion.

#### Tiger movement witnessed in front of Jagran Lake City University

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ BHOPAL

**¬**iger movement has been witnessed outside the gate of Jagran Lake City University located in Chandanpura, Bhopal. The video of Tiger roaming was made by people traveling in cars. The tiger crossing the road went towards the forest within some time.

After Tiger's movement, Bagh Mitra has also accused the department of negligence. Tiger friend Rashid Noor said, there are many tigers in Chandanpura. Despite this, wedding parties are organized in club-restaurants here, which is not good for wild animals including tigers. There is also a complaint regarding this. So that, the animal club-

restaurant is closed. Forest department officials say that this tiger is the off-spring of T-123. The four cubs of this tigress have now become adults and are creating their own territory. Their movement has been seen in the past also. Search has been going on for four days in search of

**Tiger friend Rashid Noor** said, there are many tigers in Chandanpura. Despite this. wedding parties are organized in clubrestaurants here

leopard in Bhoj (Open) University campus, but it has not been seen. In such a situation, there is a possibility that he went towards the forest from the path behind the cam-

Despite this, as a precaution, families living on campus have been advised to stay in their homes. In such a situation, they are not leaving the house in the dark. Let us tell you that leopard movement was seen in the campus on Monday night. Ĥe was roaming around the staff quarters. After this the leopard was not seen.



Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister and BJP candidate from Vidisha constituency Shivraj Singh Chouhan files his nomination papers for the Lok Sabha election, in Raisen, Madhya Pradesh on Friday.

#### Poster, painting competition organised at IGRMS

Bhopal: The cleanliness fortnight at the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalay (IGRMS) witnessed a significant event on Friday as a Poster/ Painting Competition highlighting the importance of swachhta (cleanliness) and health was organized at 10:00 AM in the Sangrahalay premises.

A total of 16 students representing 4 different schools participated in the competition, showcasing their creativity and understanding of the themes of cleanliness and its impact on health. The competition aimed to raise awareness among the youth about the crucial link between cleanliness and overall wellbeing, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a clean environment for personal and public health. Participants were encouraged to express their ideas

and perspectives through their

artwork, depicting various aspects of cleanliness, hygiene practices, and their significance in promoting good health.

The event provided a platform for young minds to creatively engage with the concept of swachhta and its broader implications on individual and community health, fostering a sense of responsibility towards maintaining cleanliness in their surroundings.

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## Kejriwal asserted he consumed food in conformity with diet chart

PNS NEW DELHI

elhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday informed the Rouse Avenue Court that mangoes were sent from his home only thrice after he was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on March 21. Besides, Kejriwal said, he had sugar-free sweets six times. Accusing the Enforcement Directorate (ED) of being "petty" and "politicising" what he ate in jail, Kejriwal asserted before a court that the food he consumed was in conformity with the diet chart prepared by his doctor.

He made the submission while the court was hearing his application to allow him to have insulin inside the jail owing to his diabetic condition. Kejriwal has also requested online consultation with a private doctor

every day for 15 minutes in the presence of his wife Sunita

Kejriwal's counsel launched a spirited assault on the ED over its claim that the AAP national convenor was eating food laden with sugar so he can fall ill and seek bail on medical grounds.

ED claimed that I want to increase my blood sugar levels to get bail. Am I going to risk paralysis to get bail? Whatever food I have is as per the diet chart prepared by my doctor prior to arrest," Senior Advocate Abhishek Singhvi told the court. Referring to the ED's claim about the politician eating mangoes, sweets, aalopoori etc regularly, he said these were provided to him only a few times.

Kejriwal's counsel argued that an impression is sought to be given that everyday regularly the Applicant is having mangoes with sweets and aloo "This is farther from truth and contrary to Jails own document. Mango (in small container) came only on 3 days ,i.e., 6th April, & 7th April and 8th April – how does it have any effect on high sugar levels as shown above from 12th April till 17th April. The allegation is that I have

been consuming mangoes... Out of 48 meals sent from home, only three times mangoes were there. No mangoes have been sent after April 8. Mangoes have been made to look like sugar bullets. Their sugar level (glycemic index) is much less than brown rice or white rice," Singhvi told the court. Kejriwal has been allowed to

have food cooked at home in jail. "I only use sugar free (an artificial sugar brand) in my tea. How petty, political and ridiculous ED can be? Their

statements are completely false and malicious. Just because you have a lot of influence in the media you are able to publish that I am having aaloo puri even though this meal was sent only once during pooja," he told the court.

Kejriwal, who had on Thursday withdrawn a petition for consulting his doctor thrice a week about his fluctuating sugar levels, moved a fresh plea on Friday seeking consultations with his physician for 15 minutes every day.

"Just because I am a prisoner do I have no right to a dignified life and good health? Am I a gangster that I cannot even be allowed to have 15 minutes VC (video conference) consultation with my doctor? We have had democracy for 75 years but I am seeing such an approach for the first time. Never seen such kind of pettiness," Singhvi said, reproachfully.
"What has ED got to do with this hearing? He (ED) is not a party. It is between me and jail and court? They are having a media trial and press is publishing anything it wants," the counsel told the court. The court reserved its order on Kejriwal's application seeking daily consultation with his doctor for Monday and directed Tihar jail authorities to file a reply, if required, by Saturday.
"Moreover, Tihar Jail through
ED counsel produced a chart of what food went in for Applicant to be had. However, a lot many times Applicant would leave food item and not have the same. No such details were produced to show what Applicant actually had. The real reason for continuous spike is the refusal of Jail

Authorities to give insulin to the Applicant which is life-saving drug.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav during a road show in support of Union Minister and BJP candidate from Tikamgarh constituency Virendra Kumar for Lok Sabha elections in Tikamgarh, Madhya Pradesh on Friday.

#### Peaceful voting in all booths of six parliamentary constituencies

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ BHOPAL

hief Electoral Officer Anupam Rajan has said that in the first phase of Madhya Pradesh Lok Sabha Elections-2024, voting held from 7 am to 6 pm in the polling centers of six Lok Sabha parliamentary constituencies of the state. Voting was conducted only from 7 am to 4 pm at all the polling stations of 3 assembly constituencies of Balaghat district - Baihar, Lanji, and Parswada. Rajan said that, 63.25 per-

cent voting was recorded in all the six Lok Sabha parliamentary constituencies till 5 pm. He told that 51.24 per-

cent voter turnout was recorded in Lok Sabha constituency no. 11 Sidhi, 59.91 percent in no. 12 Shahdol, 56.74 percent in no. 13 Jabalpur, 68.31 percent in no. 14 Mandla, 71.08 percent in no. 15 Balaghat and 73.85 percent voting in no. 16 Chhindwara.

Rajan said that voting has remained peaceful through-out in all the polling stations

Rajan said that voting had started from 7 am in all the polling stations. Peaceful voting took place in all the polling stations. Before the start of voting, the process of mock poll was conducted at the polling stations.

#### 4 candidates file nomination papers for 4th phase

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ BHOPAL

hief Electoral Officer Anupam Rajan has said that as per the election schedule of Lok Sabha Elections-2024, the process of filing nomination papers for the fourth phase is going on. On Friday, the second day of filing nomination papers for the fourth phase, 4 candidates submitted 4 nomination papers. So far, 16 nomination papers have been filed by 11 candidates.

Chief Electoral Officer Rajan said that for the fourth phase, on the second day on April 19, one nomination was filed by one candidate in Lok Sabha Parliamentary Constituency No. 21 Dewas (SC), 2 nomination papers by 2 candidates On second day of filing nomination papers for the fourth phase, 4 candidates submitted 4 nomination papers

in No. 26 Indore and in number-27 Khargone (ST) 1 nomination paper was filed by 1 candidate. No nomination paper was filed by any candidate today in the remaining Lok Sabha Parliamentary Constituencies of the fourth phase No. 22 Ujjain (SC), No. 23 Mandsaur, No. 24 Ratlam (ST), No. 25 Dhar (ST) and

Chief Electoral Officer Rajan said that the affidavits and other information of the candidates who have filed nomination papers can be seen on the website of the Election Commission of India at the

https://affidavit.eci.gov.in/. He said that the last date for filing nomination papers is Thursday, April 25. The nomination papers will be scruti-nized the next day on Friday, April 26. Candidates who have filled the nomination papers will be able to withdraw their names till Monday, April 29. Voting for the fourth phase will take place on Monday, May 13. Counting of votes in all phases will take place on Tuesday, June 4.

## Hindu priests and saints to celebrate Hindu new year

before filing his nomination papers for the Lok Sabha election, in Raisen, Madhya Pradesh on Friday.

PNS NEW DELHI

head of the Lok Sabha polls in the national capital, the Delhi BJP will host a mega conclave of Hindu priests, saints and seers to celebrate the Hindu new year and construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, at the IGI stadium on Sunday, party leaders said. Delhi goes to polls on

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said the event will also celebrate Ram temple in Ayodhya as the consecration ceremony of Ramlalla idol at the temple is going to complete 100 days in the next few weeks.

The grand consecration ceremony in Ayodhya was held in presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22 this year. The saints and seers gath-

ered for the event will also speak about the importance of "Santana Dharma", party leaders said.

More than 31,000 devout Hindus, including over 5,000 saints, seers and temple priests, will gather at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in Delhi to chant the Hanuman Chalisa, said Karnail Singh, coordinator of Temple cell of Delhi BJP. Singh said several Union ministers and senior BJP leaders will also be present in the programme. Sources said Union Minister Piyush Goel was one of the

invited guests for the

The BJP is contesting the Lok Sabha polls on all seven seats in Delhi that it has won back to back with huge margins in 2014 and 2019. The party is pitted in a direct contest on all seats on which the INDIA bloc partners -- AAP and Congress -- have fielded their candidates. The AAP is contesting four of the seven parliamentary seats while the Congress the remaining three.

"Across the country, cluding in Delhi, people celebrate the new year, Christmas, so the Hindu new year should also be celebrated with same vigour. This event is being held to focus on Indian culture and its values by celebrating different festivals that fall in the beginning of Hindu new year," Singh said.

April 9 marked the start of Vikram Samvat 2081 as per the Hindu calender. Several renowned Hindu religious figures, including 31 Mahamandleshwars, will also attend the pro-

gramme, Singh said. Delhi BJP media cell head Praveen Shankar Kapoor said the objective of the programme is to awaken the youth about their culture and to convey a message among the people about its importance.

He said the programme was going to be a "historic" one with more than 35,000 people chanting the Hanuman Chalisa simultaneously under one roof.

#### BJP to host mega conclave of Armed cops to travel in metro trains soon out, and if possible, it may be

PNS NEW DELHI

n a first, the Delhi Police personnel with weapons will be seen travelling in metro trains during emergency situations to avoid getting stuck in traffic jams and reach the spot sooner, officials said on Friday.

According to officials, the Delhi Police has got the goahead on its proposal in a recent meeting with the DMRC (Delhi Metro Rail Coorporation) and CISF (Central Industrial Security Force), which is deployed at the stations for security checks. As of now, the Delhi Police personnel are not allowed to travel in metro

According to a Delhi Police officer, the final modalities for the SOP (standard operating procedure) have been chalked

implemented before the Lok Sabha elections in Delhi. "We have got the approval for

travelling in the metro with weapons during crisis or law and order situations from the DMRC. On April 16, a meeting was held with all the stake holders, including the DMRC and CISF, regarding the matter," the officer said. The officer further said a group of personnel can travel without the token, but before the journey, their incharge or head, will have to inform the DMRC about the reason and details of the personnel.

A coach might be dedicated to the personnel depending on the situation, he said. "The basis and each travelling personnel will be wearing the uniform," the officer added. Citing an example of riot-like

situation where extra force is required, their movement in large numbers in buses becomes difficult due to heavy traffic in Delhi, the officer said. Sometime it even takes more than an hour to reach from one district to another, he said. The metro line has spread almost every parts of Delhi and it can be utilised in saving the time to reach the spot at the time of crisis, he

Another police officer said, as per the plan, transportation will be provided to the force for 'pick and drop' from metro stations to reach the spot. This also includes the movement of paramilitary personnel, if they are to be deployed in the national capital during nessed communal riots in Trilokpuri and North-East Delhi, in 2014 and 2020,



Congress candidate from Bhopal Lok Sabha constituency Arun Shrivastava with Congress State President Jitu Patwari and party workers during a rally to file his nomination papers for Lok Sabha elections in Bhopal on Friday.

## Any accident can happen with Delhi CM in jail: Sanjay Singh

PNS NEW DELHI

**√**he Aam Aadmi Party's Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Friday alleged that a "deep conspiracy" is being hatched against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and any kind of accident can happen with him in prison. At a press conference here, he also claimed the BJP can stoop to the level of even killing someone and demanded action against officials allegedly involved in the "conspiracy to jeopardize the life" of Kejriwal.

"A deep conspiracy is being hatched against Arvind Kejriwal and any kind of accident can happen with

him inside the jail," Singh charged. AAP leaders will meet the Election Commission and the President of India to raise the issue, he said.

Senior BJP leader and South Delhi Lok Sabha seat candidate Ramvir Singh Bidhuri hit back at the AAP, claiming the party was trying to take "political advantage" of Kejriwal's health condition. Bidhuri, who is also the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, suggested that the chief minister, lodged in Tihar Jail, be given food only on the advice of an expert dietician. Bidhuri said that in such a situation, the Tihar Jail administration should appoint a dieti-



from Kejriwal's house should be prepared under his supervision and the same should be given to him. Kejriwal is deliberately consuming sweets so

that his sugar level increases and he can prepare the basis for bail. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said the

AAP is running a stunt campaign to gather public sympathy for jailed Kejriwal that is of not providing medicines to the Chief Minister in jail.

Meanwhile, Delhi Cabinet minister Atishi said Kejriwal has filed an application that he be provided insulin and medicines. A day earlier, she alleged that there was a plot to kill Kejriwal by denying him home-cooked food and insulin in prison, a charge rejected by the Tihar jail authorities.

'Why are the Centre, Enforcement Directorate and Tihar (administration) opposing it? We heard of such things were done to Independence. This is a big conspiracy," she said on Friday.

"Under which legal provision did the Tihar administration share (Kejriwal's health-related information) with the Enforcement Directorate (ED)? The probe agency has only one job -- to investigate money laundering. Did AAP mix cash in his rotis? Why were details shared with ED? Why did ED file these in court?" Atishi asked.

On Thursday, the ED claimed before a court that Kejriwal is eating highsugar foods like mangoes and sweets every day despite having type-2 diabetes to create grounds for medical bail.

#### MG Motors announces ownership experience program

New Delhi: MG (Morris Garages), a British automobile brand with a 100-year-old legacy, has announced a unique ownership experience program for the MG Gloster, India's first autonomous (Level 1) premium

The newly introduced program aims to elevate the experience further by ensuring zero expenditure on car maintenance with complete peace-of-mind. Under this ownership experience program, MG Motor India has introduced after-sales service offers tailored to complement the Gloster's several incredible features seamlessly.

MG Gloster, an off-roader SUV, has carved a niche for itself in the emium vehicle segme ning over customers with its bold design, a reputation for robust build quality, luxurious features and now takes the ownership experience a step further. MG Gloster owners can now enjoy Zero Service and Repair Costs, including wear-and-tear parts expenses, for the first three years of ownership upto a limit of 45,000km of car running, setting a new benchmark for customers' convenience.

Under this program, MG Motor India covers an expansive range of elements such as wiper blades, Engine oil, oil filters, electrical wiring, hoses, motors, and brake pads, allowing for no maintenance costs.\* In addition, MG Motor India is offering an assured buyback option to Gloster customers after three vears of vehicle ownership.

#### CEO continuously monitored voting from control room

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ BHOPAL

hief Electoral Officer Anupam Rajan con-✓tinuously monitored voting besides other arrangements from the Election Control Room in all the six Lok Sabha parliamentary constituencies in the first phase of Madhya Pradesh Lok Sabha Elections-2024. As per the instructions of the Election Commission of India, arrangements were made for monitoring sensitive polling stations through webcasting and CCTV. Voting was conducted in a total of 13 thousand 588 polling stations in constituencies, Sidhi, Shahdol, Jabalpur, Mandla, Balaghat and Chhindwara. All activities taking place at more than 8 thousand

polling stations were broad-

cast live through webcasting and special monitoring was done through CCTV cam-

Rajan observed the live monitoring of the voting process from the election control room, live tracking of GPS fitted vehicles of sector officers, live updates of sector officers along with the voting process being conducted by the polling parties, location tracking of FST and SST and monitoring of other arrangements.

It may be noted that GPS devices have also been installed in the vehicles of polling parties and sector magistrates who transport to polling stations in the Lok Sabha elections 2024. This work is being continuously monitored from the office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

#### Shops illegally opened breaking seals

**Indore:** FIR registered against two persons for opening the seals imposed by the administration in shops without competent

As per the instructions of Collector Ashish Singh, last Wednesday in Indore district, the district administration team took action to seal firecracker shops and other shops for not making fire safety arrangements. SDM Kalyani Pandey said that the sealed shops were re-inspected on thursday by the administration team. During inspection, it was found that the seal imposed by the administration on the firecracker shops of Ghanshyamdas father name Nanakram and Jai Prakash father name Suresh Sukhyani was opened without a competent order, which was considered against the Explosives Act and as an obstruction in the government work. An FIR has been lodged against the shopkeepers by the administration in Tejaji Nagar police station.

## केनरा बैंक Canara Bank 🕢

Regional Office -1 Paryawas Bhawan,

E-AUCTION (SALE NOTICE)

Appendix-IV-A [See provisio to rule 8(6) SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE / IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-auction Sale Notice For Sale of movable/ Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rules 8(6) of The Security Interest

(Enforcement) Rules 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the borrower(s) & guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged / charged to the secured creditor, the constructive / physical possession of which has been taken by the authorised officer the Canara Bank (secured creditor) will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS, AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" & WHAT EVER THERE IS" on 27.05.2024 for recovery of bank dues to the Canara Bank (secured creditor)

Name and address of the Borrower & Guarantors	Outstanding Amount	Description of Properties & Name of Property Owner	Reserve Price EMD Amt. Bid Increment Amt.
	er : Contact No. 898	nch (Ph. No 8989989138) e-mail id : cb2367@canaraban 39989138, Collection A/c for EMD - 209272434, IFSC- CNR	B0002367
Borrower : M/s Shree Ram	₹ 14,94,099.62	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Shop No. L -13 out of Diverted Survey No. 368/3 Amrit Parisal	₹ 10,10,000/

Construction Proprietor Sri. Anil Ahirwar Borrower: 2349885.64 Mr. Neelesh Chauhan S/o Mr. Nanhelal

Chouhan & Mr.

**Neetesh Chouhan** 

S/o Mr. Nanhelal

+ intt and other

EMT of Residential House Situated at Plot no.02, out o Diverted Khasra no.39/6, 40/2, 40/5,41/1,41/2,41/4,41/8 41/10,41/11,41/12,41/13,41/16,41/17,41/18,42/2 situated at Mauza Muncipal Ward no.18 P.C. No.17 Village Dongri Settlement no.125, Tehsil & District Hoshangaba (M.P.) Area 1000 sqft Boundaries: East- Plot no.3, West Plot no.01, North- Colony Road, South- Other's land

Mouja Malakhedi Ward No. 8 Hoshangabad M.P. 461001 within the registration sub- district Hoshangabad and

district Hoshangabad, Boundaries: East- Shop No.L.14

24,95,000/-₹ 2,49,500/-₹ 10000/-

₹ 10000/-

Last date for submission of online bids is on or before 24-05-2024 upto 5.30 p.m. Date and Time of e-auction: 27-05-2024, 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM (With a

E-Auction login Website: https://indianbankseauction.com For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer the link "E-Auction" provided in Canara Bank's website (https://www.canarabank.com) or may contact concerned branches Or may contact Authorised Officer of Our Bank on

contact No. mentioned above, or may Contact: Canara Bank RO-1, Recovery Section Tel.: 7081160770 email id: recrobpl@canarabank.com during office hours on any working day. Place: Bhopal, Date: 19-04-2024

**AUTHORISED OFFICER, CANARA BANK** 

## Your votes safe, EVMS 100 per cent safe: CEC to voters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Election Kumar on Friday dismissed apprehensions about Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and assured people that their vote was safe and secure.

