OPINION 6

WORLD 8

MONEY 10

DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol.18 Issue 103 *Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable



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Delhi Government's Vigilance Department exposes Kejriwal

lose on the heels of multi-crore excise and ✓ Delhi Jal Board scandal, Arvind Kejriwal's AAP-led Delhi Government's Vigilance Department has found gross irregularities in procurement of certain medical items purchased to favour 'a few individuals' and 'companies' which ultimately favoured the companies, causing huge loss the Government's exchequer during the Covid pandemic.

The Vigilance Department on Monday issued a show cause notice to the Health Minister's OSD RN Das in connection with alleged irregularities in procurement of various items like personal protective equipment (PPE) kits, gloves, masks and RAT kits worth around ₹60 crore during Covid pandemic in 2021. In a show-cause notice issued

Department, it said in various cases, committees headed by RN Das (who was OSD to Health Minister Satvender Jain and currently OSD to Health Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj) was in the forefront in managing the tenders in favour of a particular family in different company names.

Jain is currently lodged in Tihar facing a probe in a money laundering case while Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia too are in Tihar Jail for the liquorgate scam.

The vigilance department has sought a response from Das within seven days and it said the conspiracy was hatched in the backdrop of Covid crisis and the pandemic was used as a reason and basis to swindle crores of rupees from public exchequer and all the procurements were done completely ignoring the president Virendra Sachdeva

procedure to be followed by the mandate issued by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Health department officials have used the context of Covid for enriching these private companies and intentionally allowed cartelisation among the companies," said the notice pointing Das chaired three committees for procurement of single use gloves, sterilised gloves and N-95 masks. Reacting to the show cause

notice, the AAP-led Delhi Government in a statement said, "The laughable allegations borne out of desperation pertain to the time period when Das was neither OSD of Saurabh Bharadwaj nor Satyendra Neither was Jain. recommended by the then Minister.

Delhi BJP Meanwhile

has welcomed the notice and Healthcare Pvt Ltd is that it has said this will help bring out the truth of the scam of purchase and distribution of fake and poor quality medicines in the Delhi Government hospitals. The BJP leader said no OSD or ministerial employee can do such a big scam without the

consent of the concerned

Minister.

According to notice, the cartelisation and giving wrongful gain to the suppliers is also established by the fact that the initial tender of RAT Kit was given to M/s SD Biosensor, Healthcare private limited at the unit price of

This tender was awarded based upon the circular of ICMR dated 26.08.2020 as per the supply order dated 16.06.2020 and 29.06.2020 for ₹49.50 crore (approximately together). The logic that was given for M/s SD Biosensor was recognised as a valid supplier for the RAT Kit.

In the said circular of ICMR, there is no mention of Pharma Surge Impex or M/s AC Surgipharma Pvt Ltd Dr RN Das and company have introduced the concept of tendering through GeM instead of directly ordering as per the ICMR circular so as to roping in Pharma Surge and M/s Impex Surgipharma Pvt Ltd, which are owned by the family of Sandeep Gupta and Chetan

The notice further said in the tender the rate that was quoted is ₹459.20 per unit. It is observed that as to how these officers have awarded contracts and adopted tendering methods contrary to ICMR circular.

Makhija.

Even in the tender, the unit price is ₹9.20 higher than the initial unit price. It is Healthcare Pvt Ltd or M/s AC

observed that the rate of RAT Kit has progressively declined every month so much so that within a span of 6 months, the RAT Kit was available at a rate of ₹31.50 per unit. It further stated that RAT Kit

orders were given jointly to M/s Pharma Surge Impex (Proprietor is Vandana Gupta wife of Sandeep Gupta) and M/s SD Biosensor Healthcare Pvt. Ltd. (Proprietor is Chetan Makhija). These two companies were

together and were given 4 orders which indicate strong collaboration. Pharma Surge Impex does not figure in the list of ICMR circular dated 26.08.2020. The vigilance department

said Chetan Makhija is also director of M/s SD Biosensor Healthcare Pvt Ltd as well as M/s AC Surgipharma Pvt Ltd. Approvals were either given M/s SD Biosensor

whereas, outwardly, they are two different companies but it is manned by Chetan Makhija which is again proof of cartelisation," it said. The notice said the omissions

and commissions have been noticed on the part of RN Das. OSD to then Minister (Health) Satyendra Jain in the purchase of various medical items, such as single use gloves, sterilised gloves, N-95 masks & RAT kit, in the backdrop of Covid crisis during the year 2020-2022.

The department said Health Department officials used the context of Covid for enriching these private companies and intentionally allowed among the cartelisation competitors.

"It is observed that certain medical items were purchased so as to favour a few individuals and companies/

companies and wrongful loss to the Government," the order a show cause notice copy said The notice said the direct order was placed to SD Biosensor Healthcare Pvt Ltd as per ICMR circular. But subsequent procurement was not done u/s 50 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, it was done based upon recommendation committee under

Chairmanship of Dr RN Das, Dr ZSIC Marak and Dr Poonam Panwar.

In its observation that led to a needle of suspicion, the vigilance noted that three members were common in all the committees formed to be involved in the procurement several items and incidentally flouting the norms all these committees were headed by RN Das in the capacity of chairperson in all the committees.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders greet supporters during a public meeting, ahead of Lok Sabha elections,

Kerala under shackles of drug mafia: Modi

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

In a whirlwind election difference campaign that saw him Congress Kochi from where he flew down to Kattakkada in southern Kerala on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made startling disclosure.

"Kerala has emerged as the narcotics capital of South India and the State is under the shackles of a drug mafia. Politicians ruling the State are offering patronage to these drug syndicates while campuses in the State have become killing fields where students are murdered while the law enforcing agencies look the other way," said the Prime Minister.

He also disclosed that both the Congress and the CPI(M) were hands-in-glove with banned extremist outfits. "These organisations themselves have declared their alliance with these

parties," pointed out Modi. Modi said there was no difference between the and Kerala, they act as if they are enemies. Once they cross the border and enter Tamil Nadu, both these parties are friends and allies. They are cheating the public of Kerala," charged the Prime

Minister. He pointed out that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has not uttered anything against the cooperative bank scam in Kerala in which the CPI(M) embezzled hundreds of crores of rupees belonging to the poor people. Modi promised the electors

that his

Kerala Government would make the State a hub of heritage tourism. He also made an irresistible offer to all homemakers' liberal financial assistance to arrange homestay facilities next few months. for promoting tourism.

