

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

RAJESH KUMAR 📕 NEW DELHI

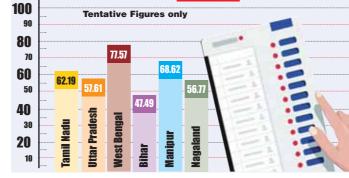
n a kaleidoscope of democracy in action, voters of all ages – from wheelchair-bound seniors to newlyweds and Great Andamanese Tribe from Strait Island in South Andaman to the world's shortest woman cast their vote on Friday with an estimated 62.37 per cent turnout recorded till 6 pm in the first phase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

explosion of a grenade launcher 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

POLL TURNOUT (PHASE 1) at 07.00 PM



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 eastern Nagaland stayed indoors following an indefinite shutdown call by an apex body of tribal organisations to press for its demand for

a separate state. Tamil Nadu recorded a voter

Bijnor, 52.42 per cent in Rampur and 54.91 per cent in Muzaffarnagar. These seats fall in

turnout of 72.09 percent in the Lok the Jat and sugarcane belt of the Sabha polls with no major

in

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. Some of the constituencies were different then and the total number of seats which went to polls were 91.

in Nagina, 60.23 per cent in Pilibhit, 54.68 per cent in Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged voters to exercise their franchise in record numbers as the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls started with polling being held in 102 constituencies

GROUND ZERO THE PIONEER REPORTS FROM

three

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 Governor Dr Tamilissai Sounderarajan was contesting

recorded 41.47 per cent till 3 pm, according to Satyabrata

LUCKNOW Sahoo, chief electoral officer. Latha Ravishankar, a BJP Voter turnout of 57.54 per cent was recorded till 5 pm activist in Chennai Central. in all eight parliamentary had

disappointment constituencies of Western Uttar Pradesh where polling written all over her face as voters failed to was held in first make it to the polling phase of Lok Sabha booths despite lot of elections on Friday. Total turnout of cajoling by her and other volunteers. voters But the DMK camp expected to be sounded positive as the lowmarginally above 60 per turn out is expected to make cent. The eight constituencies where

the prospectus of the party candidates smooth. State 39 has The constituencies while the neighboring Puducherry has one seat.

WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH

VIRENDRA NATH BHATT

was

polling was held on Friday

included Pilibhit, Saharanpur,

Bijnor, Nagina, Moradabad and Rampur. Of these,

Kairana,

Muzaffarnagar,

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

Över 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

Saharanpur.

WEST BENGAL

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA here were sufficient reasons for the Election Commission of India to heave a big sigh of relief as the first round of elections for Bengal's parliamentary constituencies of Cooch Behar, Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri passed off without any loss of life 📕 though reports of "stray incidents of clashes, stone-pelting or booth capture," came in from many

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

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

eight seats of western Uttar Pradesh.

was

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

abstain from voting in six t least four Electronic At least iour Licent Noting Machines were damaged at different polling conflict-hit booths in Manipur on Friday where polling was held in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections, according to sources.

Meanwhile, the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland recorded a voter turnout of over 50 per cent till 4 pm, the closing time for voting, on Friday, officials said. The polling began at 7 am. The polling was held, amid a call given by the Eastern People's 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. Under the shadow of a long-drawn 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.

Organisation (ENPO) to

districts of the region





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 lv in andranur our



MAHARASHTRA



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 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 place at Nawada and Aurangabad, besides the reserved seats of Gava and Jamui, where a majority of nearly 5,000 polling booths have been marked as "sensitive"

Over 49.95 per cent voters have 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, where altogether eight candidates are in the fray though the contest is primarily between Vivek Thakur, a BJP 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, 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.

Bhandara-Gondiya, Ramtek (SC)Gadchiroli-Chimur (ST)constituencies, as voters turned out in large numbers braving harsh temperatures.

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 57 to 60 per cent.

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 5.30 pm.

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 Ramtek-52.38 per cent.

Nitin Gadkari, his wife Kanchan and other family members voted at a

polling station near their residence in Nagpur.

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

"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.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Sarsanghchalak Dr. Mohan Bhagwat cast his vote at a polling booth near Reshimbagh in Nagpur.

Dr Bhagaat was among the earliest to 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 said

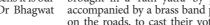
Maharashtra Congress president

Nana Patole exercised his franchise along with his family members at Sukli village in Bhandara district.

Talking to media persons after he cast his vote, Patole said that the BJP-led government had "cheated" people for 10 years and they were determined to end the 10-year dictatorship of Prime "The 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 today," he said.

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

exercised their voting rights. 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



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 democracy

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 Assam 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 already buzzing with excitement as users shared the Doodle online and expressed their thoughts on this 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



of India's 2024 Lok Sabha elections is currently underway, with significant participation multiple regions," it across posted. Stella Paul with @stellasglobe

handle termed Google's move as "pretty cool" while one @virgojyoti02 found the move 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

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." 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

by Google which is presently the only country with 1.4 strong population to create awareness about elections," added Dr Rahul Bhargava, a bone marrow transplant specialist and haematologist at Fortis Hospital, Gurgaon echoed similar

sentiments. For Sanjay Ojha, Corporate 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

governance."

senior official from Delhi Election Office informed that the classic symbol of Indian polls will be visible everywhere -- a left 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 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.



3.8-kg gold seized from passenger at city airport

L wo days after a passenger with around 1 kg of gold inside his rectum was caught at the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) here, Income Tax (I-T) department officials seized 3.8 kg of gold during a raid at the domestic cargo terminal of the airport on Friday.

The yellow metal was being taken to Mumbai. Hansraj

Fashion Jewellery Private Limited, was detained in connec-

tion with the gold seizure. Deora was reportedly carrying six gold bars and nine gold biscuits weighing around 3.8 kg along with clothes and other items in a

tin box. During interrogation, Deora reportedly told the I-T sleuths that the gold was

Deora, the sales manager of being taken to the headquarters of Fashion Jewellery Private Limited in Mumbai.

Soon after the seizure, the I-T officials searched the concerned jewellery store at Janpath in Bhubaneswar.

Notably, the officials of Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) arrested a passenger at the BPIA here for smuggling gold into the country on April 17.

The DRI sleuths seized around a kilogram of gold from the passenger after he arrived at the BPIA from Bangkok.

The officials extracted the gold from three capsules hidden in the passenger's rectum. The DRI officials reportedly took the passenger to a lavatory at the airport and extracted the capsules containing the gold

'Take action against Aparajita for using kids in campaign'

BJD urges CEO BHUBANESWAR PNS

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Friday moved the State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) alleging use of children in poll campaigns by BJP's Bhubaneswar MP candidate Aparajita Sarangi.

A delegation of the party met the CEO and filed a complaint demanding action against Sarangi. The team also

presented photo evidence to support their claims.

"We are writing to bring to your attention a serious concern regarding the misuse of children in election rallies by Aparajita Sarangi, the BJP candidate from MP Bhubaneswar. It has come to our notice that Sarangi has been using small children in BJP election meetings and rallies for political gains. This is a clear violation of ethical norms and the rights of children, who should not be exploited for the mere political interests of any party," the BJD delegation said in the complaint.

"It is deeply troubling that despite our earlier complaint regarding the use of children in a rally in Khordha, Sarangi has continued to use children in her election campaigns. This time, she has used an infant with a BJP 'uttariya' for

her election campaigning along with the BJP's Bhubaneswar Ekamra MLA candidate Babu Singh in an election campaigning in Bhubaneswar," the BJD alleged.

capital 02

The party urged the CEO to take immediate and strict action against Sarangi to ensure that she does not use children or infants in any form in her political rallies or other such events.

house at night and raped

On March 30, a resident

of the village reported the

Step Centre in the District

matter to the Sakhi-One

Headquarters Hospital.

Later, the centre staffs

rescued her and came to

complaint was lodged in

After receiving the

complaint, police regis-

tered a case and arrested

Sisira under the POCSO

Act and forwarded him to

Special Public Prosecutor

April 3, 2022.

court.

know about the rape and a

the Town police station on

In city Mystery shrouds entrepreneur's death



BHUBANESWAR

 $\mathbf{M}_{ystery \ shrouded \ the}$ death of an entrepreneur, whose decomposed body was recovered from a guesthouse at Maitri Vihar in Bhubaneswar on Thursday.

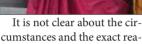
The deceased was identified as Tapan Prasad Acharjya.

As per initial reports, Acharjya was from Phulbani and owner of a company, Subham Bio-CNG Pvt Ltd. He had come to the capital city to attend a corporate meeting on Tuesday.

Acharjya had checked in at the Shanti Guest House the same day and was handed over room number 202

No respite from heat for 2 more days

Jharsuguda hottest in State at 43.8 deg; BBSR 41.4 deg



son behind Acharjya's death. Meanwhile, police recovered Acharjya's body and sent it to the Capital Hospital for a post-

mortem. An investigation has been initiated by police into the incident to ascertain whether it was a murder or under which circumstances the young entrepreneur died.

The mystery surrounding the death of the businessman would become clear after the postmortem report is availed,

police said. On getting information, family members of the deceased have reached here.