Kumar asserted that the EVMs were 100 per cent safe as a large number of safeguards - technological, administrative and process-oriented - were in place.

<sup>te</sup>It is a settled issue. It is 100 per cent safe. It has been raised in the honourable court also. We are awaiting judgment, nothing can happen to the machines. Every stage political parties and their candidates are involved. Mock polls are done," he said to questions on doubts

the EVMs "There are a large number of safeguards, technological, administrative, and processoriented. Just enjoy the voting. This is a time to enjoy the voting, not doubt anything," the CEC said.

"Enjoy your voting, your vote is safe, secure and will be recorded as you vote," Kumar

The first phase of the Lok Sabha elections got underway across 102 constituencies in 21



states and union territories on

'We are getting reports from the field that even if rains are happening, people are really coming out in large numbers. Women, youth, old age people... everyone is rushing towards the polling stations. It is really a delightful situation to see that people are dancing to the tune of democracy," Kumar

He said the Election Commission has used technology to a great extent to ensure better voter turnout by reaching out to the youth and women voters by mapping parliamentary constituencies where voting has been traditionally less.
"A turn out plan was made

depending on the local context. Lots of celebrities were roped in, a number of organisations have worked with us - petrol pumps, banks, post offices in the outreach program," Kumar

We are very hopeful that people will come out to vote. It is our appeal, please join in this festival of democracy.. Youth, women, transgender, PwD, all geographies...It is your right, your duty, your responsibility, your pride," the CEC said.

Kumar, along with fellow Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and S S Sandhu, was monitoring the progress of the election process from the control room set up at the Election Commission headquarters here.

## India ready to take next step towards becoming science powerhouse: Journal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Science journal 'Nature' has said India along with being an economic power is also more than ready to take the next step towards becoming a science powerhouse, as it called for a rise in the country's research and development spending, especially from the private sector.

The prestigious British weekly said in its editorial headlined "How India can become a science powerhouse" cited researchers to highlight that basic research has been neglected by successive governments and that a thriving research system needs much greater autonomy.

Along with being an economic power, India is also more than ready to take the next step towards becoming a science powerhouse. This is not yet a given, but it can happen," it

"In this editorial, we discuss a third aspect: how to bridge the funding gap. One thing India's government can do is to boost science spending by encouraging businesses to contribute more, as is the case for other leading economies. If policymakers and industrialists can get this right, an opportunity to put rocket boosters under the country's impressive scientific achievements is there for the



taking," the journal said. The editorial noted that in 2021-22, according to government data, India had the world's third-largest pharmaceutical industry by volume and was the leading supplier of affordable medicines and generic drugs, some of which were "crucial" to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic world-

Last year, India became the fourth country ever to achieve a soft landing on the Moon and the first to land near the lunar south pole, it said, adding that the country also has the world's largest constellation of remotesensing satellites.

The magazine said India is among the world's most prolific countries in terms of research output after the United States and China.

From 2014 to 2021, the number of universities increased from 760 to 1,113. In the past decade, seven more Indian

Institutes of Technology have been established, raising the total to 23. In the same period, two new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research were also established. "Now consider that these gains were achieved by a nation that spent just 0.64 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on research and development (R&D) during 2020-21," it said. Whichever political formation is elected to power in the ongoing polls, it must consider how to increase the country's R&D spending, as well as what

money, it said. Nature said around 60 per cent of India's research spending can be traced to central and state governments and universities, and around 40 per cent to the private sector. In comparable nations, there is often much more private-sector funding.
"In 2022, the private sector

contributed, on average, 74 per cent of OECD nations' R&D spending and 66 per cent of such funding for the 27 members of the European Union. India today has many global companies in construction, information technology, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and more. They could be contributing a lot more to the nation's research -- both in terms of funding researchers and also infrastructure," it said.

On voting day Rahul urges voters to open Mohabbat ki Dukaan



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

As polling began in the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls on Friday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi urged voters to strengthen democracy and open 'Mohabbat ki Dukaan' in every corner of the country by defeating hatred.

"Today is the first phase of voting! Remember, each and every vote of yours is going to decide the future of India's democracy and its generations," Rahul Gandhi said in a post in Hindi

'Go out and strengthen democracy by applying the balm of your vote on the wounds inflicted on the soul of the country in the last 10 years," he said. Open 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' in every

corner of the country by defeating hatred, the Congress leader added. Rahul Gandhi also shared a graphic of the key Congress guarantees to the people, including the right to apprenticeship, a legal guarantee of MSP and a nationwide caste census.

The 2024 Lok Sabha polls kicked off Friday with polling being held for the first phase scheduled in 102 seats spread across 21 states and Union territories. Among those in the fray are Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, Sarbanada Sonowal and Bhupendra Yadav, Gaurav Gogoi of the Congress, the DMK's Kanimozhi and K Annamalai of the BJP.

Assembly elections in Arunachal Pradesh (60 seats) and Sikkim (32 seats) are also being held simultaneously.

## 1992 batch IPS officer Nalin Prabhat appointed NSG chief

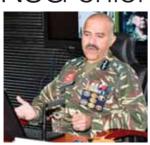
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $S^{\text{enior Indian Police Service}}_{\text{(IPS) officer Nalin Prabhat}}$ has been appointed as the chief of National Security Guard (NSG), the country's counterterrorism force, according to a Personnel Ministry order. Prabhat, a 1992 IPS officer of

Andhra Pradesh cadre, is presently working as Additional Director General in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The Appointments Committee

of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved his appointment as the Director General, NSG for a period up to August 31, 2028 i.E. The date of his superannuation, the order said.

Popularly known as the "black cats", the federal contingency Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)



was holding the additional charge of the NSG.

The ACC has also approved appointment of Sapna Tewari as the Special Director in the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Tewari, a 1992 batch IPS officer of Odisha cadre, is currently working as Additional Director

She has been appointed as the Special Director, IB for a tenure of two years from the date of assumption of charge of the superannuation i.E. April 30, chief Daljit Singh Chawdhary 2026, the order said.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

ivil services examination Ctopper Aditya Srivastava scored 54.27 per cent in the prestigious exam conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), according to the detailed marks of the recommended candidates released by the Commission on Friday. Following closely behind is Animesh Pradhan, who scored 52.69 per cent in Civil Services Examination 2023.

As many as 1,016 candidates - 664 men and 352 women have qualified in the examination, results of which were announced on Tuesday. The civil services examination

is conducted annually by the Union Public Service Commission(UPSC) in three stages -- preliminary, main and personality test (or interview) -- to select officers for Service (IFS) and Indian

Police Service (IPS), among

The preliminary examination consists of two objective type (multiple choice) question papers of 400 marks. This stage is meant to serve as

a screening test only, and the marks obtained in it by the candidates, who are declared qualified for admission to the main examination, are not counted for determining their final order of merit. The merit is determined out of the total of 2,025 marks --

written or main exam is of 1,750 marks and the interview is of 275. Srivastava (27) got a total of 1,099 marks -- 899 in the

written and 200 in the personality test, according to the marks of recommended candidates disclosed by the A trainee Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, he hails

from Lucknow in Uttar engineering from the Indian secured the second rank.



Civil Services topper Aditya scores 54.27 per cent in UPSC exams

Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur and also possesses an MTech degree. He had electrical engineering as his optional subject in the civil services exam.

Pradhan (24), resident of Talcher town in Odisha's Angul district, scored 1,067 Service (IAS), Indian Foreign ed his BTech in electrical 175 in interview -- and

He had chosen sociology as his optional subject in the examination. Pradhan completed his BTech in computer science from the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Rourkela and is currently an employee of the Indian Oil Corporation's (IOC) refiner-

Third rank holder Donuru Ananya Reddy, who appeared

in the exam as an economically weaker section candidate, got 1,065 marks (52.59 per cent) -- 875 in the main and 190 in the interview -- and fourth rank holder P K Sidharth Ramkumar scored 1,059 marks (52.29 per cent) 874 in written and 185 in the interview. Reddy (22), who has a BA

(Hons) in geography from Miranda House, Delhi University, had anthropology as her optional subject. She hails from Mahabubnagar in Telangana. Ramkumar (27) has a bache-

lor's degree in architecture from the College of Architecture in Trivandrum. Ruhani got the fifth rank with a total of 1,049 marks (51.8 per cent) -- 856 in written and 193 in the interview. She completed her BA (Hons) in economics from St Stephens College, Delhi University.

marks achieved by all the 1,016 candidates on its web-

site. The Civil Services (preliminary) Exam 2023 was conducted on May 28. A total of 10,16,850 candidates applied, of which 5,92,141 appeared in the examination. As many as 14,624 candidates qualified for the written (main) examination, which was held in September.

"A total of 2,855 candidates qualified for the personality test of the examination," the UPSC said.

Of these, 1,016 candidates were finally recommended for different government services. The government had reported 1,143 vacancies --180 in IAS, 37 in IPS, 200 in IPS, 613 posts in different central Group A services and 113 in Group B services -- to be filled through the civil services examination 2023, the UPSC said.

As many as 240 candidates have been put on a reserved list, it said, adding that the mended candidates has been

## Congress raps Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

¬he Congress charged Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday with protecting those responsible for the paper-leak and recruitment "scams" in Madhya Pradesh and asked him why the crime rate against Dalits is "increasing" in the state. Congress general secretary

Jairam Ramesh hit out at the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre ahead of Modi's rally in Damoh in Madhya Pradesh. "Today's questions for PM Modi as he heads to MP: Who is the PM protecting in MP's paper leak and recruitment scams? Why has the BJP let down Adivasis in Forest Rights Act implementation? MP has the highest crime rate against Dalits. Why is it increasing?' Ramesh asked in a post on X. Elaborating on what he said were details of "jumlas" (rhetoric), the Congress leader said the government might have changed the name of the Employees Selection Board in Madhya Pradesh but nobody has forgotten the notorious Vyapam "scam" that rocked the state 10 years ago.

Since then, allegations of rigging have cropped up in the recruitment of nursing staff, school teachers, constables and agriculture development officers, but all that the BJP government has done is deny and subvert, he alleged.

"Just last year, allegations broke out of a scam in the patwari recruitment examination. Seven of ten toppers in the examination came from the same exam centre in Gwalior which is owned by a BJP MLA.



"A few years earlier, in 2021, three tests — for agriculture extension officers, senior agriculture officers and nursing staff - were cancelled when the evidence of foul play became too obvious to ignore," Ramesh said.

He said a probe subsequently found out that the papers for the exams were leaked by a private company that was already implicated in the Vyapam "scam"." Who is the PM protecting in these scams? What is PM Modi doing to ensure that our youth never face such injustice again?" the former Union minister asked. In 2006, the Congress passed the revolutionary Forest Rights Act (FRA) that granted the Adivasi and forest-dwelling communities legal rights to manage their forests, and economically benefit from the forest produce they collect, he pointed out.

"The BJP government, how-ever, has obstructed the imple-mentation of the FRA, depriving millions of Adivasis of its benefits. Only 47 per cent (2,94,877 claims) of the 6,27,513 individual claims filed have been granted, and land titles distributed cover only 10 per cent (5,931 sq. km) of the 57,948 sq. Km eligible

for community rights, Ramesh alleged.

Why have the successive BJP governments in Madhya Pradesh failed to provide the Adivasi communities their rights, he asked.

Citing data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the Congress leader pointed out that Madhya Pradesh has the highest crime rate against Dalits in the country.

"In 2021 (the latest year for which data is available), the crime rate against SCs was 63.6 as compared to the national average of 25.3. The state also recorded high crime rates against Dalits in 2019 and 2020 — 46.7 and 60.8 against the national averages of 22.8 and 25 respectively. It is disgusting and shameful that the rate of crimes against Dalits has actually increased year-on-

year," he said. The BJP has been in power in MP for more than two decades now. Why is it that Dalits have to increasingly fear for their safety? Does PM Modi feel no shame for the countless atrocities that Dalits have endured under his watch?" Ramesh asked and said the prime minister should break his silence

## Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar to become new Navy Chief



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi will be the new Navy Chief by the end of this month succeeding incumbent Admiral R Hari Kumar. Admiral Kumar will retire from service on April

Tripathi is currently serving as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff. government has "The

appointed Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, presently serving as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff as the next Chief of the Naval Staff with effect from the afternoon of April 30," the defence ministry said.Born on May 15, 1964, Vice Admiral Tripathi was commissioned into the executive branch of the Indian Navy on July 1, 1985.A communication and electronic warfare specialist, he has had a long and distinguished service spanning nearly 30 years. Prior to taking over as Vice Chief of Navy, he had served as Flag Officer Commandingin-Chief of the Western Naval Command.

Tripathi has served in a variety of command, staff and instructional appointments. He has commanded INS

He has also held various important operational and staff appointments which include Fleet Operations Officer of the Western Fleet, Director of Naval Operations, Principal Director Network Centric Operations and Principal Director of Naval Plans at New Delhi.

As Rear Admiral, he served as Flag Officer Commanding of the Eastern Fleet. He also served as Commandant of the prestigious Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala.

An alumnus of the Sainik School, Rewa and National Defence Academy(NDA) Khadakwasla, Vice Admiral Tripathi has undergone courses at the Naval War College, Goa and Naval War College USA. He is a recipient of the Ati Vishist Seva Medal (AVSM) and Nau Sena Medal

#### DRDO hands over indigenous actuators, air brake modules to HAL



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)'s Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) has handed over the first batch of the indigenous Leading Edge Actuators and Airbrake Control Module to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), marking a significant leap towards self-reliance in aeronautical technologies, defence ministry said here on Friday. Giving details, officials said Hindustan Aeronautics Limited(HAL), Lucknow has already made preparations for the production of these units for the current 83 LCA Tejas Mk1A order. The Secondary Flight Control

of LCA-Tejas, comprising Leading Edge Slats and Airbrakes, now boasts state-ofthe-art Servo-Valve based electro-hydraulic servo actuators and control modules. These high pressure, redundant servo actuators and control module, characterised by astute design, precision manufacturing, assembly, and testing, represent a culmination of ADA's relentless pursuit of indigenous technological prowess.

### Medical experts for reintroduction of Indian **Medical Services**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

Medical experts representing the public and private sector have batted for reintroduction of Indian Medical Services (IMS), akin to Indian Administrative Service, to boost the healthcare sector infrastructure, and enhance coordination in healthcare policy formulation.

Led by the Think Change Forum (TCF), a think tank, the experts submitted a five-point agenda to the government to roll-out the IMS following discussion at a recently held panel discussion titled 'Is it time for India to resurrect Indian Medical Services?'

The deliberation highlighted the imperative of strengthening the public healthcare system and emphasised the pivotal role that IMS can play in

achieving this objective.
The IMS will help bring the sheen and trust back to public health sector which has been lost to private sector; help stop brain drain from public medical services by attracting and retaining the best medical talent; allow for superior health-care outcomes with better managed facilities and processes, as no longer generalists will be managing the specialists, said the experts.

Overall, the healthcare infrastructure is fractured and falls short of providing quality and effective healthcare at scale. These shortcomings primarily stem from inefficient bureaucratic management rather than lack of skills among healthcare

professionals, noted the

Dr Rajesh Gupta, Additional Director, Pulmonology and Critical Care, Fortis Healthcare, Noida, said, "The majority of the Indian public relies on the private sector for healthcare services, with 60 per cent of inpatient admissions (IPDs) and 80 per cent of outpatient visits (OPDs) occurring in private facilities."

The second point highlighted challenges in staffing the public healthcare system with skilled doctors. Lack of incentives for these highly educated professionals to work under generalist administrators has resulted in brain drain, they

Dr Sharad Kr Agarwal, the immediate past national president of IMA, said, "The implementation of IMS holds the promise of enhancing service quality through induc-tion of skilled doctors and addressing the persistent doctor shortage, especially in rural areas. Crucial to its success is equipping the cadre with ample facilities and resources comparable to those provided to IAS or IPS officers."

"This will ensure that doctors are incentivized to join IMS, drawn by a clear career trajectory and motivated to serve communities, even in remote areas," he said.

It was also felt that the IMS will be able to enable seamless coordination and cooperation between the central and state health departments, for improved national healthcare policies for the country.

cheating the Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Other Backward Classes

(OBC) communities in the name of social justice, and said

he is working towards achieving the dream of social reformers Jyotiba Phule, B R Ambedkar and Chaudhary

"The previous governments have only cheated the people of the SC, ST and OBC

communities in the name of social justice. Modi is working

Charan Singh.

## Modi takes dig at Rahul, Akhilesh

### PM says film of do shehzade already rejected by people

PTI ■ AMROHA (UP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a veiled dig at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Friday, saying the shooting of the film "do shehzade ki jodi" is on but it has already

been rejected by people.
"Every time these people seek votes from the people of Uttar Pradesh, they carry a basket of dynasty, corruption and appeasement. They do not leave any chance to attack our faith," Modi said, addressing a

rally here. In a veiled attack on Gandhi and Yadav, he said, "The shooting of the film 'do shehzade ki jodi (a pair of princes)' is going on. But their film has already been rejected by people."

Hitting out at Danish Ali, the Congress candidate from Amroha, Modi alleged that he has objections in saying "Bharat Mata ki jai".

"Will a person, who cannot accept Bharat Mata ki jai, look

good in the Indian Parliament? Should such a person be allowed entry into the Indian Parliament?" he asked the gathering.

Slamming the opposition, the prime minister said, "The SP and the Congress declined the invitation for the Ram temple's consecration ceremony in Ayodhya. People hankering for vote banks refused the invitation for the ceremony. Instead, look at those who fought the Babri Masjid case in the Supreme Court but still participated in

after losing the case.' Iqbal Ansari, a litigant in the Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case, attended the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple on January 22.

"They are not satisfied even after refusing the invitation, so they abuse the Ram temple and Sanatan Dharma. The SP, for its vote bank, calls Ram 'pakhandi' (hypocrites). Those in the INDIA opposition bloc hate Sanatan Dharma," Modi said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being felicitated by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a public meeting for the Lok Sabha elections, at Gajraula in Amroha, on Friday

The prime minister alleged that when he went under the sea to offer prayers in Gujarat's Dwarka, where Lord Krishna

had gone from Amroha, "the prince of the Congress said there is nothing to pray under the sea. They are rejecting our

faith only for their vote banks".

Hitting out at Akhilesh Yadav as well as Bihar's Deputy Chief in Uttar Pradesh, the leader

Minister Tejashwi Yadav, Modi said, "Those in Bihar, Minister who say they are Yaduvanshi, who takes the benefits of being Yaduvanshi, I want to ask them, how can they sit with a party that insults Lord Krishna? How can you have an

agreement with them?"
He criticised the Congress, SP
and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) governments in Uttar Pradesh in the past for allegedly ignoring farmers and said those growing sugarcane were given Rs 500 crore annually during the SP's rule, whereas the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government gave

Party (BJP) government gave Rs 1,500 crore to them.
Blaming vote-bank politics for communal riots, Modi said, "This vote-bank politics burnt western Uttar Pradesh in the fire of riots. The people of Uttar Pradesh can never forget that era of Goonda Raj. People had to migrate and leave their houses behind. "In several western Uttar Pradesh neighbourhoods, posters with 'makan bikau hai' (house for sale) written on

(house for sale) written on those were put up. But, Yogiji (Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath) got rid of criminals for your safety. We

are not strengthened again in any manner. The prime Minister accused the previous governments of

must ensure that these forces

day and night to achieve the social justice dream of Jyotiba Phule, Ambedkar and (former prime minister) Chaudhary Charan Singh," he said. The prime minister addressed the rally as polling was underway in eight western Uttar Pradesh

constituencies in the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls. Amroha will go to polls in the second phase on April 26. The counting of votes will be taken up on June 4. The prime minister began his speech with an appeal to

people to vote.
"I appeal to everyone to

exercise their right to vote given by the Constitution," he said while emphasising that youngsters should especially go out and vote to secure their future and that of the country.