A massive crowd has turned up at Kunnamkulam and the Kattakkada to greet the Prime the Minister and listen to him. heli-hopping from Kochi to Communists except in their Waxing eloquence on the Kunnamkulam and back to names. "When they are in natural beauty and salubriousness of the State's climate, Modi said he is at a loss to understand why the Congress-led UDF and the CPI(M)-led LDF kept Kerala as an underdeveloped region despite the fact that nature has been very kin to the State. Explaining the salient points in the election manifesto released by the BJP on Sunday, which happened to be the Vishu Day, the Prime

> in the next tenure of the NDA Government. The Prime Minister said the bullet train connecting Ahmedabad and Mumbai will become a reality in the

Minister told the gathering

that what they have

witnessed in the ten years

was just a trailer while the

mega action is to be expected

Boost for Indian agriculture as IMD predicts above normal monsoon

In good news for the farmers and Lagriculture sector which is the main fulcrum of the Indian economy, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast above-normal rainfall during the upcoming June-September southwest monsoon season. The seasonal rainfall forecast is expected to be 106 per cent of the long-period average (LPA), which is 870 mm (1970-2020 average).

This is the first time in a decade the IMD has predicted above-normal rainfall, that too in its first-stage longrange forecast, which is issued nearly 45 days in advance of the actual onset of the southwest monsoon over Kerala on June 1. The IMD categorises the seasonal rainfall as above-normal when it ranges between 105-110 per cent of the LPA.



The country can expect good monsoon rainfall during southwest monsoon season this year. The seasonal rainfall will be 106 per cent of the LPA," said Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, director-general of the IMD at a Press conference during the release of the first-stage long-range forecast for the southwest monsoon season in 2024.

M Ravichandran, secretary at the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences said "there are multiple favourable factors indicating a high probability for above-normal rainfall during the June-September period this year". "Of these, the vital oceanic factor is the El Nino, an event associated with

the above-normal sea-surface temperatures prevailing over the equatorial Pacific Ocean. It is known to cause extreme heatwaves and suppress the Indian summer monsoon rainfall," he said. The ongoing El Nino event, the IMD

said, is weakening. "But it continues to remain in the

'moderate' category. Closer to the onset of the southwest monsoon season, El Nino Southern Oscillation neutral conditions are likely to establish," added Mohapatra.



Amarnath yatra begins **MOHIT KANDHARI** ■ JAMMU

The 52-day-long Shri Amarnathji Yatra will commence on June 29 this year and it will culminate on August 19, 2024 amid tight security

arrangements. Meanwhile, the advance registration for the annual Amarnath pilgrimage began on Monday across designated

bank branches. The Shrine Board authorities have also taken up the task of snow clearance on both tracks on a war footing. The leftover track expansion work will be taken up further after the completion

of the snow clearance work. 'The advance registration has started today at bank branches here. The exercise is being conducted at 540 branches of PNB (Punjab National Bank) across the country," an official involved in the registration process

said.

It is Aadhaar authentication-based form generation for Yatris rather than

permitted for the pilgrimage."
For issuing a Compulsory Health Certificate (CHC) for advance yatra registration, more than 230 doctors have been authorised in various medical centres in all 20 districts of

Iran to allow Indian officials to meet seized cargo vessel crew

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Tran will soon allow Indian **▲**Government officials to meet with 17 Indian crew members who are onboard a Israel-linked ship seized near the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday by Tehran, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told Minister External Affairs Jaishankar.

Amir-Abdollahian conveyed this to Jaishankar during a telephonic conversation on Sunday, according to an Iranian readout. In the talks, Jaishankar called for the release of the Indians onboard Portuguese-flagged cargo vessel MSC Aries. Indian Government to meet with the "We are following up on the details of crew of the said ship," the Iranian



the seized ship and soon it will be possible for the representatives of the Indian Government to meet with the readout quoted Amir-Abdollahian as saying. He also reportedly called for India's role to stop the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

The readout said Jaishankar expressed his concern about the situation of the 17 Indian crew members and requested assistance from Iran in this regard.

Special Naval Forces of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) seized 'MSC Aries' reportedly in view of its links with Israel. The MSC (Mediterranean Shipping Company) said on Saturday that it is working closely with relevant authorities for the well-being of 25 crew members and the return of the vessel.

the manual procedure followed in 2022, said the officials, adding that forms will be system-generated now. For registration, it is mandatory for the pilgrims to produce a health certificate. However, children below 13 years of age, elders above 70 years and six-week pregnant women will not be

Jammu and Kashmir.

EC's crackdown on money power, ₹5,000 crore seized

RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

With the 'mystery' over and Electoral Bonds yet to settle, the flow of 'unaccounted' money of about ₹5,000 crore by the Election Commission in the last one and a half months has raised evebrows. In a move to crackdown on black money in form of cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals and freebies supply ahead of the first phase of polling for the 102 Lok Sabha seats on April 19, the poll watchdog has seized ₹4658.167 crore since March 1.

So on an average the poll watchdog has seized ₹100 crore per day. What is more concerning is the seizure of drugs worth ₹2,069 crore during this period. Out of the total recoveries worth ₹4,658 crore, freebies and other items stand at over ₹1142.49 crore, the cash component stands at over ₹395.39 crore, while liquor stands at more than ₹489.31 crore. Significantly, 45 per cent of the

seizures are of drugs (₹2,069

Data shared by the EC showed that authorities have been making seizures worth ₹100 crore every day since March 1. The EC said the seizures made since March 1 exceed the over ₹3,475 crore recovered during the 2019 parliamentary polls.

If the amount of January and February which stood at ₹7,502 crore added to this will bring the total seizure to over ₹12,000 crore so far. Meanwhile, the EC has ordered the removal of the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) of Murshidabad in West Bengal over violence in the district and the officer's alleged "lack of supervision" to immediately prevent more incidents, according to sources.

₹778.52 With over Rajasthan is top in the list, followed by Gujarat (₹605.33 Tamil Nadu (₹460.84 crore), (₹431.34 crore). Maharashtra crore), Punjab (₹311. 84 crore), Kerala (₹281. 43 crore) Delhi (₹236.06 crore), West Bengal



LIQUOR 35,829,924.75 Ltr. 489.31 Cr.





FREEBIES / OTHER ITEMS 1,142.49 Cr.

TOTAL : 4.658.16 Cr.

was a substantial focus on drug

(₹219.60 crore), and Bihar (₹155. 76 crore) are among the top in the seizures list. Karnataka, West Bengal and

Rajasthan are among the top in distributing liquor to voters during polls. Significantly, 45 per cent of the seizures are of drugs and narcotics that are under the special focus of

seizures, which accounted for approximately 75 per cent of the total seizures in January and February 2024. According to the EC, drug seizures

accounted for approximately 75 per cent of the total seizures in January and February this year with the poll panel focussing on the commission. Notably, there the menace much before the poll cavalcade of a prominent leader.

schedule was announced. Over the past few years, significant seizures have been made during elections to state assemblies in Gujarat, Punjab, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, and Mizoram.