Nuapada guy, peers prove sound can be seen In Keonjhar

By their experiment called Schlieren imaging

at APU AJIT PANDA 📃 NUAPADA We all know, sound can

only be heard and vibrations can be felt. However, students studying physics will say, 'Sound can also be seen. Sourabh Panda from Khariar of Nuapada district and two of his friends, Shreyansh Tripathy from Hyderabad and Kinshuk Ghosh from West Bengal, who are studying undergraduate physics at Azim Premji University in Bangalore, have shown it through an experiment called Schlieren imaging.

Schlieren imaging is a scientific technique used in photography for visualising density variations in transparent media. Kripa Gowrishankar, the physics teacher at APU, closely guided the students in

Sourabh enthusiastically explains, "We have read in physics that unlike light, sound requires a medium to travel - say air. When sound waves travel, they create disturbances to the molecules, which we call vibrations that can be heard or felt. It can be seen as ripples in a water tank when you drop a stone in water. But to visualise sound in air, you need to go through the experiment called Schlieren imaging.

Performed at

PNS

Utkal Hospital

BHUBANESWAR

The Utkal Hospital here on Friday announced the success-

ful completion of its first ca-

daveric liver transplant, mark-

helped us overcome the prob-"In the science lab at APU, lems. In this process, we could figure out how strong the light utes before our scheduled presentation," said a beaming

turbance, in this case, sound from a speaker, is placed in the path of the light. A knife edge the reflected light. When the speaker is turned on, sound waves start emanating from it, causing a change in the density of the air above it. The knife edge blocks out the light that is bent by the disturbed air, and this causes those sections of the image to be darkened. The result: visible sound

Man gets 20-yr RI for raping orphan minor

her.

PNS **KEONJHAF**

 ${
m A}$ dditional and Sessions Judge and Special Judge (POCSO) Subhashri Tripathi on Thursday sentenced a man to 20 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) for raping a minor girl in Keonjhar district.

The convict, identified as Sisira Dangua (25), was also ordered to pay a fine of Rs 10,000 and in default to undergo one more year's RI.

Sources said that as the 14-year-old victim's father and mother had died, she was living in her uncle's house. After a quarrel with his uncle's son, she was driven out. With no option left, she took shelter alone in an abandoned house near the Dimbo villege panchayat office under the Town police station.

On March 27, 2022, when she was alone, Sisira went to the abandoned

(POCSO) Ganesh Prasad Mohapatra said, "The court has passed the above sentence on the basis of the statement of 11 witnesses and the police investigation report. The court has also ordered the District Legal Service Authority to pay Rs 6 lakh to the victim."

Two die in Jharsuguda boat mishap

CM announces ex-gratia for victims' kin PNS BHUBANESWAR

gers. All the passengers were

to rescue over 40 passen-

from neighbouring Chhattisgarh. They were on their way to Ambavona block of Odisha when the mishap took place.

source should be, what types of mirror would work, etc. We finally succeeded just ten min-Shrevansh A report published in the

website of APU about this experiment says, "On paper, the set-up seemed simple enough. A light is shone on a mirror, cused at a point and captured

is placed at the focal point of

waves!

and the reflected light is foby a concave mirror. The dis-

their experiment.





BHUBANESWAR

he mercury again breached the 43-degree mark in the State on Friday as Jharsuguda reported the day's highest maximum temperature of 43.8 degree Celsius by 2.30 pm

Apart from Jharsuguda, Sambalpur also recorded a maximum temperature of 42.4 degree, Keonjhar and Chandbali 42.2 degree each and Hirakud recorded a maximum temperature of 42 degree as per the Regional Of-

the capital city had recorded a temperature of 43.6 degree on Thursday.

Rourkela recorded a maxi-

mum temperature of 41.8 de-

gree while Bhubaneswar re-

corded 41.4 degree. Notably,

fice of the IMD here.

As per the weather office, there would be no large change in the maximum temperature during the next two days and it would slightly fall by 2 to 3 degree thereafter at many places over the districts of the State.

Though thunderstorm acing a milestone in the field of tivities would provide some reorgan transplantation in spite from the scorching heat Odisha. The transplant, perand humid conditions, the formed on Wednesday, saw a maximum temperature is likely cadaveric liver extracted from to rise again from April 25. the IMS & SUM Hospital and

First cadaveric liver transplant in State

swiftly transported to the Utkal Hospital for transplantation.

The surgery, which lasted several hours, was led by a team of consultants including Dr Satya Prakash Ray Choudhury, Dr Salil Kumar Parida, Dr P Balachandran Menon and Dr Shakti Swaroop.

"This is truly inspirational for cadaveric organ donation, in which one person can save and live in many lives even after death," remarked Dr

Satva Prakash Rav Choudhury, Utkal Hospital. "The successful collaboration between Utkal Hospital and AIG Hyderabad and the dedication of our surgical team made have this groundbreaking procedure possible.

The recipient of the cadaveric liver transplant, a patient suffering from liver cirrhosis, is currently recovering well under the care of the medical team at Utkal Hospital.

Moreover, this transformative surgery was made possible through the invaluable assistance of skilled surgeons from AIG Hospital, Hyderabad, highlighting the collaborative efforts aimed at advancing healthcare delivery in the region.

The Utkal Hospital extended its gratitude to the families of the organ donors, whose selfless contributions have made a profound impact on the lives of those in need.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed grief over the death of two persons in a boat tragedy in Jharsuguda district on Friday.

The CM also announced an ex-gratia of Rs 4 lakh each to the families of the deceased persons.

Two persons died and six others went missing after a boat capsized in Hirakud dam in the afternoon on Friday. There were around 50 passengers in the boat. Local fishermen managed

The Chief Minister also directed the officials to send five scuba divers and two search cameras to Jharsuguda to trace the missing persons.

Besides, the CM asked Chief Secretary PK Jena and Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Satyabrata Sahu for proper coordination for the rescue operation and quick medical treatment for the missing persons upon their rescue from the dam.

Sr Clerk held taking Rs 20K bribe CUTTACK PNS

The Vigilance police on Friday caught Rabindranath Padhi, Senior Clerk, office of Block Education Officer (BEO), Harbhanga in Boudh district, while accepting a bribe of Rs 20,000 from a person.

Padhi had demanded the bribe from the complainant (a woman school teacher) as first installment out of overall Rs 40,000 from him to get her work done.

Following the trap, simultaneous searches were carried out on the parental house of Padhia's village Hatipali under the Manmunda police station in Boudh, residential house at Udayanagar in Subarnapur and his office room. Later, Padhi was arrested and

forwarded to court.

INTACH's Passion Project Kerang fabric of Gadabas of Koraput revived

PNS 📕 BHUBANESWAR

tage.

of these two tribes wear clothes O_n the occasion of the made out of the bark of the World Heritage Day, the In-Kerang plant which grows dian National Trust for Art and wild. Tribal men and women Cultural Heritage (INTACH) collect the bark of the tree and unveiled its 'Passion Project' after soaking it in waters of on the Kerang fabric of the the nearby hill streams, sun-Gadabas of Koraput. In an dry it and extract the fibre out event held at Bhubaneswar, of the bark. They use different vegetable colours before weav-Gadaba tribeswomen, attired in Kerang sarees, showcased ing it in a set pattern that has been followed for centuries. the revival of the age-old heri-

While the Gadaba women The use of hand-woven wear full-length cloth or saree clothes made out of Kerang with colourful stripes which fibre by the Gadaba and covers the entire body, the Bonda tribes has a long his-Bonda women wear a small tory and has occupied an impiece of cloth called Ringa portant place in their culture which wraps the lower part of



the body in a certain customshe dies.

ary manner. These colourful This ancient tradition of fabrics last for several generaweaving the Kerang fabric was on the wane. During tions and have a usable life of a century. The weaving of the INTACH's study in 2020, it Kerang fabric is a rite of paswas found that there were sage for every Gadaba girl; she hardly any villages which had wears it during her marriage existing looms and none of and is also draped in it when the Gadabas were engaged in

making the Kerang fabric. The INTACH undertook a "Pas-

Chapter, Anil Dhir and Dr Rajendra Padhee. The team interacted with the Gadaba tribesmen in different villages through workshops and open discussions. The report was released by Justice Sashikanta Mishra, Judge of the High Court of Orissa in the presence of Vandana Manchanda, Head of INTACH's Heritage Crafts and Community Division.

Sanjib Hota said the Koraput district administration and the Odisha Government have agreed to provide adequate handholding to ensure that this ancient tradition of the Gadabas does not vanish.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is being sold on the condition and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement befor responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss.

Printed and published by Sarada Prasanna Nanda for and on behalf of CMYK Printech Ltd., 1067, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751012. Tel: 0674-2560355. e-mail: orissapioneer@gmail.com. Printed at WEBLINE, D-2/19, Sector-A, Zone-D, Mancheswar Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010. Editor-in-Chief Shobori Ganguli. Resident Editor: S.P. Nanda. RNI Regn. No. ORIENG/2007/22475. AIR SURCHARGE of Re. 1.00 East: Calcutta, North: Leh West: Mumbai & Ahmedabad South: Bangalore & Chennai. Central : Khajuraho, Delhi Office: 100k Milap Bhawan, 8/A Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110 002, Phone: 011-40110455, Corporate Office:- 201-205, 2nd Floor, Pratap Bhawan 5, B.S.Z. Marg, New Delhi-110002 Phone: 011-69342500. Lucknow Office: 4th Floor, Sahara Shopping Centre, Faizabad Road, Lucknow 226 016. Telephones: 0522-2346443, 2346444, 2346445.

sion Project' to revive the dying tradition. Four villages were selected in Lamptaput block and looms and assistance were provided to the villagers.