## People not excited about polls, claims farmer leader Naresh Tikait

PTI ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP)

Farmer leader Naresh Tikait on Friday expressed skepticism about the BJP's claim of the NDA crossing the 400-mark and claimed "there is no excitement among people" about the polls.

"If they are saying 400, then what is the need for them to contest elections? It is special advance. Do they have any astrologer who has predicted that this is going to happen?" said Tikait, national president of the Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) while speaking to 'PTI Videos'.

Polling in eight Lok Sabha constituencies of western Uttar Pradesh, including Muzaffarnagar, are underway on Friday in the first phase.

"People express their feelings through their votes. However, the voting is slow, and it will be like this till evening. There is no excitement among people, they are disillusioned now. Also, elections are being held in several phases... Elections should be held in a single

phase and the results should be declared on the third day and (new government's) oathtaking in the next four-five days," he suggested.

"There is an Emergency-like situation in the country. These are the talks among the public," Tikait further said.

People of this area don't like slavery. There might be some region, state or seat that likes slavery by not casting their

"The era of booth capturing has passed... Everyone is complaining about the machine, then why are the polls not being conducted through ballot papers? 90-95 per cent people are against the machine (EVM). It is a machine and can be tempered

with," Tikait claimed. Talking about payment to sugarcane farmers, Tikait said, "They show the payment as a favour. Are they giving it for free? Have we not given them our sugarcane produce? The farmers today are feeling

## Close to 55 per cent polling recorded in 12 LS seats in Rajasthan

A voter turnout of close to 55 per cent was recorded in 12 parliamentary constituencies of Rajasthan where polling was held in the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections on Friday. elections on Friday.
The election authorities said

54.97 per cent of the electorate cast their votes. The final figures would be released later.

released later. The highest voter turnout of 62.93 per cent was recorded in the Ganganagar Lok Sabha seat while Jhunjhunu saw the lowest turnout of 47.98 per cent, it said. Jaipur recorded a poll percentage of 61.23. The voting percentage in Bikaner was 52.53, Churu 61.05, Sikar 55.06, Jaipur Rural 54.44, Alwar 55.82, Dausa 49.57, Bharatpur 50.97 and Nagaur 56.89.

are in the fray in the first phase of polling that began at am in the state and ended at 6 pm. There are 25 Lok Sabha seats in Rajasthan and the remaining 13 will go to poll in the second phase on April Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra, Chief Minister

Mishra, Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, former deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot and other leaders cast their votes in the initial hours. Mishra and his wife Satyawati Mishra cast their votes at a polling booth in C Scheme. "Voting is not only a

constitutional right but also the duty of every citizen of India. This strengthens democracy," the governor

The chief minister exercised



and expressed confidence that the NDA will win over 400 seats across the country in this general election. He said people of the state were voting for 'guarantees' of Prime Minister Narendra

people want change and this told reporters after casting

change in the country. The BJP had a long tenure of

10 years. Now people are bored and I am convinced that the Congress will win more seats than the BJP in Rajasthan. We will win across the country and the INDIA On the other hand, Pilot said bloc will get a majority," he

Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari also cast her vote in this phase.

Former BJP state president Satish Poonia cast his vote at a polling booth in Rani Sati Nagar in Jaipur during the

newly married couples were also seen at the polling booths.

Shivani, a resident of Dampura village in Dholpur district, reached her polling booth before entering the wedlock. Dressed in bridal attire, she also took a selfie at a 'selfie point' after casting

In Jaipur, a 95-year-old retired naval officer reached a polling station with his family members to vote. He said although he could have chosen the 'voting from home' option, he preferred to cast his vote at a polling

day. Elderly citizens and some

her vote.

station. Newlywed Rohit and Sonia

Chaudhary went to a polling station in Jaipur' Purani Basti to cast their votes. They got married on Thursday night. Rajasthan Director General of Police Utkal Ranjan Sahoo said tight security arrangements have been made for free, fair and peaceful voting. The Rajasthan Police, along with companies of the Central Armed Forces and Home Guard personnel, has been

and law and order. According to Chief Electoral Officer Praveen Gupta, a total of 2.54 crore people are eligible to vote in the first phase and around 23,000 polling booths have been set

up in this phase.

deployed to maintain peace

## In a first, people of Andaman | Vehicle carrying EVM vulnerable Shompen tribe vote

PTI ■ PORT BLAIR

 $F_{\rm Andaman~and~Nicobar}^{\rm or~the~first~time~in}$ Islands, seven members of the Shompen tribe, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTGs) of Great Nicobar Islands on Friday exercised their voting rights for the lone Lok Sabha seat in the union territory, an official said.

Not only Shompen tribe members exercised their voting rights at polling station 411 named as 'Shompen Hut' built inside the forest staff quarters but also they posed cheated and feel they have lost everything. Farmers are sad." for selfies at a designated cut-

Commission of India, which

reads - "I vote for sure". The Shompen tribes were assisted in their language by an interpreter known as 'Mathiyas' (a Nicobari tribal vouth).

Speaking to PTI, Chief Electoral Officer, B S Jaglan said, "This is for the first time a total of seven members of Shompen tribe exercised their voting rights. Earlier, we have given them training about EVMs and VVPATs through a trainer. It's good to see that they came out of the jungle and voted for the first time. As per the 2011 census the population of the Shompen



was 229.

"Other two primitive tribes Onge and Great Andamanese too exercised their voting rights like in 2019 Lok Sabha election but seven Shompen did it for the first time out of 98 Shompen voters," the CEO said.

An election official said nearly 91 per cent of voting

happened at Dugong Creek (little Andaman tehsil of South Andaman district) where Onge primate tribes live exclusively (it is a reserved forest area). "Out of 68 Onge, 62 of them voted including 35 male and 27 female," Returning Officer, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arjun Sharma said. Similarly, 100 per cent voting happened at Strait Island which is an exclusively restricted area for the Great Andamanese tribe. "Out of 39 Great Andamanese, all 39 Great Andamanese exercised their voting rights," Sharma

sinks in Assam river **PTI** ■ NORTH LAKHIMPUR (ASSAM)

An SUV carrying an electronic voting machine par-

tially sank into a river after water level rose suddenly washing away a mechanised boat that was ferrying the vehicle in Assam's Lakhimpur constituency on Friday, officials said.

The driver and the polling officer of the vehicle managed to get out before water gushed into the vehicle, an official said.

It was on its way to Amarpur area in Sadiya to replace an EVM after a technical glitch was detected in it as polling

Polling picks up in Puducherry,

commenced in the morning, the official said.

A quick response team stationed at Sadiya dispatched the SUV with the EVM, accompanied by the driver and an official.

'As the vehicle was being carried by a mechanised boat across the Deopani river, its water level and current sudden-ly increased. The boat sank under the force of the water, and the vehicle also partially

sank," the official said. "A State Disaster Response Force team was called in to pull the vehicle out of the water. The EVM, meant for replacement, was damaged in the accident,' he added.

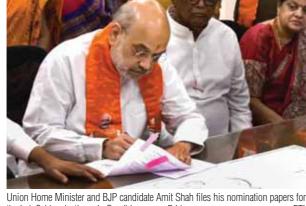
## **Shah files nomination** from Gandhinagar LS

#### Says election is all about giving Modi third term

**PTI** ■ GANDHINAGAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday submitted his nomination papers for the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha seat from where he is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate and said the general election is all about giving a third term to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Shah was accompanied by Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel when he submitted the nomination papers to Gandhinagar collector and district election officer M K Dave in the state capital at exactly 12.39 pm, considered as 'Vijay Muhurat'. Talking to reporters, Shah said this general election is all about giving a third term to



the Lok Sabha elections, in Gandhinagar, on Friday

PM Modi so that he can make India a developed country by

The Union minister said Modi's third term will be crucial because his first two terms went into correcting the mistakes made by the previous Congress-led UPA

government. This election is all about making Narendra Modi our used to create a strong

by the previous UPA government," Shah said.
The next five years would be

has resolved to turn India into a developed country by 2047 and number one in all sectors The next five years are crucial if we want to achieve that because the last 10 years went into filling pits (gadde) made

PM for the third time. Modiji

foundation for 'Viksit Bharat' he said. Thanking the BJP for

renominating him from the seat once represented by stalwarts Atal Bihari Vajpayee and LK Advani, Shah said the seat holds significance also because PM Modi is a registered voter from here. "I have been associated with this seat for the last 30 years. Before becoming an MP, I was an MLA from assembly segments that fall under this seat. Thanks to your love, l rose from a humble booth worker to becoming a member of parliament now. People of Gandhinagar gave me their blessings whenever l sought their votes," he said. Developmental works of more than Rs 22,000 crore were undertaken in the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha seat in the last five years, he said. Shah, a former BJP president, won from the Gandhinagar constituency by a margin of more than 5 lakh votes in the 2019 general elections.

#### **PTI** ■ PUDUCHERRY

Polling picked up momentum in Puducherry through the morning as the union territory gets set to elect their lone representative to the Lok Sabha, on Friday. A visit to some of the polling

stations in the rural areas brought to the fore a mixed picture of voter turnout, which was mediocre in some places and high in others. Kothandapani (89) along with

86-year-old Krishnammal turned up at a booth in the Veerampattinam coastal village Ariyankuppam Assembly constituency to cast their votes. Kothandapani grandfather of the AIADMK

#### 89 years old comes out to vote contestant G. Tamizhvendhan, family sources told media at the booth. Voters turned up

before commencement of the polls at most of the booths, official sources said. In one of the polling stations in Mudaliarpet assembly constituency, the VVPAT developed some snags and there was a delay of 45 minutes in the commencement of polling. Official sources said that as soon as the VVPAT developed technical snags, the engineers of BEL were called to

rectify the defects. Pink booths were the center of attraction. The green environment at a booth housed on the premises of the more-than-century-old VOC Government Boys school in

the town added to the lustre of

the arrangements. elections department distributed gruel, nutritious cereals and millets and also buttermilk to the voters, sources said.

Volunteers were deployed to help aged and disabled voters

to approach the booth without difficulties. Police also took care of the senior citizens and helped them get into the booth to cast their votes. Puducherry recorded 28.10 percent polling

There are 26 aspirants in the fray in this seat. The BJP nominee and Home Minister Puducherry

till 11 a.M.

Namassivayam and the Congress president and sitting member of Lok Sabha VVaithilingam are locking horns in the poll battle.

## Long queues outside polling booths in Assam

**PTI** ■ GUWAHATI

Long queues were seen coutside booths since the morning as polling was underway for constituencies in Assam in the first phase on Friday. Poling began at 7 am in Dibrugarh.

voters are eligible to vote. Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal of the BJP and

Kaziranga seats, and 86.5 lakh

Congress's deputy leader in Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi people are coming out in such a large number. People's spontaneous participation were among those who cast their votes in the first hour. will strengthen democracy,' There were apprehensions Sonowal, the BJP candidate of Dibrugarh, Jorhat, that the weather might play a Dibrugarh, said after casting Lakhimpur, Sonitpur and spoilsport with the entire his vote at a polling booth in

Upper Assam remaining cloudy, but gradually the sky cleared up.
"It is really a good sign that

Laxminath Bezbarua Bhawan in Chowkiding.

People are happy under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi and that is why they are coming out in large numbers, he claimed.

Gogoi voted at a polling booth in Devi Charan Barua Higher Secondary School in Jorhat town.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

## Theatre of the absurd

The ever-falling state of polity touches a new low, trivialising life for political gains

■ n the realm of politics, where governance and public welfare should reign supreme, a disturbing trend has emerged — the trivialisation of human life for the sake of politlical benefits. Recent events surrounding Delhi's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal exemplify this worrying trend, where his health crisis has become a point of one-upmanship and is being used to serve narrow political narratives rather than addressing the genuine concerns of his health. The case took a curious turn when the Enforcement Directorate (ED) claimed that Kejriwal intentionally indulged in a high-sugar diet to fabricate grounds for bail. Kejriwal's colleague Atishi has countered this assertion, alleging a conspiracy to deny the jailed Chief Minister access to essential insulin and home-cooked food, potentially putting his life at risk. Both claims, while patently opposite, underscore a distressing reality — the callous politicisation of a health crisis. In the theatre of politics, where power dynamics often overshadows ethical considerations, the sanctity of human life



seems to have been direly neglected. The focus has shifted from genuine concern for an individual's wellbeing to exploiting their vulnerabilities for partisan gains. Such a narrative not only reflects poorly on the integrity of political discourse but also raises profound questions about the moral compass of those entrusted with governance.

The ED's assertion of Kejriwal deliberately manipulating his health for legal advantage is a damning indictment of the extent to which political opponents are willing to go to discredit their adversaries. It underscores a culture where the personal struggles of individuals are weaponised for political advantage. Conversely,

Atishi's allegations of a plot to endanger Kejriwal's life highlight the dangerous consequences of unchecked political rhetoric. Accusations of attempted murder, if unsubstantiated, not only sow seeds of distrust but also trivialise the gravity of such heinous crimes. At its core, the Kejriwal saga underscores a broader crisis within the polity — the prioritisation of political expediency over human dignity. In the relentless pursuit of power and influence, the inherent value of human life is often sacrificed at the altar of partisan interests. This erosion of empathy and decency not only corrodes the fabric of democracy but also threatens the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. Without delving into the merits of the case or passing judgment on who is truthful, Kejriwal, like everyone else, must be given the best treatment at the moment, even if the illness is selfinflicted. To reclaim the integrity of polity, it is imperative for political actors to realign their priorities with the values of compassion, integrity and accountability. The welfare of individuals should never be subjugated to the exigencies of political gamesmanship. Instead, leaders must demonstrate a commitment to upholding the dignity and wellbeing of every citizen, irrespective of their political affiliations. The Kejriwal saga serves as a sobering reminder of the perils of allowing politics to trump humanity.



School students with their faces and hands painted as part of voter awareness campaign pose for photos, in Jammu PTI

## Aung San Suu Kyi: Prison or house arrest?



#### Concerns over Suu Kyi's whereabouts as the junta stares at defeat

he news website, *The Irrawaddy*, cites "informed sources in Naypyitaw and Yangon" as saying that Aung San Suu Kyi (78), the emblem of the Myanmar's struggle for democracy and Win Mint (72), incarcerated president of the country's democraticallyelected Government ousted by the coup on February 1, 2021, remain in prison. This, indeed, is likely to be the case given the high level of credibility that the website enjoys. It would be instructive to read what it has to say in this connection. The ball, so to say, was set rolling late on the afternoon of April 16 when a pro-regime media outlet said that both had been moved to a new location. It was followed by the regime's spokesman, Major-General Zaw Min Tun telling the Burmese services of VOA and the BBC: "Not only Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Win Myint but also some [other] older prisoners were given necessary care since the weather is extremely hot." However, he did not say that Suu Kyi had been moved to a new location. When media outlets pressed him for further information, he did not provide any details. Despite this and the absence of any photographic or other evidence showing their having been moved to house arrest, both local and international and news agencies carried stories saying that it was the case That this is not so is further sug-

gested by Aung San Suu Kyi's son, Kim Aris, who to told Kay Burley of Sky News during a breakfast interview, "They are saying house arrest. She only has one house and she's not there." Given the utterly unsavoury reputations that the junta and news outlets which act as its mouthpieces enjoy, the confusion may, in all likelihood, have been deliberately created by both acting in tandem. If this, indeed, is the case, what purpose was sought to have been achieved? The most plausible answer would be that it was to show that the junta cared. Why suddenly?

It has been known for some time that Aung San Suu Kyi was very ill in prison and the junta was

not providing her the kind of medical attention she needed. It has also been speculated that the junta could murder her in prison and claim that she had died of old age or other natural causes. Whatever it is, it would serve the generals well to create the impression that it was not their fault if something untoward happened to her. The other reason could be differences within the junta, a section of which wants to do a deal with her to end the civil war they are losing and another would hear nothing

The Sit-Tat (which and not Tatmadaw, is the real name for Myanmar Army), is now facing defeat at a none-to-distant future. It has been suffering one major reverse after another since the opposition Three Brotherhood Alliance (henceforth Alliance) launched its current offensive, codenamed Operation 1027, on October 27, 2023. The latest, the loss of Myawaddy, an important border town, on April 11, 2024, to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Karen National Army, is clearly the most devastating blow suffered by



THE JUNTA IS

**REPORTEDLY** PREPARING TO LAUNCH A COUNTER OFFENSIVE. WHETHER IT MATERIALISES AND, IF IT DOES, WITH WHAT SUCCESS, REMAINS TO BE the junta since the Alliance's current offensive began. A key trading hub close to the eastern end of Myanmar's border with Thailand—the total value of imports and exports passing though it has been valued at \$ 1 billion in 2023—it is also regarded as Myanmar's opening to South-East Asian countries.

The Junta is reportedly preparing to launch a counter offensive. Whether it materialises and, if it does, with what success, remains to be seen. But even if it is successful and the Sit-Tat is able to retain the town after regaining it, the event is unlikely to be a turning point in the civil war which is going overwhelming in favour of the Alliancecomprising the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), active in the Kokang Special Region of northern Shan State, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), also active in the Shan State and the Arakan Army (AA), based in the Rakhine State in the country's

Acting in close cooperation opposition National Unity Government's military arm, the People's Defence Force

western part.

(PDF) and other ethnic armies like the KNLA and

At the time of writing, the AA has brought almost the entire Rakhine State under its control. By early April, it had captured some 170 junta camps and posts, several larger bases, battalion headquarters and training facilities. It seized the important town of Paletwa on January 15, 2024. Kyaukphyu, where China is developing a port and a spe-cial economic zone spread over 1,600 hectares, is about to fall. The AA is pressing hard on Sittwe, an important port town, after seizing control of the small towns around it and cutting off access to it through road and waterways. India shifted its staff from its consulate there to Yangon earlier in April, 2024.

Initially, one had thought that the Junta's ouster, even though inevitable, would take a long time to come about. It now seems that it would be defenestrated much sooner than one had thought. India must bear this in mind.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

sharp contrast between the flawed current State

of affairs and the ideal governance system envi-

sioned in ancient scriptures like Manusmriti. The

Manusmriti's principles, though controversial,

present a compelling blueprint for a more right-

eous governance model, emphasising a party-

less system, voter recall rights and alignment

with moral principles. The chasm between this

### THE EDITOR

## Transformative trends in India's higher education ARITRA GHOSHAL



The surge in EdTech presents opportunities for democratising education but also highlights challenges such as the digital divide and ensuring quality

ndia's higher education landscape is undergoing a **⊥**transformative shift. With initiatives like the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, skill development programs by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the encouragement of 100 per cent FDI in education, the landscape is ripe for innovation and investment. Additionally, UGC's push for setting up international campuses in India and the Ministry of Education's focus on global learning is reshaping our educational framework

The market size of the Indian higher education system was estimated at around \$40 billion in 2023, growing at a CAGR of 15 per cent. With over 1,200 universities, 49,400 colleges and 12,600 standalone institutions, India hosts one of the largest higher education ecosystems in the world. Catering to more than 50 million students — a number expected to grow substantially in the next five years these institutions are crucial in achieving an enhanced Gross Enrollment Ratio and improving the skill set of our future workforce.