In an incident in Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, the commission suspended the flying squad leader for laxity in duty and selective checking of a

officials checked vehicles in the convoy of the Chime Minister of a State and also vehicles of a Deputy Chief Minister in another State. The commission has also taken strict action against approximately 106 Government servants who have been found assisting politicians in campaigning, thereby violating the Model Code of Conduct and instructions. The seizures have been possible

by comprehensive planning, scaled up collaboration and unified deterrence action from agencies, proactive citizen participation and optimal engagement technology. The commission has

also collaborated with the Directorate General of the Narcotics Control Bureau and its senior officials to identify key routes and corridors for drug trafficking and ensure effective counter measures are in place," the EC said in a statement.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, while announcing the polls last month, had

underlined money power as one of the '4M' challenges, the poll authority recalled. The poll panel pointed out that it

has been taking action to ensure level playing field such as checking vehicles of prominent leaders and even removing officials for laxity in carrying out their mandate. The commission, it said, has also taken strict action against nearly 106 Government servants who were found assisting politicians in campaigning, which is against various rules and ethics. The EC sources also pointed out

that there is "nothing new" in search of helicopters, as was done in case of TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee. In the run-up to the polls, all

district magistrates superintendents of police were told to keep a strict watch on airfields and helipads. Such searches are taking place in airfields, both public and private, across the country to ensure inducements are not ferried by air, the sources said.

LS elections to affect | Flying squads, static vehicle operation on **Char Dham routes**

Only 3 commercial vehicles from other States applied for green cards to operate during Char Dham Yatra

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Though the application process for the commercial vehicle operators to get green cards to operate on Char Dham routes started on April 4, the Transport department has been receiving a lacklustre response from the operators due to the ensuing Lok Sabha elections. The department was expecting to issue more green cards this time than last year but so far, it received only 36 applications from the vehicle operators in the past 12 days. Out of the 36 applications, 28 applications are for private taxis and one is for a bus, the nodal officer of Char Dham Yatra and regional transport officer (Administration) of Dehradun division Sunil Sharma said. He said that out of these 36 applications, only three applications belong to operators of other States. According to him, the main reason for the fewer applications for green cards is the requisition of vehicles by the department for LS elections. As soon as the election is completed in the State on April 19 the number of applications for green cards is expected to increase soon, he said. However, this



might be an issue as elections in many states are scheduled to be held in May and June which are the peak months for people to visit Char Dham shrines as pilgrims and tourists. Even if the elections are completed in Uttarakhand, the requisition process of vehicles will be going on in other states. This is expected to affect the application process for green cards which is an important document to operate on Char Dham routes. Last year, the department issued about 40 per cent or about 10,000 green cards to vehicle operators belonging to other states. The department was also expecting to issue about

3,000 more green cards to vehicle operators this time than last year. Talking about the issue, the RTO said that applications are expected to increase after April 19 and the department has also started raising awareness among peo-ple regarding green card ap-plications. If the department has prior knowledge of how many vehicles are expected to operate during Char Dham Yatra, it helps in making the necessary arrangements accordingly. There is certainly a dip in green card applications than last year but it is expected to get better from next week,

BJP and Congress party assure labourers of fulfilling their demands

Both national parties respond to memo submitted by delegation representing labourers

PNS DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress party have assured labourers that they will fulfill their demands regarding basic labour rights. They assured this in response to the recent presentation of demands by a delegation behalf of the 518 daily wage labourers on Monday. The delegation submitted å letter outlining the demands that the party elected to office these demands is the provision of homes for labourers which was promised by political parties un 2022 but is yet to be fulfilled. Additionally, the letter calls for a mechanism to hold accountable those who fail to pay for services rendered, as well as provision for scholarships for labourers' children in accordance with the law. Despite offering subsidies worth crores of rupees to private companies, the government seems to lack in fulfilling these obligations,



the memorandum stated

Regarding this matter, the BJP State office secretary emphasised the party's dedication to addressing these concerns and expressed willingness to explore potential solutions. Additionally, the chief spokesperson of the Congress party Garima Dasauni said that opposition parties have been persistently highlighting the alleged failure of the BJP government to uphold

public interest laws established during the Congress government era in both rural and urban areas, jeopardising people's residences and means of living. Assuring the labourers about the demand, she highlighted that women, labourers, youth and other societal segments would benefit from the Congress Party's five guarantees. Apart from this, the INDUA bloc also assured that it will fulfill their demands.

Ayurvedic treatment for pancreatitis receives validation: Prakash

PNS DEHRADUN

The Padaav Speciality Ayurvedic Treatment Centre (PSATC) in India recently received validation for its treatment of pancreatitis by the Central government. The information was shared by the chief ayurvedic physician of PSTAC and Padma Shri awardee Balendu Prakash while addressing the media here on Monday.

He said that chronic pancreatitis is an inflammatory condition of the pancreas that worsens over time and leads to uncontrolled blood sugar levels in a significant percentage of cases. Common symptoms of this condition include intense abdominal pain, vomiting, nausea, digestive issues and weight loss. He stressed that allopathy currently lacks a long-term solution for chronic pancreatitis. In view of this, they had prepared the Avurvedic treatment for the ailment which was prepared utilising copper, mercury and sulphur. Following successful results, the PSATC filed a patent application in 2014 with the assistance of the Ministry of Sciences and Technology in Uttrakhand. After considerable efforts, the Central Government recently approved for their Ayurvedic treatment for pancreatitis in India. Notably, this marks the first validated ayurvedic treatment for pancreatitis in India, he added

Commenting about the ailment, Prakash mentioned approximately 2,000 individuals, especially children under the age of 18, are currently afflicted with pancreatitis. Contrary to common belief associating alcohol consumption with a higher risk of this ailment, it is observed that eveb those who abstain are experiencing it at an

alarming frequency.

Prakash emphasised that inadequate treatment of pancreatitis can sometimes progress to cancer. Acknowledging this, the Ayurvedic treatment provided by their facility plays a crucial role and has successfully treated numerous individuals with this condition. He further emphasised that mercury-based Ayurvedic treatment, which has been patented for its authenticity, could potentially revolutionise medical practices worldwide.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

CORRIGENDUM

Sub: Tender notice no. 05-DRM-MB-24-25 dated 05.04.2024 The above noted tender is to be opened on 30.04,2024. In this tender Name of Work should be read as "Balance work of LHS no. 70, 73 & 74 in CH HGJ section under ADEN/CH" instead of "Balance work of LHS no. 73(CH HGJ) & LHS no 74(CH-HGJ) section under ADEN/CH and Advertised Value revised amount of Rs. 2,81,98,046.81 instead of Advertised Value amount Rs. 1,87,98,697.90 and Earnest Money revised amount of Rs.2,91,000/ instead of Earnest Money amount of Rs. 2,44,000/- other terms and condition will remain same

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

surveillance teams to start intensive checking drive from today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The additional chief electoral officer officer (ACEO) Vijay Kumar Jogdande has said 293 flying squads and 252 static surveillance teams have been deployed for the ensuing Lok Sabha elections. The voting will be held at 11,729 polling booths on April 19 in all the five LS seats in Uttarakhand. The voters will cast their votes from 7 am to 5 pm. Jog-dande said that all the flying and static surveillance teams will undertake an intensive checking drive 72 hours before the day of voting. The intensive checking drive will start from Tuesday. The ACEO said that intensive check-

ing will be done at inter-state borders and at all the check posts. Dry days will be observed in the State from 5 pm on April 17 till 6 pm on April 19 in the State during which all liquor shops will remain