The project was initiated by

INTACH State Convener AB Tripathy and a proposal sent to INTACH's head office at Delhi. After approval of the project, it was headed by former bureaucrat Sanjib Chandra Hota with the other members being Dr PC Mahapatra, Convener Koraput



Balangir LS seat: Whose turn is it in 2024?

Cong hinges on cine star, BJD on turncoat, BJP repeats sitting MP

SUDHIR MISHRA BALANGIR Political parties have

stepped up their activities and campaign here to woo voters to their side in Balangir Parliamentary constituency.

The Balangir Lok Sabha seat comprises seven Assembly segments in Balangir and Subarnapur districts. While five Assembly segments namely, Loisingha, Balangir, Patnagarh, Kantabanji and Titilagarh segments are in Balangir district, two Assembly segments, namely Sonepur and Birmaharajpur are in Subarnapur district. There are a total of 17,93,211 voters in the LS seat and Sangeeta Singh Deo of BJP is



Sangeeta Singh Deo

the incumbent MP.

The BJP is hopeful of maintaining its winning spree in 2024 based on the development works initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. MP Singdeo said despite the

Covid 19 pandemic, major development works have been undertaken, especially in the Railway sector while major interventions have been made to reduce unemployment and distress migration in the area in the last few years. Besides,



Surendra Singh Bhoi

foundation stone has been laid for a wagon overhauling factory, she added.

However, the headache for the BJP is the rise of dissidents after declarations of Assembly ticket by the saffron party which has left many dissatisfied. In Balangir, Titilagarh, Birmaharajpur and other areas, reports of dissidence by party leaders are coming out regularly in local media reports, making the task of sitting MP more difficult to retain the seat.



Manoj Mishra

It remains to be seen how the BJP is tackling the issue.

The BJD has fielded Congress turncoat Surendra Singh Bhoi of Saintala as its MP nominee from Balangir LS seat. Bhoi was the president of Balangir district Congress, who quit the party to join BJD recently.

"Inspired by the development work of CM Naveen Patnaik, I joined BJD and his development and pro poor programme would be his

trump card while seeking votes, besides the BJD organisation and party base all over the Parliamentary constituency," said Bhoi.

The Congress has fielded actor Manoj Mishra as its candidate for the LS seat. Although Mishra hails from Sambalpur, he decided to contest from here, capitalising on a host of issues including regional imbalance, neglect to the west-

ern Odisha, endemic poverty and distress migration etc. In fact, before joining politics, Mishra had a rift with a section of film producers and actors over his allegation of neglect to the films and actors of western Odisha region and he was creating a regional pride by uniting people of the area by holding meetings.

"My father was working here in the Forest Department and I have spent a lot of time in Balangir. People of the area know me as I always speak

against regional discrimination," said Mishra. Congress has a base in Balangir with its stalwart leader and current MLA Narasingha Mishra who won from the Balangir Assembly seat repeatedly in 2014 and 2019. This time he is not contesting election but will play a major role in deciding the poll prospects of Congress.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, there was a triangular contest between BJP, BJD and Congress. Singhdeo of BJP defeated BJD's Kalikesh Singhdeo by a margin of 19,516 votes while Congress had finished third. After the announcement that CM Naveen Patnaik would contest from Kantabanji Assembly seat which is under Balangir Parliamentary seat, it is expected that it would have a ripple effect across the western Odisha, including the Balangir LS seat helping the BJD candidates win.

smuggling has declined the

habitation of wild animals. The

number of wild animals has

also declined. In this situation

mass hunting due to lack of

awareness about the different

laws for the protection of wild-

life by the tribal people has

posed a threat to the wild ani-

mals. Like animal sacrifice, the

Government should ban the

traditional Akhand Sikar, de-

manded environmentalist Dr

Forest, Keonjhar, Jitendra

Kumar Behera said, "We are

keeping a watch over the prac-

tice. We are discouraging the

tribals through awareness

programmes and taking strict

action as per the laws against

Assistant Conservator of

Bimbadhar Behera

the violators."

INBRIEF

B'PUR SCULPTOR MAKES MINIATURE RAMLALA STATUE

Brahmapur: On the holy occasion of Sri Ram Navami, renowned sand artist of Brahmapur Satya Moharana prepared a wooden idol of Sri Ramlala of a height of five and a half inches. Though the idol is small, it looks quite attractive. It took only four days for Satya to prepare the idol.



2 POETS TO GET CHANDRA KUMAR MOHANTY AWARDS

Baleswar: Two young poets, Dr Shakti Mohanty and Hemant Dalpati would be given awards instituted in the memory of poet Chandra Kumar Mohanty for the year 2024, informed Krushna Kumar Mohanty, con-



capital 03

vener of Chandra Kumar Mohanty Memorial Committee. The felicitation ceremony would be held on July 6. The award is instituted after the demise of noted poet and advocate Chandra Kumar Mohanty in 2018. Every year, poets below the age of 50 are given this award. The two adjudged poets of this year have enriched Odia literature by their own style of presenting new ideas, said Utapal Mohanty, a member of the jury.

ODISHA'S SUKUMAR MISHRA APPOINTED IIT-DHANBAD DIRECTOR

Bhubaneswar: Prof (Dr) Sukumar Mishra from Odisha has been appointed as the Director of IIT-Dhanbad. The Union Ministry of Education on Thursday appointed new directors to six IITs. Mishra was earlier a professor in the electrical engineering department at IIT-Delhi.



HANS RAJ JAYANTI AT DAV PUBLIC SCHOOL

Bhubaneswar: The Principal and staff members of the DAV Public School, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar, observed the birth anniversary of Mahatma Hans Raj, the pioneer of DAV



movement, amidst various activities including performing a Vedic havan in the school premises on Friday. Principal Dr Sujata Sahu offered floral tributes to the great saint and appealed to all to follow his ideals in every aspect.

TIGRESS 'SNEHA' DIES AT NANDANKANAN

Bhubaneswar: White tigress 'Sneha' died while undergoing treatment at the Nandankanan Zoological Park on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar on Thursday. The 14-year-old tigress was under treatment after she fell ill reportedly due to old age and sum-



mer heat wave. She was administered saline and medicines. However, she succumbed

B'pur BJP MLA nominee takes out bike rally

Along with supporters PNS BRAHMAPUR



AAP names 4 Assembly candidates in B'garh The Bhatli nominee, Shahrukh

BARGARH PNS

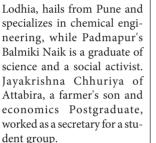
L wo graduates, an engineer and a doctor have been nominated for four Assembly seats in Bargarh district by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). They are Jayakrishna Chhuriya from Attabira, Dr Ashish Satpathi from Bargarh, Shahrukh Lodhia from Bhatli and Balmiki Naik from Padampur.

AAP district convener Bhabani Sahu emphasized the applicants' qualifications. The well-known paediatrician from Bargarh, Dr Ashish Satpathi, attended George High School and Bargarh Basic Training.

Vigilance case Junior Asst dismissed after conviction CUTTACK Brahmaapur on September 11, 2023 and sentenced to un-

Pradeep Kumar Sahu, Junior Revenue Assistant, Office of Settlement Officer, Ganjam has been dismissed from government service after being convicted in a Vigilance case.

another two months impris-Sahu was arrested and charge-sheeted by the anti-corhad communicated in this ruption agency for demandconnection to the competent ing and accepting bribe from a person for supply of copy of authority of Major Settlement Yadast relating to his land Office. Berhampur to take ap-



The party promises 300 units of free energy, fair crop prices, monthly aid of Rs 1,000 for women, coupled with an old age stipend of Rs 2,000. The party also pledges to solve issues related to education, healthcare, employment, and agriculture.

their tradition.

Parva', a unique festival. This is observed for two to three days. During this time, the

dergo rigorous imprisonment (RI) for a period of two years. The court had also imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on him and in default he had to undergo 25 families are onment. Following the conbusy in making viction of Sahu, the Vigilance

Akhand Sikar Tribals on hunting drive of wild animals in K'jhar mining operations and timber

Though environmentalists up against

practice

holding traditional weapons are seen marching towards nearby forests, certainly not for any war or lodge a protest but to do 'Akhand Sikar or Paridhi', a practice they have been continuing as a part of

The 'Akhand Sikar' literally means 'mass hunting'. Now, the tribal people of Keonjhar are observing the 'Akhani

tribal groups go to the nearby forests armed with traditional weapons for mass hunting or 'Akhand Sikar'. "We are observing the festival every year. As per our tra-

dition, we went for mass hunting. We have observed the day for a long time. After worship-

ping the village deity, we went to the forest and returned back before the evening. Whatever wild animals we hunted, we shared their flesh among the villagers," said Rajan Munda, a tribal hunter of Jagadala area under Jhumpura block. Mass deforestation due to

Summer brings cheer to palm leaf fan makers

and selling hand fans in Kendrapada

PNS KEONJHAR ${ m T}_{ m hese \ days, \ tribal \ people}$

properties. He was convicted by the

Special Judge, Vigilance,

Man gets 7-yr RI for killing father in JSpur JAGATSINGHPUR

he District Judge Court here on Wednesday sentenced a man to seven years' rigorous imprisonment on the charge of killing his father three years ago in Jagatsinghpur district. The court also asked him to pay a fine of Rs 5,000

The convict Biswamohan Ray alias Sania, a resident of Khairagada village under Naugaon block, had attacked his father Surendra Nath following a family feud with a

stick. Surendra had suffered serious head injuries and was shifted to the SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack, where he succumbed to his injuries three days later. The deceased's wife

was dismissed from service.