Amidst this expansion, the post-pandemic era has seen a significant influx of digitisa-

tion in learning, with universities offering online programs and various platforms providing a broad spectrum courses online. Considering our current infrastructure and the expected demand, it is essential for the country to further explore online learning and skill development opportunities. Aligning these opportunities with the next 10-year growth plan is crucial for preparing a skilled workforce that enhances graduate employa-

However, the selection of courses among students has also seen a paradigm shift. India is moving beyond tra- ance and adapting accredita-

ditional domains like engineering, medicine and management. Today, students are increasingly drawn to interdisciplinary programs and new-age courses that promise quicker skill acquisition and certification. There is a significant opportunity for institutions to expand their offerings in these certification/degree courses where students can learn new skills in less dura-

The surge in EdTech has been transformative and represents a key area ripe for investment and innovation. By providing everything from career guidance to student counselling digitally, these platforms have democratised access to education, ensuring that students from all regions have better career opportunities. Yet, realising the full potential of these advancements requires overcoming significant challenges. Addressing the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to technology and improving internet connectivity, especially in underserved areas, are critical. Moreover, as the field rapidly diversifies,

strengthening quality assur-

tion and regulatory frameworks are essential to maintaining standards and credibility. These bodies must adapt to the changing dynamics of higher education to uphold academic integrity and student outcomes.

The Ministry of Education's current focus on the internationalization of higher education in India is set to have profound effects, not only on educational practices but also on the broader economy and society. This strategic emphasis will enable transnational education and student/faculty exchanges, thereby building a globally competent workforce and fostering knowledge exchange between

As we look ahead, the future of higher education in India is not just about scaling up but also about smart scaling. By embracing these trends and addressing inherent challenges, we can ensure that the sector not only expands but also elevates, providing every student with a world-class education and global oppor-

(The writer is the founder and director of OneStep Global; views are personal)

#### **BJP'S STRATEGIC MANIFESTO**

Madam — Apropos the news article, "A Vision for India's Global Leadership", published on April 19, this is my response. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) manifesto signals a shift towards a policy-centric approach, departing from traditional electoral strategies. By highlighting achievements and projecting a vision for India's future, it aims to secure votes based on governance rather than populist promises. The absence of significant Pakistan-centric rhetoric suggests a nuanced understanding of foreign policy priorities, focusing instead on global engagement and regional stability.

Prime Minister Modi's emphasis on "Neighbour First" and "Act East" policies reflects a proactive stance in regional diplomacy, enhancing India's influence and fostering solidarity among neighbouring nations. The manifesto's commitment to global advocacy for the Global South underscores India's aspirations for a leadership role in international affairs. However, challenges persist, particularly in integrating India into global supply chains and enhancing the rupee's acceptability. Yet, the manifesto's articulation of strategic goals and pledges for collaboration within the Indo-Pacific region portrays a coherent vision for India's role in

the evolving geopolitical landscape. Sneha Gupta | Delhi

#### **OTT LANGUAGE DEBATE**

ity's normalisation.

Madam — Apropos the news article, "How justified is abusive language on OTT?", published on April 19, this is my response. India's OTT platforms have reshaped entertainment, offering diverse content but facing criticism for excessive profanity. The Supreme Court's recent ruling defends free speech, sparking debates on cultural integrity. Profanity may enhance realism yet risks societal norms, especially impacting youth. While OTT isn't solely responsible, it amplifies existing trends. Education reforms emphasise cultural values, conflicting with profan-

#### **Political quagmire**



propos the news article, "Corruption and Apolitical defections: A telltale sign of democratic decay", published on April 19, this is my response. The article delves into the unsettling reality of political manoeuvring, where corruption probes seem to act as a revolving door for politicians, raising questions about the integrity of the system. It draws a

ideal and the existing political landscape is vast, highlighting the urgent need for reform. While achieving perfection may be a distant goal, even partial adoption of Manusmriti's principles could yield significant improvements, reducing electoral malpractice, corruption and divisive politics. As the nation awaits potential reforms under the Modi Government, India, with its rich spiritual heritage, can transcend its current challenges and emerge as a global exemplar of moral

Ishaan Shukhi | Ludhiana

Despite honouring women in tradition, derogatory language persists, undermining societal respect. Education institutions oppose abuse, but OTT exposure challenges efforts. A balanced approach is crucial, fostering dialogue on artistic freedom versus cultural preservation. OTT's influence demands responsible content creation, respect for diverse audiences and societal values. Ultimately, societal progress intertwines with cultural preservation, demanding nuanced solutions to maintain integrity amidst evolving entertainment landscapes.

Rishab Vashisht | Bhopal

#### **INSIGHTS ON INDIAN JEWELRY**

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Heritage Indian jewellery dazzles the world", published on April 19, this is my response. Dr Alka Raghuvanshi's posthumously published masterpiece, 'Rendezvous with Traditional Indian Jewellery," transcends the boundaries of a mere book. It's a heartfelt journey delving into the soul of India's cultural heritage, where artistry intertwines with profound symbolism. The meticulous attention to detail reveals a rich tapestry of craftsmanship, history and significance. The book's thematic chapters unravel the evolution and diversity of Indian jewellery, from the majestic influences of the Mughal era to the intricate designs of

It showcases stunning visuals and explores the deep symbolism ingrained in each piece, reflecting social, religious and cultural narratives. Moreover, it sheds light on the craftsmanship and techniques passed down through generations, preserving the essence of traditional jewellery-making. Regional variations highlight the unique aesthetics across India, celebrating its diverse cultural tapestry. This book is a captivating ode to India's cherished art form, offering insights for enthusiasts, historians and admirers alike, encapsulating the beauty and legacy of Indian jewellery.

Lavanya Sharma | Lucknow

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneér@gmail.com

**BKP SINHA** 

ARVIND JHA

the pioneer

## **FIRST COLUMN**

### MIND, THE KEY TO **HIDDEN FORTUNE**

True wealth lies not in material possessions but in the freedom of mind



RAVI VALLURI

nce upon a time lived a woman. She was struck with an unexpected tragedy as her husband passed away untimely. The lady was now left with only one son and precious jewellery. Since she was hounded by creditors to repay the debts accrued by her husband, she conjured a trick to hide the wealth.

In sheer desperation to keep the jewellery safe from creditors, the lady wrapped the precious wealth in a piece of cloth and hid it under a tree. The mother and son lived in an impoverished State. Her mind was always disturbed by the fact that she did not share this piece of vital information with her only son. As it turned out, she carried this secret to the

Consequently, the son inherited plenty of debt, a barren hut and a cot. The son had to work hard for sustenance and to repay the ever-rising liabilities. He toiled hard to survive and regretted his misfortune. 'Property is not the sacred right. When a rich man becomes poor it is a misfortune, it is not a moral evil. When a poor man becomes destitute, it is a moral evil, teeming with consequences and is injurious to society and morality,' opined Lord Acton. Indeed, the impoverishment of the poor is heart-wrenching.

One day while cutting the branches of a tree, he stumbled upon the jewellery. Dumbfounded and stupefied, the strapping youngster hid the bijouterie in a pit he dug in the hut, petrified that the creditors would appropriate the wealth. He too committed the cardinal mistake of not sharing the secret with his wife and carried it to his grave. The mother and son were not mindful and wakeful enough to be in the Present Moment and remained prisoners of their past and future



Two Buddhist monks were once discussing a flag flapping in the wind. While one felt it was the wind moving, the other conjectured it was the flag fluttering. The imbroglio could not be resolved and they sought the intervention of a Zen Master. The master impassively said, 'It is the MIND that moves, neither the flag nor the wind."

Humans need freedom from their past and future to be in the present. And being in the NOW or present is true enlightenment and mindfulness. The past is full of sorrows and regrets while the future brims with anxieties and worries and humans are caged in that mindset, thereby postponing their happiness quotient. To appreciate true happiness and joy, the human mind should not vacillate between the past and the future but remain in the PRESENT.

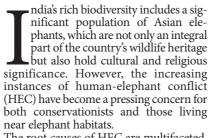
A young monk was once travelling in pursuit of happiness and truth. During his travels, he encountered a massive river that he could not cross. A short while later, he saw a senior monk on the other side of the river. He hailed him and sought assistance to cross the river to reach the other side. The senior monk pondered and replied, 'You are already on the other

This fact can be appreciated only when the mind is centred. Breathing techniques such as Sudarshan Kriya, Pranayama, Yoga, Meditation and Vipassana all help in dissolving the mind so that it becomes centred. 'True happiness is not possible without freedom. We have to learn the habit of being free. We do not allow our past, the future, our projects, or our fear to get hold of us. We are free. Every step is free. Every step is nourishment. Every step is healing. Every step is joy,' says Thich Nhat

Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living: views are personal)

## Human-elephant conflict: The way out

To ensure the protection of these majestic creatures, it is imperative to revisit and revise legislative frameworks with a focus on ecological sustainability



The root causes of HEC are multifaceted, primarily stemming from habitat loss and fragmentation due to human activities. As India's population expands, so does the need for land for agricultural and developmental activities. This expansion often leads to encroachment into elephant territories, resulting in the destruction or fragmentation of their natural habitats. Consequently, elephants are forced to venture closer to human habitations in search of food and space. Mining activities, in particular, lead to deforestation and habitat degradation, disrupting elephant migratory routes and undermining the scope and health of elephant habitats. Similarly, urbanisation and infrastructure development often intersect with elephant corridors, pushing these gentle giants into unfamiliar and potentially dangerous territories. Climate change is another significant factor in this conflict. Changes in climate patterns can affect the availability and distribution of food and water sources in elephant habitats. Extreme weather events like droughts, floods and high temperatures can force elephants to migrate in search of these resources, often bringing them into conflict with humans. The current State of HEC in India is alarming. Over 500 humans are killed annually in encounters with elephants and more than 100 elephants lose their lives due to human-related activities, including poaching for ivory, poisoning, electrocution and collisions with trains. Train collisions are the second-highest cause of unnatural elephant deaths in the country, following accidental electrocution. Over the past decade, train collisions have claimed the lives of more

than 200 elephants. As mega-herbivores, elephants consume up to 150 kilograms of forage and drink up to 190 litres of water per day. This necessitates a large foraging area, typically spanning 100-1,000 km for a family herd, to provide a diverse diet of grasses, shrubs and fruits. However, navigating large areas to find sufficient food and water becomes a challenge when these areas overlap with numan activ ities. This often results in crop raiding, property damage, and, in some tragic instances, human casualties. These incidents, unfortunately, lead to retaliatory actions from humans that can be fatal for these majestic creatures, further intensifying their fear and mistrust of humans. Farmers, particularly those with limited resources struggle to cope with crop losses. This hardship breeds resentment towards elephants, undermining conservation efforts and trapping both humans and elephants in a

cycle of violence. Since 2019, there have been over 1500 human fatalities reported due to elephant

trocuted at the Rani Tea EState near Guwahati due to low-hanging high-voltage



WESTERN MAHARASHTRA, A REGION NOT **TRADITIONALLY** KNOWN FOR **ELEPHANT** HABITATION, SAW A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN 2002 WHEN ELEPHANTS MIGRATED FROM KARNATAKA. THIS **MOVEMENT WAS** 

LARGELY ATTRIBUTED TO THEIR DISPLACEMENT FROM THE DANDELI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, A

another three elephants. The situation worsened in October 2022, when within a single week, 11 elephants across Assam lost their lives to human-related hazards including electrocution, crop poisoning and train collisions.

Western Maharashtra, a region not traditionally known for elephant habitation, saw a significant change in 2002 when elephants migrated from Karnataka. This movement was largely attributed to their displacement from the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, a place they had Wildlife Sanctuary, a place they had inhabited comfortably until 1990. The construction of the Kali hydroelectric project is believed to have been the catalyst for their relocation to the districts of Kolhapur and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra, leading to notable incidents of crop raiding. A similar pattern emerged in 2022 when a herd of 22 elephants trekked from Chhattisgarh to Maharashtra, settling in the lush forests along the Wain-Ganga, Pranhita and Dina river basins. This migration has been linked to increased human encroachment, the construction of two canals in Odisha and mining disturbances in their traditional corridors.

The Wayanad region, a vital watershed for Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, is currently facing a multitude of environmental challenges such as deforestation, irresponsible tourism and unscientific development. Such activities are posing a significant threat to the ecological balance of the region, endangering the lives of both humans and wildlife. Wayanad plays a critical role in maintaining regional biodiversity. However, ongoing habitat degradation in this region could potentially intensify the to frequent HEC incidents.

Addressing HEC requires a multi-

pronged approach that balances the needs of wildlife conservation with the socio-economic realities of human populations living near elephant habitats. This includes securing and restoring elephant corridors to ensure safe passage for elephants between different habitats, thereby reducing the likelihood of them entering human-dominated landscapes. Recognising this need, the Indian Government has launched an ambitious initiative known as Project Elephant. This program focuses on enhancing elephant habitats by creating a network of reserves, corridors and protected areas. To address the common issue of crop raiding in human-elephant interactions, the project employs innovative technologies such as early warning systems and elephant-proof barriers. It also implements various strategies like durable and solar-powered electric fences and biological deterrents including bio-fencing with cacti, beehive fences and chilli smoke to deter elephants.

Enhancing the natural food supply

within forests is another essential strategy for preventing elephants from entering human territories. This involves improving water conservation, regenerating forests by replanting and nurturing native trees and plants, implementing fire protection and removing invasive species. Programs focused on ecotourism and livelihood diversification not only engage local communities in conservation but also provide them with sustainable economic alternatives. Success stories from the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape underscore the effectiveness of community-led conservation endeavours, strategic land-use planning, trans-border collaboration and habitat restoration in diminishthe involvement of the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority in

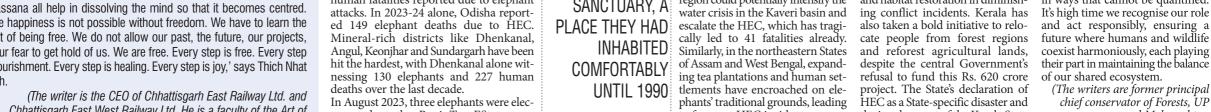
conflict management, are significant steps towards addressing this complex issue.

Statutory support is fundamental in the conservation efforts addressing the HEC. Elephants, listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List, are protected under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Recent amendments to the Forest

Conservation Act of 1980 have raised concerns regarding their impact on elephant reserves and corridors, particularly within the 100 km strip of India's boundary where the majority of these reserves and corridors are located. These changes could potentially worsen the fragmentation and degradation of these vital habitats, thereby intensifying the HEC. The Forest Rights Act of 2006, while well-intentioned in empowering forest-dwelling communities, has also had unintended consequences. Its implementation has sometimes resulted in further encroachments and habitat fragmentation, which can force elephants to venture into new areas in search of refuge and resources, increasing the likelihood and severity of conflicts. Post-project monitoring, particularly in the mining industry, is often insufficient, lead ing to a neglect of wildlife protection measures that were stipulated during the project's approval. This oversight can result in significant harm to elephant populations and their habitats, undermining conser-

vation efforts. As we move forward, let us remember that our fates are intertwined with those of the elephants and all wildlife. Their survival is our survival. Their well-being reflects the health of our planet and their continued existence enriches our world in ways that cannot be quantified. It's high time we recognise our role and act responsibly, ensuring a future where humans and wildlife coexist harmoniously, each playing their part in maintaining the balance

> chief conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra; views are personal)



## Rahul Gandhi holds on to Wayanad despite speculation

The decision comes as a strategic move, influenced by a variety of factors, including local dynamics and broader political alliances in Kerala

¬ven as the Indian National Congress was burning midnight oil about the Lok Sabha constituency from where Rahul Gandhi would contest this time, The Pioneer has reported that the scion of the Nehru-Gandhi clan would not leave Wayanad from where he was elected with a mammoth majority of four lakh votes in the 2019 edition of the General Election. The report was prepared after speaking to a cross-section of the electorate in the Wayanad constituency who were unanimous in their opinion that Rahul Gandhi should contest

from Wayanad itself. Those who reacted to the queries posed to them included hardcore CPI(M) members and activists who



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

made it known that Rahul should register a much bigger majority than that of the 2019 poll because the opponent happened to be Annie Raja of the CPI and K Surendran of the BJP. Annie, the spouse of D Raja, CPI's national general secretary, had rubbed Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in the wrong way and the CPI(M) cadres

Raja too had publicly questioned the capability of Vijayan and this made the CPI(M) activists furious. Had the Congress or BJP leaders criticized Vijayan, they would not have bothered but the CPI had crossed the Lakshman Rekha (it could be Stalinist Rekha since the comrades do not accept Ramayana). The CPI(M)

comrades would certainly teach Annie Raja a lesson or two in the art of politics. The truth is that the CPI(M) leaders wanted Rahul Gandhi to contest from Wayanad so that the CPI would lose one seat for sure.

The decision to field Surendran, the Kerala State president of the BJP, was made much later. Surendran consider it as a cardinal sin. himself knows that he would

has to kowtow the party line. The information coming out of the BJP office is that he may be given a gubernatorial position even if he loses the security deposit. There are no suitable candidates in Kerala BJP to challenge the supremacy of Rahul Gandhi and the Congress. The question being asked by Wayand voters is that how many people remember the names of the 2019 challengers to Rahul What is interesting is that the

animosity between the CPI(M) and Congress has come down drastically with Gandhi filing the nomination from Wayanad. Though the Congress leaders lambast the CPI(M), it is just a façade to convince the hardcore mem-

lose by a big margin but he bers of these parties that the CPI(M) as of date. there is no alliance between them. But what the people of the State see in TV channels and newspapers is the video images and pictures of Sitaram Yechury and D Raja hugging and kissing Rahul Gandhi while in Tripura former CPI(M) Chief Minister Manik Sarkar openly campaigning for the Congress

party's candidates. Kerala is the only State where they act as if they are rivals and enemies. By the next election, one can see the Congress and the CPI(M) fighting it together in Kerala against the BJP-led front provided the Hindutva party leadership throws out all the rotten eggs from its basket). There is no difference between the Congress and outfits whose secularist cre-silence on the CPI(M) candi-

Political pundits have been asking both parties to offi-cially legalize the ties so that the entire secular parties could be arrayed under the flag of the Congress across the country against the "communal and fascist" forces.

The secular parties include the Muslim League! In Marxist parlance, they say that whoever aligns with the CPI(M) is secular while the BJP is "communal and fascist". The CPI(M) does not have any issues in accepting the former NDA constituents as allies once they call off the marriage of convenience with the BJP. Telugu Desam of Andhra Pradesh, BJD of Orissa, BSP and JD(U) are

some of the major political

dentials depend on their ties with the BJP.

The press meeting addressed by A K Antony, the Bheeshma Pitamah of the Congress on 9 April 2024 at Thiruvananthapuram was an indicator of how political marriages take place in Kerala. While Antony was cursing his son Anil Antony who is contesting from Pathanamthitta as a BJP candidate and asking the electorate to ensure the defeat of his son, he was waxing eloquence on Anto Antony, the Congress candidate who is pitted against Anil. The former defence minister lam-

But what stood out was his

basted the BJP as anti-nation-

als, communalists and dicta-

dates. Antony's ties with the CPI(M) are infamous as he had sailed with the Marxists for almost two years during 1980-1983.

The CPI(M) and the Congress-led by Antony fought the 1980 general elec-tion together and ruled Kerala for almost two years. The Congress faction was pushed out of the LDF by the CPI(M) which demolished the offices of the Congress across the State with the police looking the other way. It is not without any reason political pundits say that politics make strange persons into bedfellows. Do we need more proof than A K Antony?

(The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

## Iran fires at apparent Israeli attack drones

n apparent Israeli drone An apparent fire air defenses at a major air base and a nuclear site early on Friday morning near the central city of Isfahan, an assault coming in retaliation for Tehran's unprecedented droneand-missile assault on the country. No Iranian official directly acknowledged the possibility that Israel attacked, and the Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment. However, tensions have been high since the Saturday assault on Israel amid its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and its own strikes targeting Iran in

Speaking at the G7 meeting in Capri, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said the US received "last-minute" information from Israel about the attack on Isfahan.