Jogdande added that the process of randomisation of the polling parties is currently underway. He informed that 12 polling parties (11 in Uttarkashi and one in Pithoragarh) will leave three day before the voting day from their headquarters. These 12 parties will depart on Tuesday morning.

cused at all possible places,"

Rainwater harvesting made mandatory by MDDA in schools

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The vice chairperson of Mussoorie Dehradun Development Authority (MDDA) Banshidhar Tiwari stated that the provision for rainwater harvesting will be made compulsory in all private schools within six months after the Lok Sabha elections in the State. All schools will have to abide by the rules or strict action will be taken against them, Tiwari said in a review meeting on Monday. He said that the MDDA will also revive all the ponds of Dehradun through rainwater harvesting. Besides this, the Kund at Triveni Ghat in Rishikesh will also be developed and recharged via rainwater harvesting. He also directed the

officials to develop the top floor of the MDDA complex

located at Ghantaghar on the

lines of high-end complexes in

the country. He asked them to prepare a detailed project report and present it to him soon. He said that the old shopping mall in the ISBT building of



Dehradun will also be devel oped similarly which will have facilities like a kid's zone and food court among others. He also asked the officials to iden

tify encroachments from Kuthal Gate to Paniwala Band and remove them after the LS elections. The MDDA will also release brochures of flats constructed in Aamwala Tarla and Dhaulas under the government schemes after the LS elections. Tiwari also directed the officials to auction all the vacant plots and shops under MDDA. He asked the offimDDA. He asked the omcials to construct a guest house on MDDA's 600 square metres of land on Rajpur Road situated at Sai Mandir. The guest house will be given later on rent to a renowned hotel group for operation. The VC also instructed the officials to start structed the officials to start the payment process to traders of Adat Bazaar after April 19. He said that MDDA will also take a revised estimate from the Public Works Department for widening and beautification of intersections.

Police arrest two daylight robbery accused after encounter

PNS DEHRADUN

The police arrested two of

I the three men accused of daylight robbery

held in an apartment of Dehradun's Vasant Vihar on Saturday afternoon. The accused Mohammad Furqan Mohammad Wasim were arrested after an encounter with the police near Asharodi late on Sunday night. Furqan was shot in the leg and a sub-inspector sustained injury in the encounter. The police also recovered some looted jewellery from the arrested accused along with two coun-

try-made pistols and two live cartridges, the Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh said. The two accused identified as Shubham Tyagi and Kapil Kumar alias Ravan are still absconding. Kumar is the main accused in the robbery and Tyagi along with the other arrested accused Omveer kept an eye outside their flat, the SSP said. The victim Vikas Tyagi registered a complaint late on Saturday that three men had allegedly kept him and his family hostage at gunpoint and knife and demanded Rs two crore. The robbers were allegedly sent by Tyagi's former business partner Rajiv Agarwal. He informed that as per the complainant, Agarwal is supposed to pay Rs 90 lakh. Tyagi claimed that the robbers told him that Agarwal had given them complete information about him and his family. He had allegedly given them a contract of Rs 15 lakh to kill them all. The robbers robbed cash and jewellery worth several lakhs and took Tyagi's son and brother as hostages in a car. Singh said that the involvement of five people in carrying out the robbery has come to light in the investigation so far. However, the complainant has also expressed that he was targeted by some people who wanted to kill him and his family. "We are probing the matter and police teams are looking for the absconding ac-

India must be militarily & economically strong to be acknowledged as Vishwaguru: Govind Dev

PNS DEHRADUN

Speaking on the seventh day of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Katha organised at the University of Patanjali in Haridwar on Monday, Govind Dev Giri said that although India is already a Vishwaguru, the global recognition would come only when the Indian army becomes robust and the people are wealthy. country can teach us what humanity and spirituality are; ours is a country which has been occupying the po-sition of Vishwaguru for thousands of years. But unless we inspire global awe by making our army strong and making ourselves wealthy, the world will never acknowledge India's status as the Guru of the world," he said.

Referring to Patanjali's ascendancy, he said that Yoga Guru Ramdev and Acharya

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Balkrishna epitomised the truth of the futility of beg-ging donations when it came to building a nationalism-inspired big institu-They learnt the hard way the lesson of acquiring wealth themselves to erect a big institution that set the lofty goal of serving every section of the country's people," he said.

While lauding the in-

IDFC FIRST

viction shown by Shivaji, he said that the brave son India had turned the impossible into possible by emerging tri-umphant in the seemingly equal against the mighty Mughals. "It is worth remember-

ing that Shivaji conducted the nation's first surgical strike against the Mughal invaders," he added.

THE PIONEER

The registry of the affiant's house whose account number 6403 was registered today on 24.12.2019 or pages 211 to 232 of Book No. 10 1 Volume 3412 and whose account number is 969 Khasra No. 1626/2 Area 385 Sq. Meter Mauza East Hope Town Tehsil Vikasnagar Dehradun It was registered today or 06.06.2011 on page 357 to 384 number 2588 of Uttarakhand and Book No. 01 Volume 1877 and whose account number is 969 Khasra No. 1626/2 m, area 0.1155 hectare, Mauza Inst. Hope Town Tehsil Vikasnagar Dehradun Uttarakhand, which is She had faller somewhere on the Shimla Bypass Road or had become mummified and could not be found even after extensive searching. Anyone who finds it please inform.

Shri Ramlakhan son of Shri Kedar Singh resident of Ratanpur Naya Village Paleo Dehradun Uttarakhand. Advocate Alok pundir Mo. No.9412054582

सूचना

भूमि खाता संख्या 201, खसरा संख्या 701क (पुराना खसरा नं0 117) रकबा 83 वर्गमीटर स्थित मौजा सुद्धोवाला परगना पछवादून, तहसील विकास जिला देहरादून के एकमात्र मालिक, काबिज स्वामी है. प्रार्थीगण द्वारा उपरोक्त सम्पत्ति इसके पूर्व श्रीमती कंचन पत्नी श्री मोहर सिंह निवासी- ग्राम सुद्धोवाला विकासनगर, देहरादून, उत्तराखण्ड से क्रय की थी। प्रार्थीगण द्वारा क्रय की गई भूमि जोकि सब रजि० कार्यालय देहरादून में बही स० 1, जिल्द 4923 के पृष्ठ 281 से 302 में क्रमांक 2784 दिनाकित 08.08.2019 को विधिवत दर्ज व अंकित है, का मूल विक्रयपत्र कहीं गुम हो गया है, जोकि काफी खोज बीन करने के उपरान्त भी नहीं मिला, जिसका प्रयोग अन्य व्यक्ति द्वारा अवेध होगा।

सन्नी व पवन कमा पुत्रगण श्री कलिराम जुराज जो कारारीन निवासीगण—सुद्धीवाला जेल रोड, देहरादून, उत्तराखण्ड मूल निवासी— खंडी, सिकोहपुर, हरिद्वार, उत्तराखण्ड

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Amit Kumar S/o Amrender Kumar Thakur R/o H.No.G-23 Durga Colony Roorkee Cantonment Near Dogra-Lines, Jalalpur Musthakam Belra Haridwar Uttarakhand-247667, have changed my name to Amit Bhardwaj.