Kunkuma Bala Ray had lodged an FIR at the Naugaon police station. Later, police arrested Sania and filed a charge-sheet against him. Taking cognisance of the case and the testimony of four witness, the court pronounced the judgement.

propriate action against him **RAJESH BEHERA** Accordingly, on Thursday Sahu **KENDRAPADA**

> $T_{
> m hanks}$ to the ongoing scorching heat coupled with rise in day temperature, the demand for palm leaf fan (Binchana) is high among the people here. As most of the time electricity is playing truant, especially in the day hours making life difficult, these fans come handy.

These fans are also very cheap and one can operate them by spinning the handle. A poor person can purchase the palm leaf fan as its minimum price starts from Rs 25. To make palm leaf fans, at least 25 families in Kendrapada township are now busy.



"First, we collect palm leaves. Later, we dry them in the sun for a day or two before using them for a fan. In order to make a palm leaf fan, we need around an hour or so. One can prepare more than 30 fans in a day. It is not difficult for a palm leaf maker to get the raw materials like palm leaf, bamboo stick and colour," said Babu Behera of Badamangala, a fan maker.

"We are now getting a lot of consignments for preparing palm leaf fans as its demand is high all over the district and one can use it in everv season also, apart from summer," stated Ramesh, another artisan Despite the advent of lat-

est gadgets like cooler, air conditioner and electric fan, palm leaf fan has not lost its lustre among the people. One

needs a palm leaf fan in summer despite the fact that he uses AC, cooler and electric fans in his house. The palm leaf fan can be used as an alternative to advanced gadgets during power outages, said artisan Arjuni Behera of Santasahi

Sangeeta Behera, an artisan, said the palm leaf fans are in high demand for being ecofriendly and less expensive.

Un the occasion of Sri Ram Navami, BJP MLA candidate for Brahmapur constituency K Anil Kumar conducted a grand motorcycle procession with more than one thousand party workers.

The procession moved throughout the city, chanting Jay Shree Ram. They started the rally from their party office at Gandhinagar, next offering prayers at Hanuman Temple near Goutam Talkies, moving through First Gate, Aska Road, Taluka Junction, Gate Bazar, New Bus Stand Road, Goilundi, Courtpeta Square, Sales Tax Office Square Gajapatinagar Junction, MKCG Medical College Road, PVN Rao Petrol Tank junction, Old Bus stand, Annapurna Market and Girija Square, they finally concluded the rally at Hanuman Temple near Goutam Talkies.

Along with K Anil Kumar, Sunil Kumar Sahu, Tutun Patra, Madan Mohan Patra, Corporator Savita Sahu, former Corporator Ashok Shukla, Badri Narayan Nayak, Ranjit Patnaik, N Dhananjay Rao, Sanjay Jena, Patitapaban Gantayat, K Sai Kumar, Chittaranjan and thousands of party leaders as well as workers participated.

No ATR on Rukuda dam displaced NHRC warns WR Secy, S'garh DM of action

Seeks report in 4 weeks afresh **RAJESH BEHERA**

BHUBANESWAR L he National Human

Rights Commission (NHRC) on April 15 issued a warning to the Principal Secretary, Department of Water Resources, Government of Odisha and district Collector, Sundargarh, pertaining to not submitting action taken report (ATR) on the lack of rehabilitation measures to resettle the displaced villagers due to construction of Rukuda Dam in Sundargarh district despite directions.

The NHRC sought the ATR within a period of four weeks,

failing which it warned to invoke its coercive power u/s 13 of the PHR Act,1993 calling for the personal appearance of the authorities concerned before it.

Acting on a petition filed by lawyer and rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy, the NHRC passed the order. The petition stated that one

Jitbahan Kandeiburu and more than 200 other residents under Tikayatpali police limits of Sundergarh were allegedly displaced on account of Rukuda Dam Project. The Government of Odisha had forcefully displaced the victims without any rehabilitation. Son of Jitbahan died on account of snake bite as his family was shel-

ter-less and staying in a nearby jungle. Jitbahan was implicated in a false case because of his protest against the displacement. He was put behind the bars and subsequently, he died. The displaced victims are de-

prived of their entitlements and legitimate rights under the provisions under Section 4 and Section 5 of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and Rules framed there-under, Tripathy said.

The petitioner also stated inhabitants that of Bandhabhuin village and others have lost more than 30 acres of FRA land, besides their revenue land. He annexed the copies of Records of Rights and land patta in favour of the victims. It is being averred that though

the Government of Odisha has a policy of rehabilitation and resettlement and specific provisions of RFCTLARR Act, 2013, yet the victims like Jitbahan are yet to be rehabilitated, Tripathy added

The State may constitute a High Power Committee (HPC) to reach each and every area and assess the ground realities with recommendations for solutions with assured implementation of the recommendations in a time-bound manner. A fresh survey of the access to justice (both social and legal) is required, Tripathy contended.

He requested the NHRC to investigate the case in details by a team of officials with regard to the issues, seek updated comprehensive reports from the Chief Secretary, Odisha and district Collector, Sundargarh to ensure proper compensation and benefits of rehabilitation and resettlement, social welfare schemes reach the land oustees and save them from wild animals and police threats.

The NHRC observed that in the instant case despite direction, the authorities have not submitted any report till date. The NHRC forwarded the proceedings to the Chief Secretary, Government of Odisha for information and for ensuring compliance of direction of the Commission by the authorities

'45 days' cap-dues-clear policy no boon for MSMEs' UBACHAK MOHANTY curing items from our local micro industries. Ultimately, BALESWAR

 A_n apparent faulty policy of the Central Government with a noble intention which was made to protect small and micro industries and service sectors against financial losses is not meeting the purpose.

According to sources, the Union Ministry of Finance had made a policy which came into force from the Financial Year 2023-24 directing that dues for every purchase made from any small and micro units or service availed from the service sectors by the medium or large industries have to be cleared within 45 days, else the defaulters have to pay penalty as per the IT law.

"Earlier we had been pro-

curing items from our local small and micro units and there was no time limit for paying the invoice amount. But now the Union Ministry of Finance under 34B(h) has made it mandatory to clear the dues within 45 days else the defaulters have to face a penalty. So, one (defaulter) has to pay a 25 percent penalty along with surcharges, which is close to 30 percent of the defaulted invoice amount plus the profit while submitting the IT returns. The same policy is not applicable if one industry is procuring items from the medium and large sectors or traders. As a result, fearing penal provision in case of default of payment, we are preferring to procure items from medium and large industries or

traders instead of small and

the small and micro units are suffering business losses," said an entrepreneur of a medium

scale industry. "Although the policy is

made to protect the small and medium scale industries to get their payment within 45 days, it is not proving very conducive for them. The industries (small and medium) fearing penal actions beyond 45 days payment are now heading towards medium and large industries instead of small and micro industries or traders," he said, adding, "The policy of making payment within 45 days of purchase should be made mandatory for all sectors including large, medium and small and micro industries in order to avoid such complications," he added.



nation 04

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

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.

"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 raised on 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 said.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $S^{\text{enior Indian Police Service}}_{(\text{IPS}) \text{ officer Nalin Prabhat}}$

has been appointed as the chief

of National Security Guard

(NSG), the country's counter-

terrorism force, according to a

Prabhat, a 1992 IPS officer of

Andhra Pradesh cadre, is

presently working as

Additional Director General in

the Central Reserve Police

The Appointments Committee

Force (CRPF).

Personnel Ministry order.

NFW DFI HI

1992 batch IPS

officer Nalin Prabhat



states and union territories on

Friday. '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

the tune of democracy," Kumar said. 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



have worked with us - petrol pumps, banks, post offices in the outreach program," Kumar said We are very hopeful that people will come out to vote. It is

our appeal, please join in this see that people are dancing to 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 at the Election Commission

Sandhu, was monitoring the progress of the election process from the control room set up

headquarters here.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

 $S_{\text{said India along with being}}^{\text{cience journal 'Nature' has}}$ an economic power is also 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 said.

"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 worldwide.

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 num-

ber 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 could be achieved with more

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, pharmaceuti-cals 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 on 'X'.

'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) elections in and Sikkim (32 seats) are also being held simultaneously.

site. The Civil Services (pre-

liminary) 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

"A total of 2,855 candidates

qualified for the personality

test of the examination," the

Of these, 1,016 candidates

were finally recommended

for different government ser-

vices. 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,

As many as 240 candidates

have been put on a reserved

the UPSC said.

was held in September.

UPSC said.

Civil Services topper Aditya scores 54.27 per cent in UPSC exams

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

vivil 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 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

She has been appointed as the Special Director, IB for a tenure stages -- preliminary, main of two years from the date of and personality test (or interassumption of charge of the view) -- to select officers for post or up superannuation i.E. April 30,

Police Service (IPS), among others.

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 UPSC.

A trainee Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, he hails from Lucknow in Uttar



He had chosen sociology as Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur and also possesses an his optional subject in the examination. Pradhan com-pleted his BTech in comput-MTech degree. He had electrical engineering as his optional subject in the civil services exam.