United States officials declined to comment as of early Friday, but American broadcast networks quoting unnamed US officials said Israel carried out Times quoted anonymous Israeli officials claiming the assault, which came on Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's 85th birthday. Israeli politicians also made comments hinting that the country had launched an

Air defense batteries fired in several provinces over reports of drones being in the air, state television reported. Iranian army commander Gen. Abdolrahim Mousavi said crews targeted several flying objects. "The explosion this morning in the sky of Isfahan was related to the shooting of air defense systems at a suspicious object that did not cause any damage," Mousavi said. Others suggested the drones may be so-called quadcopters four rotor, small drones that are commercially available.

Authorities said air defenses

fired at a major air base in

Isfahan, which long has been

home to Iran's fleet of

American-made F-14 Tomcats

- purchased before the 1979

The facility at Isfahan operates three small Chinese-supplied research reactors, as well as handling fuel production and other activities for Iran's civilian nuclear program. Isfahan also is home to sites associated with Iran's nuclear program, including its underground Natanz enrichment

> ly targeted by suspected Israeli sabotage attacks. State television described all atomic sites in the area as "fully safe." The United Nations'

site, which has been repeated-

Tasnim also published a video

from one of its reporters, who

said he was in the southeastern

Zerdenjan area of Isfahan, near

its "nuclear energy mountain."

The footage showed two differ-

ent anti-aircraft gun positions,

and details of the video corre-

sponded with known features

of the site of Iran's Uranium

Conversion Facility at Isfahan.

'At 4:45, we heard gunshots.

There was nothing going on,"

he said. "It was the air defense

these guys that you're watching,

and over there too.

Agency, also said "there is no damage to Iran's nuclear sites' after the incident.

The IAEA "continues to call for extreme restraint from everybody and reiterates that nuclear facilities should never be a target in military conflicts," the agency said.

Iran's nuclear program has rapidly advanced to producing enriched uranium at nearly weapons-grade levels since the collapse of its atomic deal with world powers after then-President Donald Trump withdrew America from the accord in 2018.

While Iran insists its program is for peaceful purposes, Western nations and the IAEA say Tehran operated a secret military weapons program until 2003. The IAEA has warned that Iran now holds enough enriched uranium to build several nuclear weapons if it chose to do so - though the US intelligence community maintains Tehran is not

actively seeking the bomb.

nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy and FlyDubai began diverting militias are based, residents of over the threat. The apparent and FlyDubai began diverting around western Iran about 4:30 a.m. local time. They offered no explanation, though local warnings to aviators suggested the airspace may have been closed.

> Iran then grounded commercial flights in Tehran and across areas of its western and central regions. Iran later restored normal flight service, authorities said. Around the time of the incident in Iran, Syria's staterun SANA news agency quoted a military statement saying Israel carried out a missile strike targeting an air defense unit in its south and causing material damage. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said the strike hit a military radar for government forces. It was not clear if there casualties,

Observatory said. That area of Syria is directly west of Isfahan, some 1,500 kilometers (930 miles) away, and east of Israel.

Baghdad reported hearing sounds of explosions, but the source of the noise was not immediately clear.

The incident Friday in Iran also sparked concerns about the conflict again escalating across the seas of the Middle East, which have been seeing attacks by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels of Yemen on shipping over the war in Gaza. The British military's United

Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center warned ships in the region that they could see increased drone activity in the skies. "There are currently no indications commercial vessels are the intended target," it wrote. The Houthis have launched at least 53 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sank another since November, according to the US Maritime Administration. Houthi attacks have dropped in recent weeks as the rebels have been targeted by a US-led airstrike campaign in Yemen and as shipping through the Red Sea

attack also briefly spooked energy markets, sending benchmark Brent crude above USD 90 before it fell again in trading Friday. However, Iranian state-run media sought to downplay the incident after the fact, airing footage of an otherwise-peaceful Isfahan morning. That could be intentional, particularly after Iranian officials for days have been threatening to retaliate for any Israeli retaliatory attack on the

nation.

"As long as Iran continues to deny the attack and deflect attention from it and no further hits are seen, there is space for both sides to climb down the escalation ladder for now," said Sanam Vakil, the director of the Middle East and North Africa program at Chatham House. (AP) Associated Press journalists Nasser Karimi, Mehdi Fattahi and Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran; Bassem Mroue in Beirut: and Nicole Winfield in Capri, Italy; contributed to this

#### Man detained after police op at Iranian consulate

Paris (AP): Police said Friday they detained a man at the Iranian consulate in Paris after responding to a report of a suspicious man possibly carrying a grenade and explosives vest, but did they did not immediately confirm finding any weapons.A Paris police official told The Associated Press that officers were verifying the man's identity and trying to determine whether he had weapons. The official was speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to be publicly named under police policy.

The official said the man was spotted around 11 a.m. (0900 GMT) on Friday and that police launched a special operation as soon as they were alerted. The man's motives were not immediately clear. No explosions have been reported, the official said.

Images on French television and social media showed police surrounding the build-

## Israel warned US about drone attack on Iran, Italian foreign min says at G7

Capri (AP): The United States told the Group of Seven foreign ministers on Friday that it received "last minute" information from Israel about a drone action in Iran, Italy's foreign minister said.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, who chaired the meeting of ministers of industrialised countries, said the United States provided the information at a Friday morning session that was changed at the last minute to address the suspected attack.

Tajani said the US informed the G7 ministers that it had been "informed at the last minute" by Israel about the drones. "But there was no sharing of the attack by the US. It was a mere information

Early Friday, Iran fired air defences at a major air base and a nuclear site near the central city of Isfahan after spotting drones, part of an apparent Israeli attack in retaliation for Tehran's unprecedented droneand-missile assault on the coun try last weekend.

In a communique following the three-day meeting, the ministers urged the parties "to prevent further escalation."

The statement pledged support for Israel's security and condemned "in the strongest terms" what the foreign ministers described as Iran's "unprecedented attack against Israel of April 13-14, which Israel defeated with the help of its partners, as well as the seizure of the Portuguese-flagged vessel MSC Aries in the Strait of Hormuz.

'We stand ready to adopt further sanctions or take other measures, now and in response to further destabilising initiatives," the document read.

The group also warned Iran against transferring ballistic missiles and related technology to Russia. On the war in Gaza the group called on Hamas to release hostages and reminded Israel to respect international and humanitarian law.

US vetoes Palestinian bid to gain statehood at UN PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

The US has vetoed a resolution in the UN Security Council on the latest Palestinian bid to be granted full membership of the United Nations, an outcome lauded by Israel but criticised by Palestine as "unfair, immoral, and unjus-

The 15-nation Council voted on a draft resolution Thursday that would have recommended to the 193-member UN General Assembly "that the State of Palestine be admitted to membership in the United

The resolution got 12 votes in its favour, with Switzerland and the UK abstaining and the US casting its veto.

To be adopted, the draft resolution required at least nine Council members voting in its favour, with no vetoes by any of its five permanent members China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Palestinian attempts for recognition as a full member state began in 2011. Palestine is currently a non-member

observer state, a status that was granted in November 2012 by the UN General Assembly.

This status allows Palestine to participate in proceedings of the world body but it cannot vote on resolutions. The only other non-member Observer State at the UN is the Holy See, representing the Vatican.

Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz praised the US for vetoing what he called a "shameful proposal. The proposal to recognise a

Palestinian state, more than 6 months after the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust and after the sexual crimes and other atrocities committed by Hamas terrorists was a reward for terrorism", Katz wrote on X, after the US

US Ambassador Robert Wood. Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs, said in the explanation of the vote at the Security Council meeting on Palestinian membership that Washington continues to strongly support a two-state

"It remains the US view that the most expeditious path

toward statehood for the Palestinian people is through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority with the support of the United States and other partners," he said.

This vote does not reflect opposition to Palestinian statehood, but instead is an acknowledgement that it will only come from direct negotiations between the parties."

Wood said there are "unresolved questions" as to whether Palestine meets the criteria to be considered a State.

'We have long called on the Palestinian Authority to undertake necessary reforms to help establish the attributes of readiness for statehood and note that Hamas - a terrorist organisation - is currently exerting power and influence in Gaza, an integral part of the state envisioned in this resolution," he said, adding that "For these reasons, the United States voted "no" on this Security Council resolution." Wood noted that since the

October 7 attacks last year against Israel by Hamas, US President Joe Biden has been

clear that sustainable peace in the region can only be achieved through a two-state solution, with Israel's security guaranteed. "There is no other path that

guarantees Israel's security and future as a democratic Jewish state. There is no other path that guarantees Palestinians can live in peace and with dignity in a state of their own. And there is no other path that leads to regional integration between Israel and all its Arab neighbours, including Saudi

Arabia," he said. The Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, sharply criticised the US veto, saying that it was "unfair, immoral, and unjustified, and defies the will of the international community, which strongly supports the State of Palestine obtaining full membership in the United Nations." Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, said that "our right to self-determination has never once been subject to bargaining or negotiation. "Our right to self-determina-

tion is a natural right, a historic

right, a legal right. A right to live in our homeland Palestine as an independent state that is free and that is sovereign. Our right to self-determination is inalienable...," he said.

Getting emotional and choking up as he made the remarks, Mansour said that a majority of the Council members "have risen to the level of this historic moment" and have stood "on the side of justice, freedom and

He asserted that Palestine's admission as a full member of the UN is an "investment in peace." On April 2, 2024, Palestine again sent a letter to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres requesting that its application for full UN membership be considered

For a State to be granted full UN membership, its application must be approved both by the Security Council and the General Assembly, where a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting is required for the State to be admitted as a full member. Earlier in the day, Guterres, in his remarks to a Council meeting on the Middle East, warned that the region is on a "knife edge".

"Recent escalations make it even more important to support good-faith efforts to find lasting peace between Israel and a fully independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian

state," Guterres said. "Failure to make progress towards a two-state solution will only increase volatility and risk for hundreds of millions of people across the region, who will continue to live under the constant threat of violence," he said.

The UN, citing the Ministry of Health in Gaza, said that between October 7 last year and April 17, at least 33,899 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and 76,664 Palestinians injured.

Over 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals, including 33 children, have been killed in Israel, the vast majority on October 7. As of April 17, Israeli authorities estimate that 133 Israelis and foreign nationals remain captive in Gaza, including fatalities whose bodies are

## Jury selection could be nearing close in Trump's hush money trial

**AP** ■ NEW YORK

awyers worked Friday to Lawyers worked 1112, round out the panel of 12 jurors and six alternates who will hear Donald Trump's hush money trial, as the former president railed against a gag order that has prosecutors seeking to hold him in contempt of court. After a jury of 12 New

Yorkers was seated Thursday, lawyers turned their attention to picking alternates who can vow to set aside their personal views and judge the presumptive Republican presidential nominee.

Thursday's proceedings demonstrated unpredictability in the jury selection process of such a high-profile case, with two jurors who had been seated a day earlier being dismissed from the panel.

The judge has suggested that opening statements could begin as early as Monday, before prosecutors begin laying out their case alleging a scheme to cover up negative



trial at Manhattan criminal court in New York on Thursday

stories Trump feared would hurt his 2016 presidential

The trial will place Trump in a Manhattan courtroom for weeks, forcing him to juggle his dual role as criminal defendant and political candidate against the backdrop of his hotly contested race against President Joe Biden. It will feature salacious and unflattering testimony his opponent will no doubt seize on to try to paint

Trump as unfit to return as

commander in chief. After

about the gag order imposed by the judge that limits what he can publicly say about wit-

He has lashed out on social media about the judge, prosecutors and likely witnesses, prompting the district attorneys to seek sanctions for possible gag order viola-tions. The judge will hold a hearing next week on prosecutors' request to hold Trump in

contempt. "The gag order has to come off. People are allowed to speak about me, and I have a gag order," Trump said. After a new group of potential jurors was brought into the courtroom, one woman who said she didn't believe she could be "completely fair" was excused. Judge Juan M. Merchan is also expected to hold a hearing Friday to consider a request from prosecutors to bring up Trump's prior legal entanglements if he takes the stand in the hush money case.

### Attack blamed on IS militants kills 22 people in central Syria

Beirut (AP): An attack on progovernment fighters by suspected members of the Islamic State group in central Syria killed 22 pro-government fighters, an opposition war monitor and pro-government media report-

ed on Friday. Gunmen attacked a bus carrying members of the Quds Brigade, a government and Russian-backed faction of mostly Palestinian fighters in Syria, near the town of Sukhna late Thursday night. Sukhna was once an IS stronghold. There was no immediate claim of responsibility but both the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based opposition war monitor, and the pro-government radio station Sham FM said IS was behind the attack. Both the Observatory and Sham FM said 22 fighters were killed. Sham FM said they were all Quds Brigade gunmen, while the Observatory said the majority belonged to the group.

## Xi Jingping launches Information Support Force for military

**PTI** ■ BEIJING

hinese President Xi Jinping On Friday launched an Information Support Force, a new wing of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which he said will be a "strategic branch" and a "key pillar" of the army. Xi, who also heads the Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the Chinese military, besides heading the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Presidency, said that the establishment of the information support force is a major decision made by the CPC and the CMC in light of the overall need of building a strong military. After presenting a flag to the force at its establishment ceremony in Beijing, Xi, 71, stressed that the information support force is a new, strategic branch of the military and a key pillar in coordinating the construction and application of the network information system.

It will play a crucial role in advancing the Chinese mili-tary's high-quality development and competitiveness in modern warfare, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted

him as saying. He ordered the force to resolutely obey the ruling Communist Party's command and make sure it stays absolutely loyal, pure and reliable. Xi urged the force to integrate deeply into the Chinese military's joint operation system, carry out information support operations in a precise and effective manner, and facilitate military operations in various directions and fields. He also urged efforts to build a network information system that fulfils the requirements of modern warfare and features the Chinese military's own characteristics, as well as efforts to accelerate the development of integrated combat capabilities more effectively.

## 3 dead in UAE floods

**AP** ■ DUBAI

Three people have died in the United Arab Emirates as a result of heavy flooding

caused by record-setting rains this week, officials said Friday. A statement by the Philippine's Department of Migrant Workers said two women suffocated inside their vehicle during the flooding, while a man died when his

vehicle fell into a sinkhole. The exact number of deaths caused by the storm is not yet known as UAE officials have not released any

information. The UAE, a hereditarily ruled, autocratic nation on the Arabian Peninsula, typically sees little rainfall in its arid desert climate. However, a massive storm forecasters had been warning about for days blew through the country's seven sheikhdoms.

By the end of Tuesday, more than 142 millimeters (5.59 inches) of rainfall had soaked Dubai over 24 hours. An average year sees 94.7 millimeters (3.73 inches) of rain at Dubai International Airport. Other areas of the country saw even more precipitation.

Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, hoped to be back on a normal schedule within 24 hours, its CEO told The Associated Press late Thursday. On Friday, longhaul carrier Emirates said on the social platform X that it would again halt local checkin for passengers traveling on its flights until early Saturday to "support operations recovery from the recent bad weather at our Dubai hub." Low-cost carrier FlyDubai also saw some disruptions. Meanwhile, intense floods also struck neighboring Oman in recent days. On Thursday, authorities raised the death toll from those storms to at least 21 killed.

## Trial underway for Panama Papers case

**AP** ■ PANAMA CITY

Eight years after 11 million leaked secret financial documents revealed how some of the world's richest people hide their wealth, more than two dozen defendants are on trial in Panama for their alleged roles. The repercussions of the leaks

were far-ranging, prompting the resignation of the prime minister of Iceland and bringing scrutiny to the then-leaders of Argentina and Ukraine, Chinese politicians and Russian President Vladimir Putin, among others. But those on trial now for alleged money laundering are principally the leaders and associates of the now defunct Panamanian boutique law firm that helped set up the shell companies used to obscure those really behind them. The leaders of that firm, Jürgen Mossack and Ramón Fonseca, are among those on Panamanian prosecutors allege that Mossack, Fonseca and their associates created a web of offshore companies that used complex transactions to hide money linked to illicit activities in the "car wash" corruption scandal of Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht. In December 2016, Odebrecht

pleaded guilty in US federal court to a charge related to its use of shell companies to disguise hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes paid in countries around the world to win public contracts.According

Panamanian prosecutors, the Mossack Fonseca firm created 44 shell companies, 31 of which opened accounts in Panama to hide money linked to the Brazilian scandal. The judge on the case, Baloisa Marquinez, last year decided to also merge the Odebrecht-related charges to prosecutors' allegations about the firm's work for German trial.

giant Siemens. Prosecutors allege a former executive with the company used entities created by Mossack Fonseca to transfer funds for bribes. A Siemens spokesperson

declined to comment, noting that it is not a party to the Panama case and that it involves former Siemens employees in their private capacity.
The 71-year-old Fonseca has

not been present for the trial, because his lawyer said he is hospitalised. But he had previously said his firm did not control how their clients used the shell companies the firm created for them. Its role was simply the creation and sale of the companies. Mossack, a 76-year-old lawyer originally from Germany, said in a statement "we categorically reject that we have committed any crime, not Mossack Fonseca nor the subsidiaries ... and we hope that can be proved in the



Treasurer Jim Chalmers of Australia, from left, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland of Canada, and Finance Minister Nicola Willis of New Zealand, pose for a photograph after a Five Eyes Finance Ministers meeting at the Treasury Department, on Thursday in Washington

## Envoy says US determined to Ukraine claims it shot down monitor North Korean nukes

The United States and its allies are discussing options "both inside and outside the UN system" to create a new mechanism for monitoring North Korea over its nuclear weapons programme, the American ambassador to the United Nations said on Wednesday.

Russia last month vetoed a UN resolution in a move that effectively abolished monitoring by UN experts of Security Council sanctions against North Korea, which prompted Western accu-sations that Moscow was acting to shield its arms purchases from North Korea to fuel its war in Ukraine.

"I look forward to engaging with both the Republic of Korea and Japan, but likeminded (countries) as well, on trying to develop options both inside the UN as well as outside the UN. The point here is that we cannot allow the work that the panel of experts were doing to lapse," US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told a news conference in Seoul, using the formal name for South Korea.

Thomas-Greenfield didn't provide specific details about US discussions with allies and other partners, including whether an alternative monitoring regime would more likely be established through the UN General Assembly or with an independent entity outside of the UN

Thomas-Greenfield met with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul on Monday and they discussed unspecified "next steps to ensure a continuation of independent and accurate reporting" of North Korea's illicit weapons development activities, according to

Thomas-Greenfield said it was



sions in the Middle East. When

asked about the Palestinian

Authority's request to have full

UN membership, she said a

UN resolution in support of

that request would not contribute to finding a two-state

solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"President Biden has said cat-

egorically that we support a two-state solution for address-

ing the situation in the Middle

East, where Palestinians will

have a state of their own and

Israel is secure in their state,

and we are working on the

ground to get to that place as quickly as possible," she said.

"We do not see that doing a resolution in the Security Council

will necessarily get us to a place

where we can find a ... two-state

solution moving forward," she

added. Tensions on the Korean

Peninsula are at their highest

point in years, as North Korean

leader Kim Jong Un has accel-

erated his weapons demonstra-

tions and issued provocative threats of nuclear conflict

clear that Russia and China, which abstained from voting on the UN resolution vetoed by Moscow, will continue to try to block international efforts to maintain monitoring of UN sanctions against North Korea. She criticised Russia for violating those sanctions with its alleged arms purchases from North Korea, and China for protecting the North from protecting the North from being held accountable.

Moscow and Beijing have thwarted US-led efforts to tighten UN sanctions on North Korea over its ramped-up ballistic missile testing since 2022, underscoring a divide between permanent Security Council members that deepened over Russia's war on Ukraine.