Disclaimer

PD(368)A

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For advertisement booking 9045057787, 8909212518 Email: pioneerdoon@gmail.com

TENDER NOTICE

S. No.	Name of work with Location	App. Cost of the work (in ₹)	the office from where the tender form has been issued	Security to be deposited (in ₹)	Completion period of the work	for submission of tender & opening of tender	particulars & Address of Office
1.	03/SrDEE/G/MB/ 2024 II Call:- Electrical work for Lighting arragement in Railway Stadium at DRM Campus Moradabad	1,14,63,312.11 (Including GST)	Electrical Branch, Divisional Railway	2,07,300/-	6 (Six) Months	Tender will be received upto	Website www.ireps.gov.in Divisional
2.	08/SrDEE/G/MB/ 2024 II Call:- Provision of Lifts for Amrit Bharat Stations in MB-GZB section & Harrawala of Moradabad Division	2,31,71,070.00 (Including GST)	Manager's office, Northern Railway, Moradabad	2,65,900/-	12 (Twelve) Months	15:00 hrs. and opened at 15:00 hrs. on 07.05.2024	Railway Manager's office, Northern Railway Moradabad

IDFC First Bank Limited

(erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC First Bank Limited CIN: L65110TN2014PLC097792

Registered Office: - KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai- 600031 Tel: +91 44 4564 4000 | Fax: +91 44 4564 4022

> Notice under Section 13 (2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

The following borrowers and co-borrowers availed the below mentioned secured loans from IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Ltd) The loans of the Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Ltd) The loans of the below-mentioned borrowers and co- borrowers have been secured by the mortgage of their respective properties. As they have failed to adhere to the terms and conditions of the respective loan agreements and had become irregular, their loan were classified as NPA as per the RBI guidelines. Amounts due by them to IDFC FIRST Bank Ltd) are mentioned as per respective notices issued more particularly described in the following table and further interest on the said amounts shall also be applicable and the same will be charged as per contractual rate with effect from their respective dates.

Sr No.	Loan Account No.	Type of Loan	Name of borrowers and co-borrowers	Section 13 (2) Notice Date	Outstanding amount as per Section 13 (2) Notice	Property Address
1	7672451 & 7667587	LOAN AGAINST PROPERTY	1. VIKRANT SHARMA 2. TEENA SHARMA	23.03.2024	10,78,832.77/-	ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OFRESIDENTIAL PROPERTY NO. 57 COMPRISING OF LAND BEARING KHASRA NO. 1011, LAND MEASURING 125.69 SQ. MTRS., SITUATED AT SANGAM VIHAR, MAUZA: KANWALI, DISTRICT: DEHRADUN, UTTARANCHAL-248001, AND BOUNDEDAS:- EAST:PROPERTY OF JAGDIGH SINGH LINGWAL- MEASURING 33 FT., WEST:20 FT. WIDE RASAT- MEASURING 33 FT., NORTH: PROPERTY OF LAL BHADUR THAPA MEASURING 41 FT., SOUTH: PROPERTY OF

You are hereby called upon to pay the amounts to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Ltd) as per the details shown in the above table with contracted rate of interest thereupon from their respective dates and other costs, charges etc. within 60 days from the date of this publication, failing which the undersigned shall be constrained to initiate proceedings, under Section 13 (4) and section 14 of the SARFAESI Act, against the mortgaged properties mentioned hereinabove to realize the amount due to IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Ltd). Further you are prohibited under Section 13 (13) of the said Act from transferring the said secured assets either by way of sale/lease or otherwise

Date: 16.04.2024 Place: DEHRADUN

Sd/-Authorized Officer IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC First Bank Limited)

MAHENDRA NATH - MEASURING 41 FT.

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1136/24



MANDATE 2 224



BJP manifesto roadmap for making Congress alleges MCC violation India developed by 2047: Dhami

The election manifesto the blessings of the public we got the UCC bill passed and Janata Party on Sunday is a roadmap for making India a is a manifesto of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantee for ensuring service, good governance, welfare of the poor, infrastructural development, women empowerment, taking the youths forward and welfare of every citizen, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said.

the President has also approved it.The BJP manifesto states developed nation by 2047. This that UCC is important for the entire nation. UCC will help eradicate social evils and ensure the security of all sections of society. The commitments considered by BR Ambedkar while drafting the Constitution of India are being fulfilled by Bharat under PM Modi's leadership. The manifesto also includes the intro-

The CM further said that the BJP poll manifesto also focuses on encouraging the one district one product scheme. The Uttarakhand government is already working on one district two products scheme. The manifesto guarantees implementation of one nation one election system. "Development works are disrupted by repeated elections and implementation of the model code of conduct. One nation one election will lend speed to develop-

> ment works. Further, citizenship will be granted to people under the Citizenship Amendment Act. This law has been implemented in the nation. The people who came from Bengal and settled Khatima, Sitarganj, Nanakmatta, Rudrapur and Dineshpur in

Udham Singh Nagar district will also benefit from the implementation of this law," the CM

Dhami further said that the BJP manifesto proposes important schemes to speed up development in mountain States through tourism and development in mountainous States.

The development of Uttarakhand and other mountainous States are among the top priorities of PM Modi. Schemes for boosting eco tourism, planned development through master plans, enhancing connectivity, thematic circuit development to provide an experience of the culture and lifestyle of border areas and adventure tourism are proposed in the manifesto for development of mountainous regions. "PM Modi's guarantee has been presented in the form

of our party's manifesto. The works underway in Uttarakhand will get a boost through this manifesto. There is an atmosphere of unanimous support for the BJP in the State. Everyone wants to contribute to ensure that Modi serves the nation as the PM for the third term," Dhami said.