Institute of Technology (NIT) Pradhan (24), resident of Rourkela and is currently an Talcher town in Odisha's employee of the Indian Oil Corporation's (IOC) refiner-Angul district, scored 1,067 892 in written and

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 bachelor'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 writ-ten and 193 in the interview. er science from the National She completed her BA (Hons) in economics from St Stephens College, Delhi

list, it said, adding that the University. UPSC

was holding the additional

appointment of Sapna Tewari as the Special Director in the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Tewari, a 1992 batch IPS offi-cer of Odisha cadre, is currently



charge of the NSG. The ACC has also approved

of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved his appointment as the Director General, NSG for working as Additional Director a period up to August 31, 2028 Union Public Service Commission(UPSC) in three in the IB. i.E. The date of his superan-Popularly known as the "black cats", the federal contingency



Civil the

Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) chief Daljit Singh Chawdhary 2026, the order said.

nuation, the order said.

he Indian Administrative Service (IFS) and Indian

Service (IAS), Indian Foreign ed his BTech in electrical 175 in interview -- and engineering from the Indian secured the second rank.

Third rank holder Donuru Ananya Reddy, who appeared marks achieved by all the 1,016 candidates on its web-

Medical Services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI

Medical experts for

reintroduction of Indian

candidature mended candidates has been kept provisional.

Congress raps Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

¬he Congress charged Terime 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.



Ramesh alleged.

rights, he asked.

Why have the successive BJP

governments in Madhya

Pradesh failed to provide the

Adivasi communities their

Citing data compiled by the

"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 National Crime Records found out that the papers for Bureau (NCRB), the Congress the exams were leaked by a leader pointed out that private company that was Madhya Pradesh has the highalready implicated in the est crime rate against Dalits in Vyapam "scam"."Who is the the country. PM protecting in these scams? "In 2021 (the latest year for What is PM Modi doing to which data is available), the ensure that our youth never crime rate against SCs was 63.6 as compared to the national face such injustice again?" the average of 25.3. The state also former Union minister asked. In 2006, the Congress passed recorded high crime rates the revolutionary Forest Rights against Dalits in 2019 and Act (FRA) that granted the 2020 – 46.7 and 60.8 against the national averages of 22.8 and 25 respectively. It is dis-gusting and shameful that the Adivasi and forest-dwelling communities legal rights to manage their forests, and ecorate of crimes against Dalits has actually increased year-onnomically benefit from the forest produce they collect, he pointed out. year," he said.

"The BJP government, how-ever, has obstructed the imple-mentation of the FRA, depriv-MP for more than two decades now. Why is it that Dalits have ing millions of Adivasis of its to increasingly fear for their benefits. Only 47 per cent (2,94,877 claims) of the 6,27,513 individual claims safety? Does PM Modi feel no shame for the countless atrocities that Dalits have endured filed have been granted, and land titles distributed cover under his watch?" Ramesh asked and said the prime minonly 10 per cent (5,931 sq. km) ister should break his silence of the 57,948 sq. Km eligible on the issue.

to become new Navy Chief

Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar



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 The BJP has been in power in 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 Commanding-

in-Chief of the Western Naval Command. Tripathi has served in a vari-

ety of command, staff and instructional appointments. He has commanded INS Vinash. 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 cours-es 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 (NM).

DRDO hands over indigenous actuators, air brake modules to HAL



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

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.

professionals, noted the experts.

Medical experts represent-ing 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

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 noted.

Dr Sharad Kr Agarwal, the immediate past national pres-ident 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.



Modi takes dig at Rahul, Akhilesh

PM says film of do shehzade already rejected by people

temple's

PTI AMROHA (UP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a veiled dig at Congress leader Rahul asked the gathering. 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 after losing the case.' Iqbal Ansari, a litigant in the and Yadav, he said, "The shooting of the film 'do shehzade ki jodi (a pair of Ram Masjid case, attended the consecration ceremony of the princes)' is going on. But their film has already been rejected 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,

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



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

for its vote bank, calls Ram bhakts 'pakhandi' (hypocrites). Those in the INDIA opposition bloc hate Sanatan Dharma," Modi said.

PTI JAIPUR

released later.

56.89.

had gone from Amroha, "the The prime minister alleged that when he went under the prince of the Congress said there is nothing to pray under sea to offer prayers in Gujarat's Dwarka, where Lord Krishna the sea. They are rejecting our

faith only for their vote banks". Hitting out at Akhilesh Yadav

Minister Tejashwi Yadav, Modi said, "Those in Bihar, Minister who say they are Yaduvanshi, as well as Bihar's Deputy Chief in Uttar Pradesh, the leader 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). (BSP) governments in Uttar Pradesh in the past for allegedly ignoring farmers and 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 must ensure that these forces are not strengthened again in any manner.

The prime Minister accused the previous governments of

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 Charan Singh.

"The previous governments have only cheated the people of the SC, ST and OBC communities in the name of social justice. Modi is working 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.

home' option, he preferred to cast his vote at a polling

Newlywed Rohit and Sonia

Chaudhary went to a polling station in Jaipur' Purani Basti

station.



People not excited about polls, claims farmer leader Naresh Tikait

PTI MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP)

For 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 is in can perceive advance. Do they have any astrologer who has predicted votes 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 farmers today are feeling 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 People are opposing

As many as 114 candidates are in the fray in the first phase of polling that began at 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 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 elections on Friday. The election authorities said

Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra, Chief Minister Mishra, Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, former 54.97 per cent of the electorate cast their votes. The final figures would be 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.

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. "Voting is not only a constitutional right but also the duty of every citizen of India. This strengthens democracy," the governor said later.

The chief minister exercised his franchise at a polling



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 Modi

people want change and this told reporters after casting

station of Patnik Jagatpura election was going to be for

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

his vote. 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

day. Elderly citizens and some 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

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 deployed to maintain peace

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.

In a first, people of Andaman |Vehicle carrying EVM sinks in Assam river vulnerable Shompen tribe vote

her vote. 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

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

PTI PORT BLAIR

 $F_{\rm Andaman}^{\rm or \ the \ first \ time \ in} \ {\rm Nicobar}$ 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-out made by the Election

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 youth).

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



"Other two primitive tribes like 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 (ASSAM) (little Andaman tehsil of An SUV carrying an elec-tronic voting machine par-South Andaman district) where Onge primate tribes live exclusively (it is a tially sank into a river after

reserved forest area). "Out of water level rose suddenly wash-68 Onge, 62 of them voted ing away a mechanised boat including 35 male and 27 female," Returning Officer, that was ferrying the vehicle in Assam's Lakhimpur constituency on Friday, officials Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arjun Sharma said. said. The driver and the polling Similarly, 100 per cent voting happened at Strait Island officer of the vehicle managed which is an exclusively restricted area for the Great Andamanese tribe, "Out of 39 said. Great Andamanese, all 39 Great Andamanese exercised their voting rights," Sharma was detected in it as polling said.

PTI NORTH LAKHIMPUR

commenced in the morning, the official said. A quick response team sta-

tioned 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

to get out before water gushed sank," the official said. "A State Disaster Response into the vehicle, an official Force team was called in to pull the vehicle out of the water. The It was on its way to Amarpur EVM, meant for replacement, area in Sadiya to replace an EVM after a technical glitch was damaged in the accident,'

he added.

Shah files nomination from Gandhinagar LS seat

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



Union Home Minister and BJP candidate Amit Shah files his nomination papers for the Lok Sabha elections, in Gandhinagar, on Friday PTI

PM for the third time. Modiji

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 Modi so that he can make India a developed country by 2047 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

by the previous UPA government," Shah said. The next five years would be government. This election is all about making Narendra Modi our used to create a strong

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 his wife Krishnammal turned up at a booth in the Veerampattinam coastal village in Ariyankuppam Assembly constituency to cast their votes. Kothandapani is the

Polling picks up in Puducherry, 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 till 11 a.M. the town added to the lustre of the arrangements. The elections department distributed gruel, nutritious of cereals and millets and also buttermilk to the voters, sources said.

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

Volunteers were deployed to help aged and disabled voters

Long queues outside polling booths in Assam

PTI GUWAHATI

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

voters are eligible to vote. Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal of the BJP and Congress's deputy leader in Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi were among those who cast their votes in the first hour. There were apprehensions 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

Kaziranga seats, and 86.5 lakh

Upper Assam remaining cloudy, but gradually the sky

cleared up. "It is really a good sign that people are coming out in such a large number. People's spontaneous participation will strengthen democracy,' Sonowal, the BJP candidate of 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.

grandfather of the AIADMK

BHUBANESWAR | SATURDAY | APRIL 20, 2024

he pioneer

pinion 06

www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

-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 political 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 dovernance.

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.



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 suggested 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 confu-sion 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 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

of it. 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** SEEN

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 (PDF) and other ethnic armies like the KNLA and KLA.

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)

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

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

Rakhine State in the country's

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

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 Ltransformative 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.



post-pandemic era has seen a been transformative and repsignificant influx of digitisaresents a key area ripe for tion in learning, with univerinvestment and innovation. sities offering online pro-By providing everything from grams and various platforms career guidance to student counselling digitally, these providing a broad spectrum platforms have democratised courses online. Considering our current access to education, ensuring infrastructure and the expectthat students from all regions ed demand, it is essential for have better career opportunithe country to further explore ties. Yet, realising the full online learning and skill potential of these advancedevelopment opportunities. ments requires overcoming Aligning these opportunities significant challenges. Addressing the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to technology and improving with the next 10-year growth plan is crucial for preparing a skilled workforce that enhances graduate employainternet connectivity, espebility. cially in underserved areas, are critical. Moreover, as the However, the selection of

field rapidly diversifies, courses among students has strengthening quality assuralso seen a paradigm shift. India is moving beyond tra- ance and adapting accredita-

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

nations. 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 opportunities.