"I don't expect that they will cooperate or agree with any efforts that we make to find another path, but that is not going to stop us from finding that path moving forward," Thomas-Greenfield said.

Thomas-Greenfield also briefly addressed questions about ten-

The United States, South Korea and Japan have responded by expanding their combined military exercises and sharpening their nuclear deterrence strategies built around strategic US

In a telephone conversation on Wednesday, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida agreed to further strengthen three-way cooperation with Washington to counter North Korean threats and other regional challenges amid "deepening uncertain-ties in the international situa-

tion", Yoon's office said. The Security Council imposed sanctions after North Korea's first nuclear test explosion in 2006 and tightened them over the years in a total of 10 resolutions seeking — so far unsuccessfully — to cut funds and curb its nuclear and missile programmes. The last sanctions resolution was adopted by the council in December 2017.

The Security Council established a committee to monitor sanctions, and the mandate for its panel of experts to investigate violations had been renewed for 14 years until last

month. Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told the Security Council before last month's vote that Western nations are trying to "strangle" North Korea and that sanctions are losing their "relevance" in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the North. In its most recent report circulated last month the panel of experts said it is investigating 58 suspected North Korean cyberattacks between 2017 and 2023 valued at approximately USD 3 billion, with the money reportedly being used to help fund its weapons development.

## Russian strategic bomber

Ukraine's air force claimed Friday it shot down a Russian strategic bomber, but Moscow officials said the plane crashed in a sparsely populated area due to a malfunction after a combat mission. Neither claim could be independently verified. Previous Ukrainian claims of shooting down Russian war-planes during their more than two-year war have met with silence or denials from Moscow.

Meanwhile, Russian missiles struck cities in the central Dnipro region of Ukraine, killing eight people, including a 14-year-old girl and 8-year-old boy, and injuring 28, local officials said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy repeated Kyiv offi-cials' almost daily appeals for more Western air defense systems, again drawing a parallel with how Israel blunted a recent Iranian attack.

Missile and drone attacks can be thwarted, he wrote on social platform X: "This has been demonstrated in the skies over the Middle East, and it should

also work in Europe." Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba added: "Children must not be killed in airstrikes in modern Europe.'

Russia's air force is vastly more powerful than Ukraine's, but sophisticated missile systems provided by Kyiv's Western partners are a major threat to Russian aviation as the Kremlin's forces slowly push forward along the around 1,000-kilometre front line in what has become a grinding war of attrition. Ukrainian officials say they expect a major Russian offensive in the summer. Ukraine said the air force and military intelligence cooperated to bring down the Tu-22M3 bomber

**EU** official von der Leyen visits Finland-Russia border to assess security situation

after visiting the border in

Lappeenranta with Finnish

Prime Minister Petteri Orpo.

"We should be more Finnish

Von der Leyen and Orpo flew in a Finnish helicopter over the

landscape of forests and towns

on the border. In a statement

issued after the visit, Orpo said that "the spring's warmer weather increases the risk of

Russia helping people illegally try to get to Finland via the land border ... outside the border

crossing points." Most of the migrants hail from

the Middle East and Africa. The

vast majority of them have

sought asylum in Finland, a member of the EU and NATO

with a population of 5.6 million. Finland joined NATO in April

2023, ending decades of neu-

trality after the country's defeat

by the Soviet Union in World

War II. In March, Sweden also

became a member of the trans-Atlantic alliance. The move

dealt a major blow to Putin, with a historic realignment of Europe's post-Cold War secu-

rity landscape triggered by Moscow's full-scale invasion

when it comes to security."

**AP** ■ COPENHAGEN

The head of the European Union's executive branch said on Friday that Finland's decision to close its border crossings with Russia over a surge in migrants was a security matter for the whole 27member bloc to consider.

Commission European President Ursula von der Leyen made the remarks during a trip to the frontier, visiting a part of the border located in the Arctic. "We all know how (Russian President Vladimir) Putin and his allies instrumentalize migrants to test our defenses and to try to destabilize us," von der Leyen said. "Now Putin is focusing on Finland, and this is no doubt in response to your firm support of Ukraine and your accession to NATO."
On April 4, Finland decided to

extend the closure of its border crossing points with Russia "until further notice" because of what the government says is a high risk of organized migration being orchestrated by Moscow. Finland's government has closed eight of its nine checkpoints with Russia. The only one that remains open is dedicated to rail travel only, and cargo trains mainly run

through it. Finland shares a 1,340-kilometer (832-mile) land border with Russia, running mostly through thick forests in the south, and to the rugged landscape in the Arctic north. "This is not just about the security of Finland, but it is about the security of the European Union. We are in this together," von der Leven said

with anti-aircraft missiles. Russia commonly uses the bomber to fire Kh-22 cruise missiles at Ukrainian targets from inside its own airspace. The plane can also carry nuclear warheads. The Russian defense ministry

said the warplane crashed "in a deserted area" in the southern region of Stavropol, hundreds of kilometers (miles)

from the Ukrainian border. Three crew members were rescued after ejecting from the aircraft, and the search for a fourth is taking place, according to the ministry. But Stavropol Gov. Vladimir Vladimirov said one of the rescued pilots died.

On Christmas Eve, Ukraine claimed to have shot down two Russian fighter jets. In January the Ukrainian air force said it shot down a Russian early warning and control plane and a key command center aircraft that relays information to troops on the ground, in what appeared to be a signif-icant blow for the Kremlin's forces. The next month forces. The next month, Ukraine said it knocked out another early warning and

control plane.

Also in January, Moscow accused Kyiv of shooting down a Russian military transport plane that was carrying Ukrainian POWs who were headed for a prisoner swap. Russian forces overnight conducted a combined aerial attack with the use of 22 missiles of various types and 14 Shahed drones during the night, the Ukrainian air force said. All the drones and 15 of the missiles were intercepted, it said. The attack hit urban areas as well as train infrastructure in the Dnipro region, Ukraine's National Railway Operator said. Among those killed in the strikes was employee Oksana

Storozhenko, the mother of two

teenage sons, it said.

## More people evacuated after dramatic eruption of Indonesian volcano

More people living near an erupting volcano on Indonesia's Sulawesi Island were evacuated on Friday due to the dangers of spreading ash, falling rocks, hot volcanic clouds and the possibility of a tsunami. An international airport in Manado city, which is located less than 100 kilometers 52 miles) from the erupting Mount Ruang, is still temporarily closed as volcanic ash was spewed into the air.

Satellite imagery from the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency showed that the ash has spread to the west, northwest, northeast and southeast, covering Manado and North Minahasa, according to a statement from Indonesia's Transportation Ministry.

"We are still monitoring developments in the eruption of Mount Ruang and coordinating with relevant stakeholders ... to anticipate the necessary actions to ensure flight safety, security and comfort," said Ambar Śuryoko, head of the regional airport authority More than 11,000 people were

told to leave their homes and at least 1,000 have done so. A joint

team from the local authorities is still combing the villages surrounding the volcano and evacuating the residents to safer

areas by boat. Officials worry that part of the volcano could collapse into the sea and cause a tsunami, as happened in an eruption there in 1871 eruption. Houses, roads and other buildings in the affected areas were covered by roofs were also broken by the materials spewed from the eruption. Mount Ruang saw at least five large eruptions Wednesday, causing the Centre for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation to issue its highest level of alert. People were ordered to stay at least 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) from the 725-metre (2,378-foot) mountain. The observation from the agency on Friday said that white smoke is rising from the main crater with medium to thick intensity. Tagulandang Island, east of the volcano, could be at risk if a collapse occurred. Its residents were among those being told to evacuate. Indonesia's National Disaster Mitigation Agency said residents will be relocated to Manado, a journey

## IMF MD says China has to define growth strategies for the future

Observing that China has the benefit of a particular set of policies over the last decades for its export-oriented growth, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has said that the time has come for Beijing to look at domestic sources for growth, opening up more opportunities for the market.

per cent in the first quarter, making a stronger-thanexpected start to the year even as the downturn of its property market continued while the domestic demand remained subdued. The GDP grew 5.3 per cent year on year to 29.63 trillion yuan (about USD 4.17 trillion) in the first three months of 2024, data from the National Bureau of Statistics

showed on Tuesday. 'China is the fork in the road. Why? Because China has to define growth strategies for the future. China has the benefit of a particular set of policies over the last decades, export-oriented growth, but the time has come to look at domestic sources for growth, opening up more opportunities for the market to lift up these prospects," Georgieva said.

The IMF sees three important opportunities for China, she said. Number one, to shift the economy more towards domestic consumption. It is actually in line with what China is aspiring to, the dual circulation economy. It would take giving consumers more confidence and offering them more services, and more things to buy. "We know that the healthcare services in China can expand quite significantly that getting the social safety nets to work more effectively would give people an opportu-

nity to save a bit less, to spend

a bit more," she said. "Secondly, we see the reforms in China that have served the country well continuing to be needed, reforms of state-owned enterprises opening up for a more competitive environment. In the years ahead, that can help Ćhina grow more," Georgieva said. Last but not least, there are some problems right now, and how they are solved will have implications for China's growth, she observed. "The most obvious example is the property sector. People in China rely on their homeownership as a way of saving. When prices there—as savings go down, when prices of real estate go down, that So clearing up the problems in the sector more resolutely would certainly help China, she said.

"We see China making some important decisions around greening their growth pattern. Again, the more China does for lifting up domestic consumption, the better," the IMF Managing Director said. At a separate news conference,

Asia and Pacific Department, told reporters that on the macroeconomic aspects. China's economy is experiencing weak domestic demand.

This emanates from two factors: the continued weakness in the real estate sector and the legacies of the pandemic. So in that context, the IMF has

advocated for two things. One is policies that would help address the problem in the property sector and other than that, trying to boost consumption demand by improving social safety nets in the case of China and again, improving the pension system in a fiscally prudent way and investing in people, education, and health. 'So that's as far as once on the domestic demand side if you pursue these policies, you will see domestic demand rising

affects consumer confidence. and deflation risks coming So clearing up the problems in down," he said.

China provides wide-ranging support to priority sectors. This includes preferential access to credit research funds and incentives for certain firms, particularly in the areas of strategic manufacturing and science and technology. "In terms of what China can do, on the first issue of misallocation of resources, we have talked tant to address SOE reform quite urgently, scaling back of industrial policies, which provide implicit or explicit guarantees for SOEs. So in other words, try to make it have to ensure competitive neutrality between SOEs and the private sector so that there's no misallocation of resources doesn't happen," Srinivasan said.

That's one thing. And again, we also said that SOE reforms, some SOEs are clearly unprofitable. And the more support you provide, you keep them in business for longer than they should be. So that's something which we've called for in terms of SOE reforms. And so those are the policies which we're advocating for China both to address, to address the issue of what you talked about as overproduction," he added.

## Teenager charged with terror in stabbings of bishop and priest at Sydney church

Christian clerics during a Sydney church service has been charged by police with terrorism offenses.

nected religious motivation and that the boy travelled up to 90 minutes from his home to the Christ the Good Shepherd Church in Sydney's western suburbs.

The teen spoke in Arabic about the Prophet Prophet Muhammad being insulted after he stabbed Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel and the Rev. Isaac Royel during Monday night's Assyrian Orthodox service. He was later overpowered by parishioners, sustaining severe hand injuries. 'Yesterday investigators attended a medical facility to interview the alleged offender where he was charged with committing a terrorist act," Federal said Police Commissioner Reece Kershaw at a press conference

The offense carries a maximum penalty of imprisonment for life. The matter was heard at a Sydney children's court on Friday. The juvenile, who is not being named, did not appear via video link from his hospital bed and did not apply for bail at the brief hearing.

on Friday in Sydney.

The teen has a history of knife-related offenses and had seen three psychologists and a school counsellor, and had an appointment to see a psychiatrist, his lawyer said during Friday's court hearing. The boy's family had previously said the 16-year-old might have "anger management and behavioral issues"

Svdnev (AP): A 16-year-old shown no signs of being radiboy accused of stabbing two calised. The 16-year-old's lawyer, Greg Scragg, said the boy had a "long history of behaviour" consistent with a mental illness or intellectual disability.

Authorities said the stabbing The magistrate made a recomwas declared a terrorist act mendation for the boy to have a because of the teenager's sus- mental health assessment while custody at a children's detention centre once released from the hospital, until his next court hearing on June 14.

A crowd of up to 600 people converged on the church after the attack, some demanding that police hand over the boy. Hours of rioting led to 51 police officers being injured.

Sydney mosques also received firebomb threats.

The bishop released an audio statement on Thursday saying that he was "doing fine, recovering very quickly" and that he forgave his attacker. He also used his statement to call for calm after the attack, which was Australia's second high-profile knife attack in a week, after a man stabbed six people to death at a busy Sydney shopping centre on Saturday before he was fatally shot. Regarding the church attack, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said, "Clearly this was a terrorism event", and it had been disappointing to see the riots that followed.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY

MARINE DEPARTMENT
No.-MD/ACCTS/WK/R-18/2023-415 Date: 16.04.2024
e-Tender Call Notice (e-TCN) No.
MD/ACCTS/WK/R-18/2023/161 dtd.07/02/2024

Name of the Work: Hiring of 01 No.60 ton Bollard

pull Tug along with manning crew for Marine Operation at SPMs and inside Harbour at Paradip for a period of 07 (seven) years. Estimated cost put to tender: Rs.86,35,39,812/-

With reference to above e-tender, revised tender

document has been published in the e-procurement website with extension. Last date & time of submission of bids through on-line

bidding is 17:00 Hours on dt. 07/05/2024. Technical Bids shall be opened at 16:00 hours on dt.08/05/2024. For details, please log on to the

Website: https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app

## US ambassador to UN visits Nagasaki A-bomb museum

of six hours by boat.

**AP** ■ TOKYO

The American envoy to the United Nations called Friday for countries armed with atomic weapons to pursue nuclear disarmament as she visited the atomic bomb museum in Nagasaki, Japan.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who became the first US cabinet member to visit Nagasaki, stressed the importance of dialogue and diplomacy amid a growing nuclear threat in the region. "We must continue to work together to create an environment for nuclear disarmament. We must continue to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons in every corner of the world," she said after a tour of the

atomic bomb museum. "For those of us who already have those weapons, we must pursue arms control. We can and must work to ensure that Nagasaki is the last place to ever experience the horror of nuclear



Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, right, shake hands during a meeting on Friday

weapons," she added, standing in front of colourful hanging origami cranes, a symbol of peace. The United States dropped the world's first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, destroying the city and killing 140,000 people. A second attack three days later on Nagasaki killed 70,000 more people. Japan surrendered on August 15, ending World War II and its near-

ly half-century of aggression in Asia. Nagasaki Gov. Kengo Oishi said in a statement that he believed Thomas-Greenfield's visit and her first-person experience at the museum "will be a strong message in promoting momentum of nuclear disarmament for the international society at a time the world faces a severe environment surrounding atomic weapons?

## Five Japanese escape unhurt in Karachi suicide bombing security guards killed one terrorist while another blew him-

self up in an attempt to get close

"All five Japanese nationals are safe," DIG Shaikh said. "No one

to the van, the official said.

PTI ■ KARACHI/PESHAWAR

Pive Japanese nationals had a lucky escape when their vehicle was targeted by militants in a suicide attack here in Pakistan's Sindh province on Friday, police said. Deputy Inspector General

(DIG) East Azfar Mahesar said the terrorists on a motorbike attempted to hit the van of the Japanese nationals near Murtaza Chorangi in Landhi. "All five Japanese remained safe.

However, the private security guard with them was injured," he said. "The Japanese nationals were on the way to the Export Processing Zone from their residence in Zamzama, Clifton," he said. Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) DIG Asif Aijaz Shaikh

told Dawn News that the

Japanese nationals were travel-

ling in a van along with two

security guards when two ter-

rorists tried to hit the van. The

has claimed responsibility so far," the DIG said, adding that the vehicle carrying the Japanese nationals was bullet-proof. Meanwhile, with the death of two more persons, the toll in Thursday's ambush on a gov-

ernment vehicle in Pakistan's restive Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province rose to seven, police said on Friday. The deceased include five officials and two passer-byes, including a fouryear-old girl and a man.

The officials from Customs Intelligence were on routine duty on Quetta Road in Dera Ismail Khan district in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province when unknown gunmen opened fire at their vehicle, police said. On Thursday, police said five people, including a girl

child, were killed in the attack. The killers fled from the scene before police from Draban Police Station rushed to the area. Chief Minister of the province Ali Amin Gandapur strongly condemned the attack and directed the police to arrest the attackers. On Wednesday, Pakistani secu-

rity forces killed seven terrorists trying to infiltrate the country's border with Afghanistan in the same province. There has been an uptick in ter-

ror incidents across Pakistan, especially in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province over the last two years since the Taliban-led dispensation took over the control of Afghanistan. Pakistan has consistently asked the Taliban-led interim Afghan government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border and deny the use of Afghan soil by terrorists for perpetrating acts of terror ism against Pakistan.

#### Sd/- Deputy Conservator, Paradip Port Authority PPA/PR-01/2024-2025 dtd.18.04.2024 and a "short fuse", but had RITES LIMITED (A Govt. Of India Enterprise) Shikhar, Plot No.1, Sector-29, Gurgaon – 122001

Written test for the posts of Assistant Manager (Mechanical/Metallurgy), Assistant Manager (Electrical/Electronics), Assistant Manager (Civil) and Assistant Manager (IT/CS) advertised vide VC No 132/24-135/24 will be

conducted on 05-05-2024. Last date for submission of

application has been extended to 29-04-2024.

Engagement of manpower on contract:

Written test will be conducted at Guwahati, Kolkata, Mumbai Chennai, Bangalore, Gurugram, Hyderabad on 05-05-2024.

## India standout performer amidst sluggish global growth: IEA Secretary

espite a challenging global scenario, India's economy has shown robust growth over the past year backed by sustained consumption and investment demand, a top Indian official told members of a World Bank committee here.

The GDP growth estimate for the fiscal, which has been revised upwards from 7.3 per cent to 7.6 per cent in the second advance estimates, highlights the enduring strength and resilience of the Indian economy, India's Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said while addressing the Development Committee meeting here on Thursday.

"India grew above 8 per cent for three consecutive quarters of FY24, reaffirming its position as a standout performer amidst sluggish global growth trends," Seth

He said that similar sentiments have been echoed by various agencies who have revised India's fiscal 24 growth

India's proactive stance on reform and investment in sustainable growth avenues sets a benchmark for emerging

The Indian delegation at the annual Spring Meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank is being represented at the official level this time. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is not attending the annual gathering of global financial leaders due to the ongoing Lok Sabha elections

Seth told the Development Committee that India's thrust on capex continued to crowd in private investment resulting in enhanced Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) at constant prices registering a growth above 10 per cent in FY24.

inflation outlook India's appears positive with headline and core inflation trending downwards, indicating a broad-based moderation in price pressures, he said. Seth said that on the external



merchandise trade deficit and the rising net services receipts are expected to improve the current account balance in fiscal 2024.