The BJP State president Mahendra Bhatt, cabinet minister Ganesh Joshi, Rajya Sabha member Naresh Bansal and others were also present on the occasion.

by PM, CM & BJP State chief

E-Auction Notice

E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Properties under the securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement o

Security Interest Act, 2002 Read with Proviso to Rule 8 (6) of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property

mortgaged/charges to the Secured Creditor, the Constructive/Symbolic/Physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised officer of Canara bank

Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" for the recovery of dues to the Bank, as per Demand Notice under

Brief Description of Property/ies

The Uttarakhand Congress has alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, State BJP president Mahendra Bhatt and other BJP leaders are violating model code of conduct (MCC) enforced in view of Lok Sabha elections. A delegation of the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) met the joint chief electoral officer (JĆEO) Namami Bansal on Monday and handed over a letter addressed to the Chief Election Commissioner of India, complaining about the violations of the MCC by the PM Modi, CM Dhami and

केनरा बैंक Canara Bank 🚓

■ Riser Syndicate

Name & Address of

other leaders. The Congress delegation also handed over the social media posts released on the official page of BJP as evidence to the Election Commission. The Congress leaders alleged that in the social media posts (Facebook and Instagram), posters with pictures of temples are being publicized along with the pic-ture of Narendra Modi wearing army uniform. Similarly, the pictures of the State BJP President Mahendra Bhatt are being publicized with pictures of temples, which is a clear violation of the MCC. The Congress delegation has also

said that while on one hand the five Lok Sabha candidates of BIP in Uttarakhand are instigating the religious sentiments of the voters by using temples and slogans of a particular religion in their campaign posters and social media posts, on the other hand, the Congress candidate from Garhwal Lok Sabha constituency, Ganesh Godiyal has been instructed to remove the reference of Shri Badrinath Ji from his pamphlet. The Congress delegation said that the adoption of such double standards by the Election

Commission raises questions

on transparent and fair elec-

The Congress leaders demanded that the objectionable campaign material should be immediately removed from the social media posts of PM Modi, BJP leaders and BJP candidates and action should be taken as per the provisions of EC so that transparent and fair elections are conducted. The delegation included social media coordinator Vishal Maurya, head of social media wing of State Congress Vikas Negi and state spokesperson Garima Dasauni.

Rs. 21.88 Lakhs

Rs. 2.19 Lakhs

Rs. 10,000/-

Property No.1

Rs. 14.66 Lakhs

Rs.1.47 Lakhs

Rs. 10,000/-

Property No.2

Rs. 7.65 Lakhs

Rs. 0.77 Lakhs

Rs. 10,000V-

Rs. 50,000/-

Rs. 1.31 Lakhs

Rs. 10,000/-

Rs. 32.57 Lakha

Rs. 6.67 Lakhs

Rs. 50.000/-

Rs. 2.75 Lakhs

Rs. 25,000/-

Rs. 1.20 Lakhs

Rs. 10,000/-

Symbolic Possessio

Rs. 1.55 Lakhs

Rs. 12.38 Lakhe

Rs. 25,000/-

Rs. 1.23 Lakhs 897910317

Costs minus Recoveries w.e.f. 01.03.2023

(if any) in the A/c 160000103777

Symbolic Possession 9871155514

Physical Possession 857082567

Rs. 3.26 Lakhs Bahuguni Contact Rs. 10.000/-

Rs. 27.45 Lakhs Shri Ashis

Rs. 11.98 Lakhs Shri Sune

No.

857082567

Shri Brij

Shri

Priyanka

Canara Bank, Regional Office I, IT Park,

Plot No. 38, Sahastradhara Raod, Dehradun

(4)

e.f. 01.03.2023

+ Incidental Expenses and

Rs. 26,81,075.97

+ interest w.e.f. 30.05.2015 +

Expenses

08.06.2021

Rs. 30,72,779.00

Expenses & Other

Charges -

after 28.10.2018

01.08.2023+

01.04.2021

Expenses & Other

Addressing the media here on Monday, a day after the BJP released its Lok Sabha election manifesto, Dhami said, "Before the 2022 Vidhan Sabha election we had resolved to implement the Uniform Civil Code under PM Modi's leadership. With

duction of a law to check examination paper leaks. In Uttarakhand, we have already introduced a strict anti-copying law following which thousands of youths were provided

jobs in a transparent manner." **People disappointed**

CS administers pledge to vote to secretariat employees

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

hief Secretary Radha Raturi administered the pledge to vote in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections to the officers and employees of the State secretariat on Monday. The employee took a pledge that they will exercise their franchise without fear and without getting influenced by religion, caste, creed, language and any



of Ankita Bhandari but Yogi other persuasion. The chief electoral officer (CEO) Adityanath has left them BVRC Purushottam, additional chief electoral officer (ACEO) Vijay Kumar Jogdande and others were present on the occasion.

Lot Branch; Sab Area Cantt. (18516) All That Residential Property Bearing Khasra No. 152-ka Measuring Area 120.00 Sq Mts or 143.51 Sq Yds Situated At 7,65,091.07 W/o Sri Kalyan Singh, R/o Village Kalyanpur, Village Kalyanpur, Pargana Pachwadoon, Tehsil Vikas Ngar, s on 31.01.2023 Hasanpur, Po Sherpur, Shimia Road, Tehsil Vikas Nagar Dehradun-248198. 2. Co-Borrower: Mr. Kalyan Singh S/o Shri Sher Singh R/o Village Kalyangur, Hasanpur, Hasanpu w.e.f 01.02.2023 Sher Singh, R/o Village Kalyanpur, Hasanpur, Po Sherpur, Shimla Road, Tehsil -Vikas Begam Noor Hasan, North- Lank Begam Noor Hasan, South- 30 Ft. Wide Road. 06.02.2023 Nagar Dehradun-248198, Uttarakhand, 3, Sri Ghambheer Singh alias Shri Ghammeer Singh S/o Sri Kesar Singh R/o Village Kalyanpur, Hasanpur, Po Sherpur, Shimla Road, Tehsil -Vikas Nagar Dehradun-248198, Uttarakhand Branch: Scholars Home (18517) Borrower: Mis Fusion Accessories. Shop No. 02, 2nd Floor, 76/67 Near Anand Fast Food Tilak Nagar Rishikesh Dehradun Uttarakhand 249201. Mr Arpit Arora Silo Kishan Kumar Arora. 63, Mahant Parshuram Marg Rishikesh. Dehradun. Miss Shaifal Arora Dio Kishan Kumar Arora, 63 Shaefi Niwas. Parshuram Marg Rishikesh Dehradun. History Miss Property Shop No. Commercial Property: Property (Shop) on Second Floor, part of Municipal No. 76/67, Area 11.93 Sq Yard Or 9.98 Sq Mt. Situated as on 31.06.2023 Rs. 11.48 Lakhs as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.000/Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.000/Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e.f. 01.07.2023 + Rs. 10.28,567.31 as on 31.06.2023 + Future interest w.e. Lot Branch: Scholars Home (18517) Uttarakhand-249201 Branch: Scholars Home (18517) Branch: Scholars Home (18517) Branch: Scholars Home (18517) Branch: Scholars Home (18517) Property No. 1. All that Residential property constructed over the land khata khatauni No. 00023(1423 to 1428 fasti), bearing khasra no. 08.05.2023. Prayesh Sharma Sio Sh. Suresh Chand Sharma Khasra 20 K Danda Lakhaund Mauja Sqmtrs, situated at Mauza Vyasa Nehri, khat Haripur Vyasa, Tehbanda Lakhaund Sahastradhara Road Charadhand. Proprietor: Under: North-Land of present owner, South-Road, East-House of Mr. Maya Singh, West-House of Kunwar Singh. Property No. 2. All that piece of land khata khatauni No. 00012 Apartment. Sondhowali Raiseshwar Nagar (1420 to 1425 fasti) hearing khasra No. 35 min. measuring area Lot Branch: Scholars Home (18517)

South: Common Passage.