(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

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 profanity's normalisation.

CORRUPTION

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

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 pro-

Political quagmire

THE EDITOR

sharp contrast between the flawed current State of affairs and the ideal governance system envisioned in ancient scriptures like Manusmriti. The Manusmriti's principles, though controversial, present a compelling blueprint for a more righteous governance model, emphasising a partyless system, voter recall rights and alignment with moral principles. The chasm between this 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 vield 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 governance

Ishaan Shukhi | Ludhiana

found 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 South India.

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: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

WWW.dailypioneer.com facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

the pioneer

FIRSTCOLUMN 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 grave.

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 side' 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 Hanh.

Human-elephant conflict: The way out



ARVIND JHA

analys \$ 07

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

ndia's rich biodiversity includes a sig-nificant population of Asian elephants, which are not only an integral part of the country's wildlife heritage but also hold cultural and religious significance. However, the increasing instances of human-elephant conflict (HEC) have become a pressing concern for both conservationists and those living near elephant habitats.

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 human 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 attacks. In 2023-24 alone, Odisha reported 149 elephant deaths due to HEC. Mineral-rich districts like Dhenkanal, Angul, Keonjhar and Sundargarh have been hit the hardest, with Dhenkanal alone witnessing 130 elephants and 227 human deaths over the last decade.



wires. This was not an isolated incident; back in October 2021, sagging power lines near the Dihing-Patkai National Park claimed the lives of 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 dis-placement 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, lead-ing 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

WESTERN

REGION NOT

ELEPHANT

TRADITIONALLY **KNOWN FOR**

HABITATION, SAW

A SIGNIFICANT

CHANGE IN 2002

WHEN ELEPHANTS

MIGRATED FROM

KARNATAKA. THIS

MAHARASHTRA, A

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.

pronged approach that balances the

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 diminishing conflict incidents. Kerala has also taken a bold initiative to relocate people from forest regions and reforest agricultural lands, despite the central Government's refusal to fund this Rs. 620 crore project. The State's declaration of HEC as a State-specific disaster and the 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 conservation 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 of our shared ecosystem. (The writers are former principal chief conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra; *views are personal)*

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living: views are personal)

In August 2023, three elephants were electrocuted at the Rani Tea EState near Guwahati due to low-hanging high-voltage

Odisha and mining disturbances in their traditional corridors.

MOVEMENT WAS The Wayanad region, a vital watershed for Karnataka and Tamil LARGELY Nadu, is currently facing a multitude of environmental challenges such as ATTRIBUTED TO deforestation, irresponsible tourism THEIR and unscientific development. Such activities are posing a significant threat to the ecological balance of DISPLACEMENT the region, endangering the lives of FROM THE both humans and wildlife. Wayanad DANDELI plays a critical role in maintaining regional biodiversity. However, WILDLIFE ongoing habitat degradation in this region could potentially intensify the SANCTUARY, A water crisis in the Kaveri basin and PLACE THEY HAD escalate the HEC, which has tragically led to 41 fatalities already. INHABITED Similarly, in the northeastern States of Assam and West Bengal, expand-ing tea plantations and human set-COMFORTABLY tlements have encroached on ele-**UNTIL 1990** phants' traditional grounds, leading to frequent HEC incidents.

Addressing HEC requires a multi-

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 $CPI(\dot{M})$ 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 Gandhi

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

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 "com-munal 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 between the Congress and outfits whose secularist cre-silence on the CPI(M) candi-

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 lambasted the BJP as anti-nationals, communalists and dictators.

But what stood out was his

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 corre-spondent with The Pioneer; *views are personal)*



Iran fires at apparent Israeli attack drones

AP DUBAI

n apparent Israeli drone Aattack on Iran saw troops 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 Syria

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

Capri (AP): The United States

told the Group of Seven foreign

ministers on Friday that it

received "last minute" informa-

tion from Israel about a drone

action in Iran, Italy's foreign

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, who chaired the

meeting of ministers of indus-

trialised countries, said the

United States provided the

information at a Friday morn-

ing session that was changed at

the last minute to address the

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

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 drone-

Early Friday, Iran fired air

Tajani said the US informed

minister said.

suspected attack.

information

foreign min says at G7

the attack. The New York Times quoted anonymous Israeli officials claiming the assault, which came on Iranian Supreme Leader Avatollah Ali Khamenei's 85th birthday. Israeli politicians also made comments hinting that the country had launched an attack

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

and-missile assault on the coun

vent further escalation."

Portuguese-flagged vessel MSC

Aries in the Strait of Hormuz.

further sanctions or take other

measures, now and in response

to further destabilising initia-

against transferring ballistic

The group also warned Iran

tives," the document read.

'We stand ready to adopt

try last weekend.

Islamic Revolution.

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 different anti-aircraft gun positions, and details of the video corresponded 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?

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 site, which has been repeatedly targeted by suspected Israeli sabotage attacks. State television described all

atomic sites in the area as "fully safe." The United Nations'

nuclear watchdog, the Dubai-based carriers Emirates number of Iranian-backed and Gulf of Aden has declined International Atomic Energy and FlyDubai began diverting militias are based, residents of over the threat. The apparent 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.

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. Ăround 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 the were casualties,

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

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

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 inten-tional, particularly after Iranian officials for days have been

threatening to retaliate for any Israeli retaliatory attack on the

"As long as Iran continues to

deny the attack and deflect

Getting emotional and choking up as he made the remarks, Mansour said th

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

Antonio Guterres requesting that its application for full UN

membership be considered

For a State to be granted full UN membership, its applica-

tion 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.

work information system.

It will play a crucial role in

advancing the Chinese mili-tary's high-quality develop-

ment and competitiveness in

modern warfare, state-run

Xinhua news agency quoted

olutely obey the ruling

Communist Party's command

and make sure it stays absolute-

ly loyal, pure and reliable. Xi

urged the force to integrate

deeply into the Chinese mili-

tary'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.

He ordered the force to res-

him as saying.

Secretary-General

nation.

report.

hope?

UN

again.

Information Support

Force for military

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

Man detained after police op at Iranian consulate

world 08

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. attention from it and no further The official said the man hits are seen, there is space for both sides to climb down the was spotted around 11 a.m. (0900 GMT) on Friday and that escalation ladder for now," said Sanam Vakil, the director of the police launched a special operation as soon as they were alert-Middle East and North Africa program at Chatham House. ed. The man's motives were not (AP) Associated Press journalimmediately clear. No exploists Nasser Karimi, Mehdi Fattahi and Amir Vahdat in sions have been reported, the official said. Tehran, Iran; Bassem Mroue in

Images on French televi-Beirut: and Nicole Winfield in sion and social media showed Capri, Italy; contributed to this police surrounding the build-

US vetoes Palestinian bid to gain statehood at UN Israel warned US about drone attack on Iran, Italian

PTI UNITED NATIONS

The US has vetoed a resolu-tion in the UN Security Council on the latest Palestinian bid to be granted full membership of the United In a communique following Nations, an outcome lauded by the three-day meeting, the min-Israel but criticised by Palestine isters urged the parties "to preas "unfair, immoral, and unjustified"

The statement pledged sup-The 15-nation Council voted on a draft resolution Thursday port for Israel's security and condemned "in the strongest terms" that would have recommended to the 193-member UN General Assembly "that the State of Palestine be admitted what the foreign ministers described as Iran's "unprecedented attack against Israel of April 13-14, which Israel defeat to membership in the United ed with the help of its partners, Nations. as well as the seizure of the

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 reso-

lution required at least nine Council members voting in its favour, with no vetoes by any of its five permanent members China, France, Russia, the

missiles and related technology United Kingdom and the to Russia. On the war in Gaza United States. Palestinian attempts for recogthe group called on Hamas to release hostages and reminded nition as a full member state Israel to respect international began in 2011. Palestine is currently a non-member and humanitarian law.

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 veto.

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 solution.

"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 under-

take 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

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 guaranfree and that is sovereign. Our right to self-determination is inalienable...," he said. teed.

"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 bargain-

ing or negotiation. "Our right to self-determina-Earlier in the day, Guterres, in tion is a natural right, a historic his remarks to a Council meet-

ing on the Middle East, warned right, a legal right. A right to live in our homeland Palestine that the region is on a "knife as an independent state that is 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 chil-dren, 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 withheld.

3 dead

in UAE

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

AP NEW YORK

arriving at the courthouse about the gag order imposed by the judge that limits what he can publicly say about witnesses 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 prosecu-tors' 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 court-Former President Donald Trump holds up news clippings as he speaks following his AP/PTI room, one woman who said she didn't believe she could be "completely fair" was excused. date against the backdrop of Judge Juan M. Merchan is also his hotly contested race against President Joe Biden. It will feaexpected to hold a hearing ture salacious and unflattering Friday to consider a request testimony his opponent will no from prosecutors to bring up Trump's prior legal entangle-ments if he takes the stand in the doubt seize on to try to paint Trump as unfit to return as commander in chief. After hush money case.

kills 22 people

Council resolution." Xi Jingping launches Attack blamed

awyers worked Friday to Lound 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 unpredictabili ty 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

stories Trump feared would hurt his 2016 presidential campaign. The trial will place Trump in a Manhattan courtroom

trial at Manhattan criminal court in New York on Thursday

for weeks, forcing him to juggle his dual role as criminal defendant and political candi-

in central Syria

on IS militants

Beirut (AP): An attack on pro government 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 reported 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.