To catalyse and democratise the Artificial Intelligence (AI) innovation ecosystem in the country, the Centre has approved the "India AI Mission" with a budget outlay of INR 103 billion for building computing infrastructure, developing indigenous AI capabilities, streamlining access to datasets, attracting AI talent, and financing AI starttechnology is expected to propel India to stay on the of technological innovation, consolidate and solidify its position in the

a robust AI ecosystem through

strategic programmes and

partnerships across the public

and private sectors. The focus

infrastructure

global supply chain," he said. Öbserving manufacturing sector registered double-digit growth in Q3 of 24 fiscal years, driven by a surge in investment, improved investor confidence, ups. and strong domestic demand "The Mission aims to establish conditions, Seth said the year growth in services, led by noncontact-intensive

Emphasising that India has the highest digital transactions globally with a share of 46 per cent of global real-time transactions in 2022, Seth noted that the monthly transactions for March 2024 stood at 13.44 billion to talong an amount of INR 19.78 The volume of UPI online

transactions witnessed a 54 per cent YoY growth in Q3 FY24, which can be attributed to convenience, increased financial flexibility, and avenues in ease of spending for consumers, he

"Today this increased mobile connectivity and its linkage with the bank accounts has become an integral part of India's inclusive economic growth story with consumers, small traders, vendors, and vulnerable populations from the lowest rung of the society, being the key beneficiaries," he

## Stock markets stage strong rebound

**PTI** ■ MUMBAI

 $S_{\rm close}$  markets rebounded from early lows to  $S_{\rm close}$  higher on Friday, snapping the four-day losing streak on heavy value buying in banking and auto shares

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 599.34 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 73,088.33. The index opened lower and tanked further 672.53 points or 0.92 per cent to hit a low of 71,816.46 in early trade. However, the index rebounded in the second half on value-buying in banking shares. The NSE Nifty jumped 151.15 points or 0.69 per cent to close at 22,147. The broader index dropped to a low of 21,777.65 in early trade before paring its losses to end in the green.

From the Sensex basket, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, HDFC Bank, JSW Steel, Maruti, Wipro, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank and ITC were the major gainers. Nestle India, HCL Technologies, Larsen &

Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Motors and Infosys were among the laggards. Infosys declined nearly 1 per cent after the company's revenue growth guidance for FY25

failed to meet market expectations. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Hong Kong settled in the negative territory. European markets were trading in the red. Wall Street ended mostly lower on Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.55 per cent to USD 87.62 a barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,260.33 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

"Despite global weakness, Indian markets staged a strong recovery driven by large-cap stocks, buoyed by the expectation of limited prospects



of escalation following Israel's action against Iran. However, fragility persists with elevated oil prices, posing inflation risks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. "Nifty reversed a four-day losing streak to end higher," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities. In the broader market, the

smallcap index dipped 0.04 per cent. Among the indices, bankex jumped 1.02 per cent and metal climbed 0.85 per cent. Financial services (0.83 per cent), consumer durables (0.78 per cent) and commodities (0.54 per cent) also gained. IT, telecommunication, utilities, realty and teck were among the laggards.
On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark

BSE midcap gauge declined 0.39 per cent and

declined 1,156.57 points or 1.55 per cent and the Nifty dipped 372.4 points or 1.65 per cent. Meanwhile, the 2024 Lok Sabha polls kicked off on Friday with the beginning of polling for the first phase. The BSE benchmark tanked 454.69 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 72,488.99 on Thursday. The NSE Nifty declined 152.05 points or 0.69 per cent to 21,995.85.



## Nestle shares continue to decline; mcap erodes by ₹10,610.55 crore in two days

PTI NEW DELHI

Shares of Nestle India to decline on Friday, ending the day over 1 per cent lower, amid reports that the global FMCG major sold infant milk products with more sugar content in less developed countries

The stock declined 3.53 per cent to Rs 2,375.75 during the day on the BSE. It later ended at Rs 2,437.10 a share, down 1.04 per cent.

On the NSE, shares of the company dipped 2.13 per cent to Rs 2,410 during the day. The stock ended at Rs 2,430 apiece,

On Thursday, shares of Nestle India had declined over 3 per

In two days, the company's market capitalisation (mcap) got eroded by Rs 10,610.55 crore to Rs 2,34,974.74 crore. Nestle India on Thursday said it has reduced added sugar on baby food products in India by up to 30 per cent, depending on variants, over the past five

years, amid reports that the

global FMCG major sold

products with more sugar

content in less developed

According to findings by Swiss NGO, Public Eye and International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), Nestle sold baby products with higher sugar content in less developed South Asian countries, including India, Africa and Latin American nations as compared to markets in Europe

When reached out for comments, a company spokesperson said, "Reduction of added sugars is a priority for Nestle India. Over the past 5 years, we have already reduced added sugars by up to 30 per variant."

The spokesperson further said, "We regularly review our portfolio and continue to innovate and reformulate our products to further reduce the level of added sugars, without compromising on nutrition, quality, safety, and taste.'

Nestle India asserted that its "infant cereal products are manufactured to ensure the appropriate delivery of nutritional requirements such as protein, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, iron etc. For early childhood".

## Strong growth momentum provides RBI policy space to focus on price stability: Das

The strong growth momentum and the GDP projections for 2024-25 give the RBI a policy space to unwaveringly focus on price stability, Governor Shaktikanta Das stressed while voting for a status quo in the interest rate earlier this month.

The Reserve Bank had maintained status-quo on the benchmark lending rate (repo) at 6.5 per cent since February on concerns over 2023 on concerns creatinflation after the three-day meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) earlier this month.

**MUTUAL FUND** 

HDFC AMC Q4

profit soars 44 pc

HDFC Asset Management Company (AMC) on Friday reported a 44 per cent jump in profit after tax at Rs

541.1 crore in three months

In comparison, the company posted a profit after tax (PAT)

of Rs 376.1 crore in the year-

ago period, the fund house said

in a regulatory filing to the

The firm's total income surged

by 33 per cent Year-on-Year

(YoY) to Rs 851 crore in the

quarter under review from Rs

637.8 crore in the January-March quarter of the financial year 2022-23 (FY23).

Additionally, the company's

expenses grew 18 per cent YoY

to Rs 172 crore in the fourth

March 2024 as against Rs 4.5 lakh crore a year earlier.

For the full financial year 2023-

24 (FY24), the fund house's

PAT surged by 37 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1,946 crore

and total income rose 27 per cent YoY to Rs 3,162.5 crore.

HDFC AMC is an investment

manager for HDFC Mutual

Fund, one of the leading

mutual funds in the country. Shares of HDFC AMC settled

1.73 per cent lower at Rs 3,707.15 apiece on the BSE.

quarter ended March 2024. The company's average asset under management (AAUM) stood at Rs 6.13 lakh crore as of

to ₹541 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ended March 2024.

stock exchanges



The central bank on Friday released the minutes of the meeting.

The gains in disinflation achieved over last two years have to be preserved and taken forward towards aligning the headline inflation to the 4 per cent target on a durable basis," he said, according to the

Five of the six MPC members had voted for the status quo in the policy rate.

MPC member Jayanth R however, had advocated a reduction in the repo rate by 25 basis points as "high interest rates entail a growth sacrifice".



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold and silver prices soared to fresh record high levels on Friday with the precious metal breaching Rs 74,000 per 10 grams mark here on bullish global trends.

According to HDFC Securities, gold price jumped Rs 400 to hit its lifetime high of Rs 74,100 per 10 grams in Delhi. It had closed at Rs 73,700 per 10 grams on Thursday.

Similarly, silver prices rose by Rs 100 to hit a new peak of Rs 86,600 per kg.

the Delhi markets are trading at a record high of Rs 74,100 per 10 grams, up by Rs 400 amid a positive trend in the overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,390 per ounce, up by USD 15 from the

previous close. Gold in the global market surged near a record high in the Asian trading hours on Friday, following reports that Israel had struck targets on Iranian soil, days after Iran had launched an attack on Israel in retaliation for a raid on its

possibility of a larger regional conflict that would support higher gold prices. Additionally, silver was quoted

This has increased the

consulate in Syria.

higher at USD 28.29 per ounce. In the previous close, it had finished at USD 28.25 per

According to market analysts,

a string of reports, including US inflation data which has remained hotter than forecast this year, have pushed the top US Federal Reserve officials to say recently they could hold That's a letdown after the Fed earlier had signalled three cuts to interest rates could be possible this year. But Fed officials have been adamant they want to be sure inflation is heading down toward their 2 per cent target before lowering the Fed's main interest rate from its highest level since

"Gold prices are expected to react to news developments related to both geopolitical tensions and updates on interest rates from the Federal Reserve," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

#### BUSINESS BRIEF



#### **VITEEE-2024 KICKS OFF AT VIT AP UNIVERSITY CAMPUS**

The Vellore Institute of Technology Engineering Entrance Examination (VITEEE)-2024 has officially begun today at the VIT-AP campus in Amaravati. The computer-based entrance exam, conducted annually, aims to facilitate admissions to B.Tech programs offered at VIT's campuses in Vellore, Chennai, Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh), and Bhopal Sharing his insights on VITEEE 2024 Dr. S.V. Kota Reddy -Vice-Chancellor highlighted that the entrance examination will continue at various exam centres until April 30, 2024. Candidates hailing from 125 cities across the nation and 6 cities abroad will participate in the online entrance examination. The results are tentatively set to be available on May 3, 2024, on www.vit.ac.in. Dr. Jagadish Chandra, Registrar, said that the examination is conducted in three sessions daily, from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m., and 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

#### **INDUSTRY, ACADEMIA MEET AND EXHIBITION TODAY**

The Department of Architecture, Zakir Husain College of Engineering and Technology (ZHCET), Aligarh Muslim University is organising an Industry-Academia Meet and Exhibition on April 20, 2024, to bring together the professionals, academicians and students for interaction and exchange of ideas. AMU Vice Chancellor is the chief patron and Prof Mirza Salim Beg, Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Technology and Prof MM Sufyan Beg, Principal, ZHCET are the co-patrons. The talks will be focused on the present scenario in building design and construction practices and the eminent speakers are Prof Manoj Mathur, SPA, New Delhi; Prof Rajat Ray, Ex-Dean, Guru Govind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi; Dr. Arun Kapur, Amity School of Architecture, Lucknow and also Honorary Architect, Gunjan and Associates, Lucknow; Architect Gaurav Gupta, De:Cape Studio, Lucknow; Architect Manish Kr Sahai, Sahai Architects, Aligarh; Architect Hemlata Singh, White Fox Designs LLP, New Delhi and Architect Udit Gaurav, Green Building Consultant, Greater Noida

### Hyundai Motor India rolls out Grameen Mahotsav aspirations but also identify that with good monsoon,

AIndia has expanded its 'Grameen Mahotsav' initiative to 16 new locations across the country, after the success of its inaugural event held in Gujarat this month. The 'Grameen Mahotsav' initiative aims to further strengthen HMIL's connection to rural India with specially curated events and product displays including live music, folk dance, and regional talent shows among others.

It also serves as a platform for Hyundai to delve into the vast potential of rural markets. By closely engaging with communities and discerning market trends, HMIL aims to not only cater to evolving

and welcome new customers, increasing income levels and statement on Friday. The inaugural 'Grameen

Mahotsay' event was held successfully in Mahemdavad, Gujarat. Now, Hyundai Motor India looks forward to extending its reach and impact across rural landscapes.

"Our sustained efforts towards bolstering rural connect are bearing great fruits and Hyundai Motor India has witnessed a remarkable growth in rural markets in the financial year 2023-24. We sold 1.15 lakh vehicles in rural India last year, a growth of 11 per cent over 2022-23," Hyundai Motor India Ltd. COO Tarun Garg said. "We are confident

from contribution rural markets will further increase,' he said. Hyundai Motor said nearly 40 per cent of sales and service networks were in rural areas. HMIL is committed to fostering strong bonds with rural communities.

With initiatives like Grameen Mahotsay, we hope to nurture our customers in every part of the country and also understand the market trends to fulfill their expectations. As we continue to innovate and engage with rural consumers, we are confident in our ability to contribute to the inclusive development of the country," Garg added.

## Infosys shares decline nearly per cent after Q4 earnings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $S_1$  hares of Infosys on Friday ended nearly  $S_1$  per cent lower after the company's revenue growth guidance for FY25 failed

to meet market expectations.

The stock fell 2.87 per cent to Rs 1,379.70 during the day on the BSE. It finally ended at Rs 1,411.60 apiece, lower by 0.63 per On the NSE, it declined 2.85 per cent to Rs

1,378.75 in intra-day trade. Shares of the company ended at Rs 1,411.95 each, down 0.51 per cent.

The company's market capitalisation (mcap) declined by Rs 3,655.37 crore to Rs



5,85,936,45 crore. In volume terms, 8.65 lakh shares of the

company were traded on the BSE and over 206.04 lakh shares on the NSE during the IT company Infosys on Thursday said its

consolidated profit jumped 30 per cent to Rs 7,969 crore in the March 2024 quarter. The company posted a profit of Rs 6,128 crore in the year-ago period, according to a regulatory filing.

The consolidated revenue of Infosys

during the quarter increased 1.3 per cent to Rs 37,923 crore from Rs 37,441 crore in the same quarter a year ago. The company expects a revenue growth of

1-3 per cent in constant currency for FY25 and an operating margin of 20-22 per cent. The growth projection is lower compared to the outlook of between 4 per cent and 7 er cent for FY24.

Infosys guided for 1-3 per cent constant currency revenue growth for FY25, missing expectations," as per a report by JM Financial Institutional Securities.

#### for cancellation. An Air India spokesperson said the airline has cancelled the flights to and from Dubai

## due to continued operational

operations resume," the spokesperson said in a

Dubai airport operations have been hit by unprecedented rains and floods.

#### CAG signs pact with SAI Bulgaria to enhance international collaboration Girish Chandra Murmu, the he said

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has signed an agreement with SAI Bulgaria, the Bulgarian National Audit Office, in Sofia, in a bid to foster international cooperation. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), inked by the two Supreme audit insti-

tutions, aims to enhance collab-

oration and the exchange of expertise in the field of auditing between the two nations, the CAG said in a statement. Through the MoU, a platform will be established for the exchange of knowledge and experience amongst auditing professionals and technical teams through collaboration in training programs, and mutual assistance in conducting audits, it said.

CAG of India, expressed confidence in the partnership and said the MoU will further strengthen bilateral coopera-'We look forward to working

closely with you and assure you of our support and commitment to energize our capacity development initiatives and exchange of knowledge and information between our SAIs,"

The MoU signing ceremony

was attended by Goritsa Grancharova - Kozhareva, Acting President of the Bulgarian National Audit Murmu further highlighted

the broader implications of the MoU, stating it will also help cementing the ties that already exist between the two



### Air India cancels Dubai flights

Ahas cancelled flights to and

from Dubai due to continued

operational disruptions at the

Passengers of Air India who have booked the flights for travel till April 21 will be

offered a one-time waiver on rescheduling and full refunds

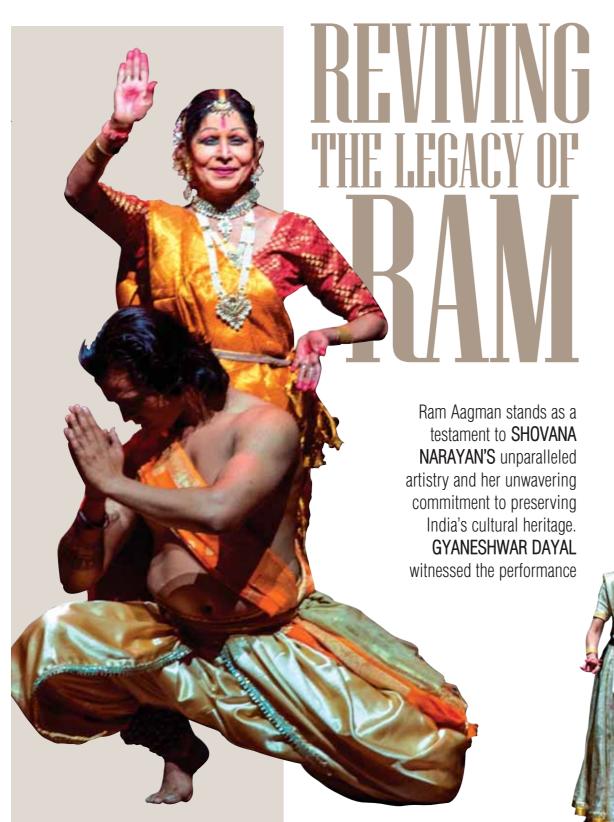
airport in the Gulf city.

PTI NEW DELHI ir India on Friday said it

disruptions at the Dubai airport.
"We are doing our best to get affected customers on their way by re-accommodating them on flights as soon as

statement.

## BHOPAL | SATURDAY | APRIL 20, 2024 ne pioneer



classical enowned dancer Shovana Narayan, Padmashree awardee celebrated her mesmerising performances, once captivated audiences with her scintillating dance production "Ram Aagman." Held on the auspicious occasion of Chaitra Navratri, this spectacle, presented at the Kamani Auditorium in New Delhi, was a testament to Narayan's dedication to preserving and promoting Indian classical dance forms

'Ram Aagman,' choreographed and directed by Narayan herself along with Lalita Narayan, delved into the timeless tale of Lord Ram, from his birth to Sita's disappearance into the earth. With a team of 19 skilled dancers from her repertory ASAVARI, Narayan masterfully brought to life lesser-known incidents from Ram's life, offering a fresh perspective on the epic narrative. The event was graced by esteemed personalities such as Sangita Saxena, Meenakshi Lekhi, Dr Sachchidanand Joshi, and Dr Sandhya Purecha, among others. Their presence underscored the significance of Narayan's contribution to the cultural landscape of India.

'Ram Aagman' was not just a dance performance; it was a rich tapestry of cultural exploration. Through insightful talks by Lady Kishwar Desai and Dr. Alka Pande, the production seamlessly integrated cultural geography and visual arts, shedding light on the influence of Sri Ram's journey in Punjab and the

> in hand-held paintings depicting his darshan. Narayan's choreography skillfully portrayed the myriad emotions stirred bv Lord Ram's arrival, from the joyous anticipation of his devotees to the impact on his family and subjects. Her commitment to social messaging was evident as she unearthed new dimensions of the Ram Katha, resonating with audiences on both intellectual emotional levels.

profound symbolism present

One of the distinctive elements of "Ram Aagman" was homage to Goddess





Durga, emphasizing the celebration of divine femininity and her pivotal role in the universe. Narayan's reverence for tradition, coupled with her innovative approach, breathed new life into this timeless tale, making it relevant for contemporary audiences.

The success of 'Ram Aagman' owes much to the collective efforts of the talented team behind the scenes. From the soul-stirring music composed by Pt. Jwala Prasad, Pt. Madho Prasad, and Dinesh Parihar to the meticulous lighting by Milind Srivastava, every aspect contributed to the immersive experience.

Narayan's dedication to her art form is evident in every aspect of "Ram

Aagman." Through her evocative choreography and profound storytelling, she continues to inspire audiences and keep the rich heritage of Indian classical dance alive. As she eloquently puts it, "The absence or the presence of 'Ramatva' became evident through various emotions portrayed, offering food for thought to the audiences."

'Ram Aagman' stands as a testament to Shovana Narayan's unparalleled artistry and her unwavering commitment to preserving India's cultural heritage. With each graceful movement, she not only honours the legacy of Lord Ram but also enriches the cultural tapestry of our

## Tradition, Transformation, Empowerment

Poonam Dhillon returns in Ek Kori Prem Katha alongside newcomer Khanak Budhiraja, a film that tackles the sensitive subject of the Kori tradition. In this conversation with SAKSHI PRIYA the film's cast dwells on the gravity of sensitive social issues and the challenge of questioning outdated traditions.

your character undertakes in the film?

n Ek Kori Prem Katha, my character embodies the acceptance of the Kori tradition, deeply rooted in her family, village, and society, which she embraces without a question. The story progresses with a newlywed girl who enters a family, deeply in love with the son. Initially happy with the union, tensions arise in the family when the daughter-in-law refuses to participate in the Kori tradition, leading to shock and hostility where my character begins to gauge the unjust nature of the tradition and the need to refuse the perpetuation of such practices. This marks a transformation in my character, as she starts to support her daughter-in-law in opposing the Kori tradition. Together, they stand up against this outdated tradition in their powerful journey of change and empowerment. The film narrates my character's journey as she challenges outdated traditions for the greater good of evolving our cultural norms.

How did you prepare to play a character with a different perspective than your own?