Shri Ram Singh 5m 45 Ft.

Guarantor: Sh.Teg Bahadur S/o Sh. Kesar Vikas Nagar, District Dehradun. Boundaries: East- Land of

Singh, All R/o Village Kalyanpur, Hasanpur, Sh. Ramjaan, West- House of Sh. Hari Singh, North- Land of

PO Sherpur, Shimla Road, Dehraduri-248197. Sh. Ramjaan, South-30 fts wide road.

West-House of Mr. Kunwar Singh South-Passage

Corridor Thereafter Flat No GB-08, North - Flat No GA-07, South -

Property situated at Shop No. 27 (First Floor), RGM Plaza, 23

Land and Building in the name of Mamta Rai D/o Shri K B Rai

situated at Khata Khatauni No. 641, Khasra No. 452, Mauza Markham Grant 1 Pargana Parwa Doon Tehsil & Disti- Dehradun.

Boundaries: East: Property of Mrs. Premwati W/o Shri Ram Singh 5 m. 48 Ft, West- Property Of Mrs. Leela Devi 5 m 48 Ft, North- 16

Residential Property: All that single storeyed residential property

Plot Measuring To East 15" To West 15'6 To North 32'4' And To

salempur Rajputan, presently Andar Hadood Nagar Nigam Roorkee.

Emt of Residential Property in the name of Smt. Amrit Kaur W/o

Secution 13(2) & Further interest thereon, charges and costs due to the Canara Bank, as detailed in the table below.

Apartment, Sondhowali Rajeshwar Nagar Dehradun - 248001 Uttarakhand, Guarantor/ 100 sqmtrs, situated at Mauza Tilwari, Khat-Haripur Byaas, Teh-Apartment, Sondhowas Rajeshwa 1998 Dehradun - 248001 Uttarakhand, Guarantori Mortgagor: Mrs. Dimpal Sharma w/o Mr. Kalsi, Distt Dehradun. The property is bounded and butted as Parvesh Sharma Phase - I Dhorankhas Skyline under : North- Others Property South- Built UP Khasra No. 3 Kha Aparlment, Sondhowali Rajeshwar Nagar owner, 40 ft wide Road, East- Others Property,

Branch: Scholars Home (18517)

Residential Property: All That Residential Flat No. GB- 07, Ground

Borrower/Mortgagor: Mr. Rambir Singh S/o
Chaudhary Satpal Singh, Flat No. GB-07,
Rock Valley Apartments, Mauza Sewia Kalan,
"Rock Valley Apartments" Built on Free Hold Plot of Land Bearing

w.e.f. 01.03.2023 Shimla Byepass, Dehradun Uttarakhand
- 248001, Guarantor: Mr. Jitender Choudhary,
House No 2001, Gurudwara Colony, Clement

Khasra No 222KH, 222 KHA, 222GA, and 222NA Situated At
Mauza Sewia Kalan, pargana, pachtwa Doon, district Dehradoon.
Boundaries: East - Driveway Thereafter Property of others, West -Town, Dehradun, Uttarakhand - 248001.

Branch: Clock Tower, Dehradun
Borrower: 1. M/s Jindal & Co. Prop. Sri
Narendra Jindal S/o Srl. A K Gupta
Dehradun, Total Area 170 Sq Feet, in the name of Sri. Narendra
Jindal S/o Srl. A K. Gupta Boundaries: East: Common Passage,
Jindal S/o Srl. A. K. Gupta Boundaries: East: Common Passage,
North: Property of Nadeern Akbar And Others, Road, Laxman Chowk, Dehradun.

Lot Branch: Clock Tower (2162)

Borrower: Mrs Mamta Rai D/o Shri K B Rai, Pargana Parwa Doon, Tehsil Dehradun, Dehradun Uttarakhad, Guarantor: Mr. Rajendra Prasad S/o Shri Tirath Prasad 262 Chander Shekhar Colony, Dehradun

Ft Wide Road 5 m 45 Ft., South- Property of Mrs. Premwati W/o Lot Branch: Scholars Home (18517) Borrower M's Sharda Sharma, Prop: Sharda constructed over the land khata khatauni no 03107(1417-1422 Sharma, Khasra No. 631 Ramprrasth Enclave Badripur Jogiwala Dehradun, sq mtrs having covered area on ground floor 110.02 sq mtrs Uttarakhand. Sharma Who Dinesh satuated at mauza Ajabpur Kalan, Pargana pachwadoon, Dist Sharma, Ramprashth Enclave, Badripur Stuared at mauza Ajabpur Kalan, Pargana pachwadoon, Dist Sharma, Ramprashth Enclave Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Dehradun, Boundaries of The Property- North- 20 Ft Road, South

Others Property, East- Property of Mr. G D Badhani, West- Land of Mr Ram Ratna. Lot Branch: Alabpur, Kalan, Dehradun (5579) Residential property situated at Khata Khatauni No. 501, No. Borrower: Ms Rashi Industries, Partners - (1) Bearing part of Khasra No. 2093 at Mauza Raipur, Pargana Borrower: M/s Rashi Industries, Partners - (1 Smt. Sheetal Joshi W/o Sri. Rakesh Joshi (2) Sri Parwa Doon, Distt Dehradun, in the name of Smt. Sheetal Joshi W/o Sri. Rakesh Joshi, Boundaries: East- 20 feet wide Rakesh Joshi S/o Sri. Ravi Dutt Joshi Address -Khasra No. 235/CH, Opp. Titan, Haridwar Road, Kuanwala, Dehradun (Uttarakhand) Guarantor: Road, SM 18 FT. West- Lane of Others SM 18 FT., North- Wall, Srl. Rakesh Joshi S/o Sri Ravidutt Joshi, R/o H. No. 397, Rajeshwan Puram, Lower Nathanpur, Dehradun-248001

Lot Branch: S P Road II (18976) Borrower: M/s Sach Automobile, Prop. South 30', Total Area 475.29 Sq Ft. Le 44.17 Sq Mt. Bearing Khasra Roahan Kashap Main Saharanpur Road No. 1637, Situated At Gall No. 20, Mohalla Krishna Nagar . Ram Nagar Chowk Roorkee, Haridwar 247667. Proprietor: Roahan Kashap S/o Rajpal Main Saharanpur Road Ram Nagar Chowk Roorkee, Haridwar 247667, East-House of Babita And others, West-Rasta Wide 12 Ft., North-