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 net-

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 Eleaked 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 trial.

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 to 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 AP/PT



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 effec-tively 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 pro-

vide specific details about US discussions with allies and other partners, including whether an alternative monitoring regime would more like-ly 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 her office.

Thomas-Greenfield said it was



clear that Russia and China, which abstained from voting on the UN resolution vetoed by

> 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 bal-

"I don't expect that they will



"President Biden has said cat-

ing the situation in the Middle

East, where Palestinians will

have a state of their own and

and we are working on the

"We do not see that doing a res-olution in the Security Council

where we can find a ... two-state

added. Tensions on the Korean

Moscow, will continue to try to block international efforts to maintain monitoring of UN sanctions against North Korea. She criticised Russia for violat-ing those sanctions with its alleged arms purchases from North Korea, and China for protecting the North from solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. egorically that we support a two-state solution for address-

listic missile testing since 2022, underscoring a divide between permanent Security Council members that deepened over Russia's war on Ukraine.

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

Peninsula are at their highest point in years, as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has accelerated his weapons demonstra-

tions and issued provocative threats of nuclear conflict addressed questions about ten-

against rivals

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 assets.

In a telephone conversation on Wednesday, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida agreed to further strengthen three-way cooper-ation 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 Israel is secure in their state, month's vote that Western nations are trying to "strangle" North Korea and that sanc-tions are losing their "releground to get to that place as quickly as possible," she said. vance" in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons will necessarily get us to a place in the North. In its most recent report circulated last monthsolution moving forward," she 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.

The IMF sees three important

opportunities for China, she

said. Number one, to shift the

economy more towards domes-

tic 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 ser-

vices, and more things to buy.

"We know that the healthcare

services in China can expand

that getting the social safety

nets to work more effectively

would give people an opportu-

nity to save a bit less, to spend

"Secondly, we see the reforms

in China that have served the

quite significantly

a bit more," she said.

AP 📕 KYIV

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 mis-sion. 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

visits Finland-Russia border to assess security situation

AP COPENHAGEN

The head of the European Union's executive branch said on Friday that Finland's designed to describe harder 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-kilome-

ter (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



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

world 09

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 post forces. The next month, another early warning and

a Russian military transport plane that was carrying Ukrainian POWs who were

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

AP MANADO

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, securi-ty 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 anic ash Many hous 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 for the market to lift up these of six hours by boat. prospects," Georgieva said.

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

now

PTI WASHINGTON

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. conomy 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 affects consumer confidence. and deflation risks coming So clearing up the problems in down," he said. 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, Srinivasan Director out the fact that it is impor IMF 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 consump-tion 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

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

bishop and priest at Sydney church Svdnev (AP): A 16-year-old shown no signs of being radiboy accused of stabbing two calised. The 16-year-old's lawyer, Christian clerics during a Greg Scragg, said the boy had a

Teenager charged with

terror in stabbings of

Sydney church service has "long history of behaviour" conbeen charged by police with sistent 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 in custody He will enter i

Russian strategic bomber with anti-aircraft missiles. **EU** official von der Leyen

after visiting the border in Lappeenranta with Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo. "We should be more Finnish

when it comes to security." 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 neutrality 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

of Ukraine.

Ukraine said it knocked out control plane. Also in January, Moscow accused Kyiv of shooting down

headed for a prisoner swap. Russian forces overnight con-ducted a combined aerial attack

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 tant to address SOE reform quite urgently, scaling back of industrial policies, which provide implicit or explicit guaran-tees 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.

pected 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.

terrorism offenses.

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, sus-taining 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 on Friday in Sydney.

The offense carries a maximum penalty of imprisonment for life. The matter was heard at a Sydney children's court on Friday. The juvenile, not appear via video link

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.

who is not being named, did from his hospital bed and did not apply for bail at the brief hearing.

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" and a "short fuse", but had

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY 9 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 tende document has been published in the e-procurement website with extension. Last datu & time of submission of bids through on-ling 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

Sd/- Deputy Conservator, Paradip Port Authority PPA/PR-01/2024-2025 dtd 18.04.2024

	FFA/FR-VII	2024-2025 utu. 18.04.207
(† RITES	RITES LI (A Govt. Of India Shikhar, Plot No.1, Sector-2	Enterprise)
Enga	agement of manpower	on contract:
VC No.	Post	No. of Vacancies
(N Electrical/E Manager (conduc ap Written tes	tten test for the posts of Assis lechanical/Metallurgy), Assist ilectronics), Assistant Manage IT/CS) advertised vide VC No ted on 05-05-2024. Last date i plication has been extended t it will be conducted at Guwah Bangalore, Gurugram, Hyder	ant Manager er (Civil) and Assistant 132/24-135/24 will be for submission of o 29-04-2024. ati, Kolkata, Mumbai,

US ambassador to UN visits **Five Japanese escape unhurt** in Karachi suicide bombing Nagasaki A-bomb museum

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



US Ambassador to United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield, left, and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, right, shake hands during a meeting on Friday

weapons," she added, standing in ly half-century of aggression in front of colourful hanging origa-mi cranes, a symbol of peace. Ásia. Nagasaki Gov. Kengo Oishi said in a statement that he The United States dropped the believed Thomas-Greenfield's world's first atomic bomb on visit and her first-person expe-Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, rience at the museum "will be a destroying the city and killing strong message in promoting momentum of nuclear disarma-140,000 people. A second attack three days later on Nagasaki killed 70,000 more people. Japan ment for the international society at a time the world faces a surrendered on August 15, endsevere environment surrounding World War II and its nearing atomic weapons?

PTI KARACHI/PESHAWAR

 F^{ive} 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 travelling in a van along with two security guards when two terrorists tried to hit the van. The

security guards killed one ter-rorist while another blew himself up in an attempt to get close to the van, the official said. "All five Japanese nationals are safe," DIG Shaikh said. "No one 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 government 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 four-

year-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 security forces killed seven terrorists trying to infiltrate the country's border with Afghanistan in the

same province. There has been an uptick in terror 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.

money 10

India standout performer amidst sluggish global growth: IEA Secretary

PTI WASHINGTON

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," Šeth said.

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

estimate closer to 8 per cent India's proactive stance on reform and investment in sustainable growth avenues

the pioneer

BHUBANESWAR | SATURDAY | APRIL 20. 2024

sets a benchmark for emerging economies. 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 front, the narrowing



on

curve

Öbserving

a robust AI ecosystem through

strategic programmes and

partnerships across the public

and private sectors. The focus

technology is expected to

propel India to stay on the

innovation, consolidate and

solidify its position in the

manufacturing sector registered double-digit growth

in Q3 of 24 fiscal years, driven

by a surge in investment,

improved investor confidence,

that

global supply chain," he said.

of

and

the

technological

infrastructure

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 startups. and strong domestic demand "The Mission aims to establish conditions, Seth said the year

also saw continued strong growth in services, led by noncontact-intensive services sectors

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 totalling an amount of INR 19.78 trillion.

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

"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 said

Stock markets stage strong rebound

PTI MUMBAI

Stock markets rebounded from early lows to 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 BSE midcap gauge declined 0.39 per cent and 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

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

countries.

PTI NEW DELHI

 $S_{\text{continued to decline on}}^{\text{hares of Nestle India}}$ 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 years, we have already reduced stock ended at Rs 2,430 apiece, added sugars by up to 30 per cent cent. On Thursday, shares of Nestle India had declined over 3 per cent. 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

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

PTI MUMBAI

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 2023 on concerns over 2023 on concerns ore inflation after the three-day meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) earlier this month.

HDFC

MUTUAL FUND

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



The central bank on Friday released the minutes of 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".

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

and welcome new customers, increasing income levels and uto-maker Hyundai Motor otor India said in a AIndia has expanded its 'Grameen Mahotsav' initiative statement on Friday. The inaugural 'Grameen to 16 new locations across the Mahotsav' event was held successfully in Mahemdavad, country, after the success of its inaugural event held in Gujarat Gujarat. Now, Hyundai Motor India looks forward to this month. The 'Grameen Mahotsav' initiative aims to extending its reach and impact across rural landscapes. further strengthen HMIL's "Our sustained efforts towards connection to rural India with specially curated events and bolstering rural connect are bearing great fruits and Hyundai Motor India has product displays including live music, folk dance, and regional witnessed a remarkable growth talent shows among others. It also serves as a platform for Hyundai to delve into the vast in rural markets in the financial year 2023-24. We sold 1.15 lakh vehicles in rural India potential of rural markets. By last year, a growth of 11 per cent over 2022-23," Hyundai closely engaging with communities and discerning Motor India Ltd. COO Tarun Garg said. "We are confident market trends, HMIL aims to not only cater to evolving

nfrastructure the improve

Gold jumps ₹400 to breach

₹74k mark, silver hits fresh peak

consulate in Syria.