Well, every time I play a character, it is different, and 99 per cent of the time she is not the real me. So, I always start with the physical attributes of the character, how she dresses, talks and walks, and slip into the role from the

director's, and the writer's, point of view.

How did you feel working with Raj Babbar in this film? Working with Raj Babbar after so many years felt really good. Today, I feel our communication is much better. As an actor and a person, he is great, and at this stage in life it feels good to talk to him. I must admit, I didn't even have his phone but now we are far more comfortable and enjoy working together. Were there any humorous moments during the shoot?

Our shooting location was actually quite funny, or perhaps the set itself was, I'm not entirely sure, but I think we had our funny and sad moments. We were told that we would be shooting in a *haveli*, (a large bungalow) but when we reached the location we were surprised because in villages, they refer to old houses as haveli. In our minds the visual of a haveli is more like a grand palace, like in Rajasthan. In reality what we faced was actually humorous. How did you handle the

of outdoor challenges shoots?

Outdoor shoots come with their own set challenges and difficulties. If we think everything should be according to our expectations and perfect that is impossible. expectations

Poonam Dhillon, can you elaborate on the journey make you unhappy which disturbs the whole unit. So, one adapts and adjusts.

> Khanak Budhiraja, what drew you to the role of Sabhayata, the challenges you faced in bringing her story to life, given the gravity of the film's subject?

I am an introvert and feminine by nature and I am not a sportsperson. So playing Sabhayata was a very challenging task. Like Poonam said, 99 per cent of the time you do not find a role which you relate to, thereby the challenges. Apart from learning how to ride a bus and drive a bike, my character had to be bold on-screen. In our society we still fight shy of issues like virginity. I am happy that at the outset of my career, I could play such a

Khanak, as a newcomer, what did you learn while filming?

I think filming everyday on the sets is in itself a learning process. We prepare ourselves for something which is poles apart from the scenes we actually shoot. As my first film, I was nervous, wondering about the surprise element in every scene. It took time, but I got used to it.

Khanak, your character fights against a regressive tradition. How did you prepare for the role of Sabhayata? I researched, and met two victims in Rajasthan,

although they were initially not forthcoming about their experiences. I did manage a conversation with one of them. It is unfortunate to see that girls continue to bear such atrocities in a society which speaks of gender inequality. Our film is about the change that is unfolding. Is there an artist in this industry who influences you? I think Priyanka Chopra and keep

Parineeti Chopra who was my senior in school. I am really inspired by both of them. Their journey is truly motivational. I will try my best to moving Chinmay Purohit (Director), what do you hope audience will take away from this film? I hope the audience will understand the depth of the subject and plot, and they will take away the learning that we should not treat women like

we do and what needs

to be done.

# Sculpting

Inspired by Beethoven and her Indian roots, Niyamat Mehta, all of 23, has already carved a niche in art history, says SAKSHI PRIYA

culptor Niyamat Mehta is Smaking waves in the art world with sculptures that blend traditional techniques and contemporary themes. Inspired by Beethoven and her Indian roots, her work resonates with deep historical and cultural significance. At the Venice Biennale, she became the youngest artist to showcase her talent, drawing global acclaim. Her first solo exhibit, Meraki, featured 27 sculptures inviting viewers to contemplate their own journeys.

At a tender age of 23, Niyamat has already etched her name in the annals of art history, hailed by Firenze Yes Please as the 'Emerging Artist to Invest In 2023. Her artistic journey began at the prestigious Venice Biennale, where she became the youngest artist to exhibit at the renowned Palazzo Albrizzi, sharing space with luminaries like Anish Kapoor, Simone Leigh, and Célestin Faustin.

Niyamat's journey is a testament to the harmonious blend of diverse influences and traditions. Being the youngest artist at the Venice Biennale was not just a milestone but a transformative moment that shaped her artistic vision. Exhibiting at Palazzo Albrizi was both encouraging and overwhelming, with the rich history and heritage of the venue enhancing her experience. The sculptor draws inspiration from Beethoven's 'String Quartets' that unveils a deep connection between music and visual art.

Niyamat listens to Western classical while sculpting to stay in the creative flow and translate intangible energy into tangible texture in her sculptures. This is a systematic process that begins with clarifying what she wants to create and why. Her Indian heritage is a fundamental part of her identity, influencing her sculptures and artistic vision.



Niyamat believes that the diversity of preferences, dislikes, and opinions across various regions enriches the world, making her work inherently fascinating. When collaborating with collectors, she strives to find a balance between her artistic vision and their desires, creating something meaningful together. Mehta's training in "drawing in space" and the sight-size method is not just a technical foundation but the essence of her artistic expression. She views these techniques as languages that serve as alphabets of her craft.

Her meticulous nature extends to her creative

attention to detail. Her sculptures, particularly the Dali series, are inspired by artists like Salvador Dali and

where she approaches sculptures as "landscapes," seeking diverse topography within different areas of the piece. Bridging artistic cultures, Niyamat incorporates traditional techniques in her contemporary work seamlessly. She believes that every creation must possess both technical excellence and artistic allure, a philosophy instilled in her during her training at the Florence Academy of Art. This blend of vibrant Western techniques and Indian heritage is evident in her sculptures like Atman and Amor Fati.

The young sculptor operates from her private studio, Atelier Della Firenze, located in New Delhi. Her studio is more than just a workspace; it is a sanctuary. With an atmosphere akin to heaven, it provides the perfect backdrop for her masterpieces. Here, not only does she sculpt, she also imparts her knowledge masterclasses, nurturing a new generation of sculptors.

Niyamat's sculptures are a testament to her creativity and

Auguste Rodin. Drawing from their styles, she strives to compose something unique of her own, blending surrealism and romanticism to create sculptures rich in expressions and emotions. Her recent solo exhibition, Meraki, showcased 27 sculptures that invited viewers to contemplate their own journeys. The title means putting your soul into your work which reflects the philosophy Niyamat abides by. She believes every sculpture of hers embodies a piece of her, an expression of herself. This guiding principle is

evident in every sculpture presents, imbuing them with a soulful essence. Looking ahead, Niyamat

aims to persist with c o m m i s s i o n e d work, hold solo exhibitions, and ensure

that her sculptures find their way into the collections of art collectors who truly value her artistry. She wants the next generation of sculptors to approach this career without fear, embrace commissioned work, participate in exhibitions, and serve as their own most discerning critics.

Niyamat is a shining example of and passion, talent notwithstanding an artist's age. Her exhibitions are not just displays of art but experiences that transcend words. Each sculpture tells a story, inviting viewers to immerse themselves in her world of creativity. A hidden artist with immense talent, the world deserves to know and appreciate her work. In a world where creativity knows no bounds, Niyamat Mehta stands out as a beacon of artistic excellence, her sculptures showcasing her talent, passion, and dedication.

## ISHABH PANT SET FOR EMOTIONAL HOMECOMING

emotional homecoming awaits Rishabh Pant when he leads Delhi Capitals out at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here, hoping to halt the marauding run of Pat Cummins' Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday and continue the resurgence which has come to define his life both on and off the field. The last time Pant was seen at

the refurbished stadium, he needed crutches to walk but that now seems a distant memory given how remarkably well he has managed to come back both as a wicketkeeper and batter after enduring a life-threatening car accident in 2022.

Capitals have had a mixed season so far, but a couple of impressive wins against Lucknow Super Giants and Gujarat Titans have put them back in the mix. In all, they have three wins and four defeats in seven outings so far. Placed fourth in the IPL points table, Sunrisers Hyderabad have set a different template altogether with two of the highest-ever totals of 277/3

and 287/3, which will require a lot of heart and skill to counter. Hence, 'Captain Pant' will have to use his resources with extreme caution and guile on a track which will have good bounce and carry for a change Travis Head (235 runs) — IPI's foreign flavour of the season will be keen to build on his 39ball century and his partner Abhishek Sharma (211 runs) is no pushover either. Both have a penchant for taking the aerial route during powerplay.

Abhishek's and intimidating strike rates of 199 and 197 respectively will pose a serious challenge for the pace trio of Ishant Sharma, Khaleel Ahmed and Mukesh Kumar. Adding to the threat is Heinrich Klaasen, who is also striking at 199, who is one of finishers best international cricket with propensity to hit balls out of the stadium, which gives SRH's batting a scary look.

But Kuldeep Yadav's (economy of 6.06) left-arm wrist spin could well prove to be a game-changer and in Tristan Stubbs, Pant has got an ideal third spin option alongside Axar Patel (6.75). Pant, who is himself



game, wouldn't mind if he can win the toss and opt to bat. But David Warner's knuckle injury is a cause for concern for Pant and head coach Ricky Ponting although Jake Fraser-McGurk has impressed one and all in his first two matches. While SRH's batting has been top-notch on belters, their bowlers have suffered a lot on those tracks with only skipper Cummins (7.87) having an economy rate of less than eight runs per over, which is considered good in T20. However, the seasoned duo of Jaydev Unadkat (11.35) and

Bhuvneshwar Kumar (10.45), have both been average while the tweakers — wrist spinner Mayank Markande (11.23) and left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed (ER 12.44) — have been sent on a leather hunt. The best option for Pant would be to open the batting and go for the jugular against SRH, putting a scoreboard pressure on the rampaging Orange

Army. In case Capitals have to chase, the idea would be to keep SRH down to 210-220 which would be chaseable against an attack its own on a good batting

**TEAMS (FROM):** Delhi Capitals: Rishabh Pant

(c&wk), David Warner, Abishek Porel, Ricky Bhui, Yash Dhull, Shai Hope, Prithvi Shaw, Tristan Stubbs, Kumar Kushagra (wk), Swastik Chikara, Ishant Sharma, Jhye Richardson, Rasikh Dar Salam, Vicky Ostwal, Anrich Nortje, Mukesh Kumar, Kuldeep Yadav, Praveen Dubey, Khaleel Ahmed, Sumit Kumar, Axar Patel, Mitchell Marsh, Lalit Yadav, Jake Fraser-McGurk. Sunrisers Hyderabad: Pat Cummins (c), Abdul Samad, Abhishek Sharma, Aiden Markram, Marco Jansen, Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Sanvir Singh, Heinrich Klaasen (wk),

Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, T. Natarajan, Anmolpreet Singh, Mayank Markande, Upendra Singh Yadav (wk), Ümran Malik, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Shahbaz Ahmed, Travis Head, Jaydev Unadkat, Akash Singh, Jhathavedh

Subramanyan

## Hardik Pandya fined for slow over rate against Punjab Kings

PTI MULLANPUR (PUNJAB)

Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya has been maintaining a slow over rate during their thrilling nine-run victory over Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League. Mumbai Indians, thanks to Suryakumar Yadav's blazing

78 off 53 deliveries, posted a competitive 192/7 and then dismissed PBKS, despite Ashutosh Sharma's stunning 28-ball 61 and Shashank Singh's 41, for 183 in 19.1

MI rose to seventh from ninth position on the points table following their third win in seven games in IPL 2024,

while PBKS dropped a spot to ninth after their fifth defeat. "Hardik Pandya, the Mumbai Indians captain, has been maintained a slow over rate during their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 match against Punjab Kings at the International New Cricket Stadium, Mullanpur on April 18," said an IPL

statement on Friday. "As it was his team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over rate offences, Pandya was fined Rs 12 lakhs," the statement added. Mumbai Indians next play Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur on April 22.

## It was my dream to play sweep shot against Bumrah: Ashutosh

PTI ■ MULLANPUR (PUNJAB)

**D**unjab Kings' batting Ashutosh sensation Sharma said he lived a "dream" when he swept "world's best fast bowler" Jasprit Bumrah during his team's IPL clash against Mumbai Indians here. The 25-year-old Ashutosh put the Bumrah-led Mumbai Indians' bowling to sword here Thursday when he hammered seven sixes and two fours to make 61 off a mere 28 balls, a knock which brought PBKS back from the brink after an early collapse. PBKS were 17/4 inside the powerplay but courtesy the stunning fightback from Ashutosh and Shashank Singh (41), they were able to get close to MI's 193-run target before losing by nine runs.

It was in the 13th over of Punjab's chase when Ashutosh got down low on his front to convert an attempted vorker from Bumrah into a full toss and smack it for a six over backward square leg.

"It was my dream to hit a sweep shot against Bumrah. I was practising for that shot but it came against the best bowler in the world - it is a part of the game," Ashutosh told the media here after the match.

Ashutosh said he was confident of taking Punjab over the line.

"I had belief in myself that I would be able to win the game



for the team," he said. Ashutosh credited former India player and coach Sanjay Bangar, head of cricket development at PBKS, for his improvement this season.

"Sanjay sir told me that I am not a slogger and that I can play proper cricket shots. It was a small statement but carried a huge meaning for me. I am only following it - I am not a hard-hitter, I am playing proper cricketing shots and that is what has changed my game," Ashutosh

"Back home, I was working with my coach Amay Khurasiya who had told me that the longer you stay on the pitch, the more your team has a chance of winning," he added.

The right-handed batter, who made some gestures towards the PBKS dugout after completing his fifty, said the celebrations were meant for his team management.

That celebration was for our Sanjay (Bangar) sir, I have been working a lot with him and I keep asking him

He gave me a chance, and also the entire Punjab team which showed belief in me. Our head coach Trevor Bayliss, Ashish (Tuli) paaji, Shikhar (Dhawan) paaji, everyone believed in me, so it was for all of them," he added.

Punjab slumped to their fifth defeat in seven matches as well as to the ninth spot in the points table, but Ashutosh said his side has been playing well. "Winning and losing are part of the game. How you are playing is something that matters and we are playing well as a team. If we will play well, we will win," he said. Mumbai Indians' pacer Gerald Coetzee conceded his side was tense after Ashutosh's stunning

"He really brought it to us. We just wanted to be really clear do. We executed really well to him in the back end to shut it down and win the game," the South African bowler said.

"But it was tense, as I think everyone saw. But it was just all tactical discussions," he added.

Coetzee conceded Mumbai Indians could've been better with their slower balls, something that PBKS used perfectly in the first half.
"We just really learned from their innings. We adapted our plans and I think it worked,"

Coetzee added

### Impact Player not ideal for coaches but fans have last say: Ponting

PTI NEW DELHI

The Impact Player rule in The Impact riages and Interest and Impact plus be hampering the growth of all-rounders but Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting said on Friday that fans should be able to decide on the future of this contentious system.

Ponting has never been a strong advocate of the Impact Player and the debate gained momentum after Sharma in a recent YouTube podcast said that he is not a fan of the rule" as it hurts development of Indian allrounders.

"Look, I think, I read some really, really interesting answers from Rohit Sharma on this yesterday. This Impact Player is taking the all-rounders out of the game a little bit," Ponting said ahead of DC's match against Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Saturday.

'You know you can play your specialist batsman down till No. 8. Pretty much. But look, I players, it's probably not ideal, but I think you know a lot of what this game tries to do is to entertain people," Ponting explained his point of view.

"The T20 game is an entertainment package and it's probably better asking the spectator what they think about the impact player, because if everyone is loving the fact that teams are making, you know, 220 up to 250 in a lot of the games, and the spectators like seeing it, then it should stay.

"But if the spectators aren't



liking it as much, then there's no reason why I couldn't go back to the old," he added. "Warner is around 85 to 90%

David Warner, who missed the last match due to a knuckle injury, was seen batting at the nets and also hit some balls into the stands while facing throwdowns

Ponting said he is nearly 85 to 90% fit.

"David did a fitness test on game day in which he got close. He's probably sort of 85 or 90% a couple days ago. We'd expect that there would be a little bit more improvement from him today.

"But he will have to do a lot of batting today against some fast bowling stuff to make sure that the pain is not there anymore," Ponting replied to a query from PTI.

The coach was happy with the pitch on which DC will play its first home game.

"A lot more grass on the entire square than we used to see here. You know, this is the main reason that we moved away from those couple of games at the back of WPL.

#### OTHER SPORTS

## Group condemns searches by security at Barcelona stadium

The director of a group that advocates for female sports fans says she and other Paris Saint-Germain supporters were subjected to "abusive" searches while entering Barcelona's stadium for a Champions League match earlier this week.

Anoush Morel, the director of Her Game Too France, told L'Equipe and RMC Sport that her breasts, buttocks and groin were touched by a female security officer during a pat-down at the Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium on Tuesday night. Other women reported similarly aggressive searches, she said.

Paris Saint-Germain won the match 4-1 and advanced to the Champions

League semifinals. In a letter Thursday, the organization immediately answered.

on "relevant authorities" to take action. "It's unacceptable that spectators, fans and women in general were particularly targeted by these intrusive and humiliating searches that constitute sexual aggression," the letter read. The group said there have been similar complaints at other stadiums

in Europe, usually impacting visiting fans. It called on teams, organizers of the games and stadiums to ensure their security protocols avoid the "unfair treatment" of supporters. It asks UEFA to provide answers on

condemned the practice and called

whether visiting fans in particular are being subjected to more aggressive searches.

A request for comment from UEFA sent on Thursday evening was not

### Olympic organisers to use Al in sports International

Olympic organisers unveiled their plans Friday to use artificial intelligence in sports, joining the global rush to capitalize on the rapidly advancing technology.
The International Olympic Committee

outlined its agenda for taking advantage of AI. Officials said it could be used to help identify promising athletes, personalize training methods and make the games fairer by improving judging. 'Today, we are making another step to ensure the uniqueness of the Olympic Games and the relevance of sport. To do

this, we have to be leaders of change," IOC



President Thomas Bach said at a press event at the former London Olympic Olympic Park, which hosted the Summer Games in 2012. "We are determined to exploit the vast potential of AI in a responsible way,"

Bach said. The IOC revealed its AI strategy as it gears up to hold the Paris Olympics, which are set to kick off in just under 100

days.
The IOC's AI plans also include using the technology to protect athletes from online harassment and to help broadcasters improve the viewing experience for people watching from home. The IOC earns billions of dollars through the sale of broadcast rights for the games.

## Punia, Sujeet to miss Asian qualifiers

Tn a huge setback for the Indian wrestling contingent at the Asia Olympic Qualifiers in Bishkek, two of the country's best wrestlers, Deepak Punia and Sujeet Kalakal, will miss the continental event as they could not report for the weigh-in on time as their flight arrived late in the Kyrgyzstan capital owing to bad weather in Dubai. While both Punia and Kalkal eventually

managed to reach Bishkek after being stranded at the Dubai international airport due to incessant rain and flooding, they could not report for the mandatory weighin on time, according to sources.



The sources added that the organisers did not allow late weigh-in despite request from the Indian coaches

Punia (86kg), who had come close to winning a medal at the Tokyo Games, and Sujeet (65kg), were on their way to Bishkek to participate in the Asia Olympic qualifiers - the second-last qualifying event for Paris

Olympics - when a majority of the flights leaving Dubai got cancelled or delayed because of the flooding of the airport.

The duo, accompanied by Russian coach Kamal Malikov and physio Shubham Gupta, were forced to sleep on the floor and had no access to proper food due to the rain-induced crisis in Dubai.

"They were stuck at the Dubai airport since April 16 and it seems the chance of qualifying for Paris Olympics is slipping out of their hands as they are scheduled to compete tomorrow. They are not getting any flights to Bishkek. I am worried about them," Dayanand Kalakal, Sujeet's father, had told PTI on Thursday.



### **Andy Murray back** on practice court

**AP** ■ LONDON

Three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray has returned to the practice court after confirming that he's not going to have surgery on his injured ankle.

The 36-year-old Murray tore ligaments in his left ankle during a match at the Miami Open last month.

Murray's team said this week he's "out of the walking boot," wouldn't be having surgery, and was "hoping to start hitting again on court soon." A short video on Murray's Instagram account on Friday showed the former world No. 1 hitting forehands on an indoor court.

There was no timeline for his return announced. The two-time Wimbledon champion, who has said he's unlikely to play past this summer, has been hoping to compete for Britain again in the Paris Olympics.