This has increased the Gold and silver prices soared to fresh record high levels on Friday with the possibility of a larger regional conflict that would support higher gold prices. precious metal breaching Rs Additionally, silver was quoted higher at USD 28.29 per ounce. 74,000 per 10 grams mark here on bullish global trends. In the previous close, it had finished at USD 28.25 per

PTI NEW DELHI

According to HDFC Securities, gold price jumped Rs 400 to hit ounce. 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. "Snot o

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 interest rates high or a while 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 2001

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

lepending variant." The spokesperson further said, "We regularly review our portfolio and continue to innovate and reformulate our

countries. 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

compromising on nutrition, quality, safety, and taste.'

SUSINESS 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

products to further reduce the level of added sugars, without

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".

HDFC AMC Q4 profit soars 44 pc to ₹541 crore

PTI NEW DELHI

HCompany (AMC) on Friday reported a 44 per cent jump in profit after tax at Rs 541.1 crore in three months ended March 2024.

In comparison, the company posted a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 376.1 crore in the yearago period, the fund house said in a regulatory filing to the

stock exchanges 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

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

from contribution 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

the Delhi markets are trading at a record high of Rs 74,100 rural 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

"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.

Infosys shares decline nearly per cent after Q4 earnings

PTI NEW DELHI

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

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 cent

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 day

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

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.

currency revenue growth for FY25, missing expectations," as per a report by JM Financial Institutional Securities.

a regulatory filing. The consolidated revenue of Infosys

[†]Infosys guided for 1-3 per cent constant

CAG signs pact with SAI Bulgaria to enhance international collaboration

PTI NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has signed an agree-ment 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 institutions, 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.

Girish Chandra Murmu, the CAG of India, expressed confidence in the partnership and said the MoU will further strengthen bilateral cooperation.

'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,"

he said

The MoU signing ceremony was attended by Goritsa Grancharova - Kozhareva, Acting President of the Bulgarian National Audit

Office. Murmu further highlighted the broader implications of the MoU, stating it will also help cementing the ties that already exist between the two nations.

Air India cancels

Dubai flights PTI NEW DELHI

ir India on Friday said it Ahas cancelled flights to and from Dubai due to continued operational disruptions at the airport in the Gulf city.

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 for cancellation.

An Air India spokesperson said the airline has cancelled the flights to and from Dubai due to continued operational 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 operations resume," the spokesperson said in a

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



ne pioneer





classical enowned dancer Shovana Narayan, Padmashree awardee celebrated her mesmerising performances, once again 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

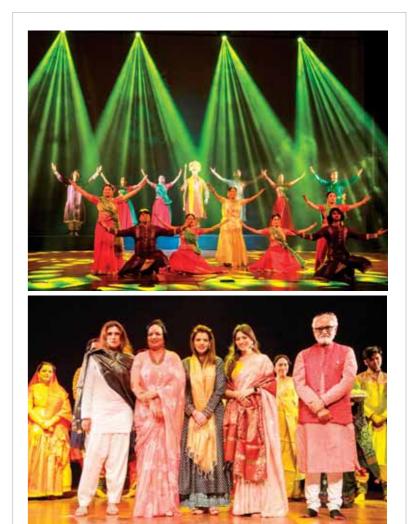
profound symbolism present in hand-held paintings depicting his darshan. Narayan's

choreography s k i l l f u l l y portrayed the m y r i a d 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 and emotional levels. One of the distinctive "Ram elements of Aagman" was its homage to Goddess



Inspired by Beethoven and her Indian roots,



Durga, emphasizing the celebration

of divine femininity and her pivotal

with her innovative approach,

tale, making it relevant for

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

Narayan's dedication to her art form

is evident in every aspect of "Ram

to the immersive experience.

contemporary audiences.

Aagman." Through her evocative choreography and profound storytelling, she continues to inspire role in the universe. Narayan's audiences and keep the rich heritage reverence for tradition, coupled of Indian classical dance alive. As breathed new life into this timeless she eloquently puts it, "The absence or the presence of 'Ramatva' became evident through various emotions The success of 'Ram Aagman' owes portrayed, offering food for thought much to the collective efforts of the 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 nation.

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.

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

one adapts and adjusts.



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 of challenges and difficulties. If we think everything should be according to our expectations and perfect that is impossible. Undue expectations

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?

0

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 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 keep moving ahead.

> Chinmay Purohit (Director), what do you hope the 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.

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.

The sculptor operates from her private studio, Della

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

process,

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. young

in New

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

masterclasses, nurturing a new

Niyamat's sculptures are a

testament to her creativity and

attention to detail. Her sculptures,

particularly the Dali series, are

inspired by artists like

Salvador Dali and

generation of sculptors.

Delhi. Her studio is

more than just a

workspace; it is a

located

knowledge

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 Atelier Firenze,

through

essence. Looking ahead, Niyamat aims to persist with commissioned work, hold solo

sculpture

presents, imbuing

them with a soulful

she

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.

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.

diversity of preferences, dislikes, and opinions across various

Niyamat believes that the



sports 12



ISHABH PANT SET FOR EMOTIONAL HOMECOMING

PTI NEW DELHI

emotional homecoming awaits A 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 Head 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 the best in 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



getting back to the top of his which may not be able to hold game, wouldn't mind if he can its own on a good batting win the toss and opt to bat. track.

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

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 Yaday, Jake Fraser-McGurk. Sunrisers Hyderabad: Pat

TEAMS (FROM):

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), Umran 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 his team

while PBKS dropped a spot to ninth after their fifth defeat. "Hardik Pandya, the Mumbai Indians captain, has been fined team maintained a slow over rate got down low on his front to convert an attempted vorker during their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 match from Bumrah into a full toss against Punjab Kings at the and smack it for a six over International backward square leg. PCA New "It was my dream to hit a Cricket Stadium, Mullanpur on April 18," said an ÎPL sweep shot against Bumrah. I was practising for that shot but statement on Friday. "As it was his team's first it came against the best bowler in the world - it is a part of the offence of the season under game," Ashutosh told the the IPL's Code of Conduct media here after the match. relating to minimum over rate Ashutosh said he was confident of taking Punjab offences, Pandya was fined Rs 12 lakhs," the statement added. Mumbai Indians next play over the line. 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 **r** 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

OTHER SPORTS

questions," Ashutosh said 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 onslaught. "He really brought it to us. We

just wanted to be really clear actically what we wanted to

Impact Player not ideal for coaches but fans have last say: Ponting

PTI 📕 NEW DELHI

The Impact Player rule in TIPL might 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 Rohit Sharma in a recent YouTube podcast said that he is not a fan of the rule" as it hurts development of Indian all-

rounders. "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 think for a coach and for the players, it's probably not ideal, little bit more improvement but I think you know a lot of from him today. what this game tries to do is to entertain people," Ponting explained his point of view. batting today against some fast bowling stuff to make sure that "The T20 game is an the pain is not there anymore," Ponting replied to a query from PTI. entertainment package and it's probably better asking the The coach was happy with the pitch on which DC will play its spectator what they think about the impact player, because if everyone is loving first home game. the fact that teams are making, "A lot more grass on the entire you know, 220 up to 250 in a square than we used to see here. You know, this is the lot of the games, and the main reason that we moved spectators like seeing it, then it should stay.



no reason why I couldn't go back to the old," he added. "Warner is around 85 to 90% fit'

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

"But he will have to do a lot of

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 overs

MI rose to seventh from ninth position on the points table following their third win in seven games in IPL 2024,

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 "I had belief in myself that I changed my game," Ashutosh said.

"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

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

"We just really learned from their innings. We adapted our plans and I think it worked," Coetzee added.

away from those couple of "But if the spectators aren't games at the back of WPL.



Group condemns searches by security at Barcelona stadium

AP PARIS

The director of a group that advocates I 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

condemned the practice and called 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 whether visiting fans in particular are being subjected to more aggressive searches.

A request for comment from UEFA sent on Thursday evening was not immediately answered.

Olympic organisers to use AI in sports International

Olympic

AP LONDON

Olympic organisers unveiled their plans Friday to use artificial intelligence in sports, joining the global ruch to conjugate on the 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 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.



AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit before the Nota Public, Keonjhar, Dist-Keonjhar. I Suchi Sweta Mohanta , the real daughter o Army No. 4550443Y Naik Late Raghunath Mohanta (Retd.) residing at Vill-Gajapathar, P.O.: Damahunda, P.S.: Patna, Dist-Keonjhar, At/Pre : Wo. Bimalendu Mohanta, At/P.O.: Jamunti, P.S.: Raruan,Dist-Mayurbhanj, Odisha declares that in my father's service documents and discharge book my name & date of birth are wrongly mentioned as Suchitsmita Mohanta, DOB 15-Jan-87. That my correct name is Suchit Sweta Mohanta & Date of Birth is 05-06-1991. This is mentioned in my educational certificate & Birth Certificate. That both Suchit Sweta Mohanta, Date of Birth 05.06.1991 & Suchitsmita Mohanta, Date of Birth 15-Jan-87 belongs to one and same person. That my correct and full name is Suchit Sweta Mohanta, DOB 05-06-1991 for all purpose. This affidavit may be produced before concerned authority as & when required

Punia, Sujeet to miss Asian qualifiers

PTI NEW DELHI

 $\ensuremath{{\mathsf{T}}}$ n a huge setback for the Indian wrestling L 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 weigh in 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.