Guarantor: Mrs Shiksha W/o Rajpal, Sanjay plot of Deepa, South- Raasta Wide 14 Ft. Gandhi Colony Maktoolpuri Roorkee Dist-Haridwar-247667 Lot Branch: Sub Area Canteen (18516) Borrower/Mortgagor: Smt. Amrit Kaur W/o Sh. Gambheer Singh alias Sh. Ghameer Singh situated at part of Sh. Gambheer Singh, Co-Borrower: Sh. land bearing Khasra No. 152-Ka measuring 120.00 Sq. Mtrs. Gambheer Singh S/o Sh. Sher Singh, Situated at Village Kalyanpur, Pargana Pachwa Doon, Tehsil

Branch: Bhaniyawala (3552) All that part and parcel of the property of Residential property at Borrower: M/s Bhagwati Traders Proprietor Khata No. 01221 Khasra no 57 MIN measuring area 73.32 Sqmt Srl Mohan Singh S/o Sri Pal Singh, and Mauja Majri Grant Pargana Parwa Doon, Tehsil Doiwala District Borrower/Mortgager: Sri Mohan Singh S/o
Sri Pal Singh both as H.No. 28 village Majri
Grant Anshik Pa Majri Dolwala Distt. Dehradun
Dehradun Uttarakhand. Bounded: East. Land other, West:
Passage 14 feet wide, North: Property of Rajkumari, South: Property of Sri Sushil Kumar.

Lot Branch: Selagui, Dehradun (18972) All that property bearing Khata No 289 (Fasii Year 1416-1421) Haripur Selagui Vikas Nagar, Dehradun.

Borrower: M/s Deep Restaurant, Proprietor Khasra No 197JA having area 1126.78 sq ft or 104.71 sq mt situated /Mortgagor: Sh. Deepak Sing Negi S/o at Mauza Sherpur, Tehsil Vikasnagar, Zila Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Madan Singh Negi R/o Haripur, Selaqui, Boundaries: East- 28 ft Wide Road, West- Land of Smt Kavita Vikas Nagar, Dehradun 2, Madan Singh Negi Rawat, North- Land of others, South- 16 ft Wide Road.

Respective EMD amount to be credited to the following account Account Name- SL-OL-RTGS-INWARD | Account No.- 209272434 IFSC- CNRB0008305

Date & Time of E-acution: 06.05.2024 from 12.30 AM to 03.30 PM (With extension of 5 min. duration each till the conclusion of sale) For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer the link "E-Auction" provided in Canara Bank's website: www.canarabank.com or may contact Related Branches during office hours on any working day

with Yogi's election campaign in U'khand: Mehrishi

PNS ■ GOPESHWAR

 $T^{\text{he chief media coordinator}}$ occurred in the area which is the birth place of Yogi and Congress Rajiv Mehrishi son of a BJP leader who was has said that the Uttar a position holder in gov-Pradesh chief minister Yogi ernment is the prime Adityanath's election cam- accused in the case. He said paign in Uttarakhand has that the police have not yet disappointed the people of shown the courage to put its the state. He said that the hand over the VIP said to be UP CM talks about the rule of law but he didn't utter a single word in the Ankita Bhandari murder case in his election meetings which shows that the BJP is not interested in the safety of

murder of Ankita Bhandari

the daughters. Mehrishi said that the

disappointed. **Candidate selection by parties**

equations in U'khand Candidate selection by parties renders caste factor

forces caste out of LS-2024

inconsequential in LS-2024 polls in Uttarakhand

GAJENDRA SINGH NEGI ■ DEHRADUN

As it nappens in many parts of the country, caste factor has always influenced the outcome of elections in Uttarakhand. However, in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections, caste, which sadly has always remained a major subject in electoral battles in the past, is no longer an this issue time. Interestingly, the caste is out of the electoral politics of LS -2024 battle not due to any social reform or enlightenment of the electorate but due to major political parties- BJP and Congress -having fielded candidates of same castes in all the LS constituencies of the State.

Keeping the caste equations in mind, both Congress and BJP have given tickets to two Brahmins and two Rajputs each in the State. In all the four unreserved constituencies, the candidates of same caste are fielded against one another, ren-

s it happens in many dering the caste factor about three lakh votes. inconsequential in 2024 Lok Sabha hustings.

involved in the crime.

The Congress leader said

that the people of the State

were hoping that the UP

CM will say something on

women safety and murder

In Tehri, the BJP has reposed faith in the sitting MP Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah from the erstwhile ruling family while Congress has fielded Jot Singh Gunsola, a Rajput leader. The independent candidate the young Bobby Panwar who is trying hard to make the battle three- cornered also belongs to Rajput caste.

In neighbouring Garhwal constituency which has always remained a hot-bed of caste politics, the ruling BJP has given its ticket to national spokesperson Anil Baluni while Congress has fielded former Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Ganesh Godiyal. Here also both candidates are Brahmins. In the LS elections of 2019, BJP's Teerath Singh Rawat trounced his rival Manish Khanduri of Congress by a margin of

In terms of the caste equations, the Garhwal LS constituency is dominated by the Rajputs which constitutes about 50 per cent of the electorate; Brahmins are about 25 per cent while 20 per cent of the population is of Dalits. In Haridwar LS constituency, former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat of BJP and son of former CM Harish Rawat, Virendra Rawat of Congress are in the fray and both of them are Rajputs.

A similar situation prevails in Nainital- Udham Singh Nagar constituency where both BJP and Congress have given tickets to Brahmin candidates. Here BJPs's union minister of State Ajay Bhatt is locked in an electoral battle with Congress party's Prakash

Many in Uttarakhand opine that the caste as

mode of garnering votes in elections was initiated prominently in the famous by- election of 1982 when Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna contested from Garhwal LS constituency as an independent candidate against Chandra Mohan Singh Negi of Congress.

Senior journalist Jay Singh Rawat told The Pioneer that the history of caste based politics in Uttarakhand started in early 1990s when Sarola Sabha was founded by Tara Dutt Gairola. The higher caste Brahmins were included in the Sarola Sabha. Rawat said that in response to this organisation, Kshatriya Sabha was founded by Kotwal Singh Negi and others. He added that the politicians try to create a wedge in society during elections in the name of caste but people in Uttarakhand have always lived in harmony with one

Authorised Officer, Canara Bank

Place: Dehradun

Manifesto recognises aspirations, needs of rising middle class: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The BJP asserted on Monday its manifesto recognises the aspirations and needs of the rising middle class, and identifies opportunities for them and promises to create conditions for a better quality of life. The ruling party has promised better cities, higher quality infrastructure, faster and better digital infrastructure, controlling pollution, investment in technologies of tomorrow and better living conditions, it said, adding that the middle class will benefit a lot from these, it said.

Its promise of encouraging the creation of new satellite townships near metro cities, boosting transit-oriented development, building unified metropolitan transport systems, ensuring water-secure cities, leveraging best practices for waste water treatment and eliminating open landfills will address immediate liveability



concerns of the middle class, the party said.

It has also promised in its manifesto, which was released on Sunday by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other senior leaders of the BJP, high-value jobs not just in big cities but in tier-2 and tier-3 cities besides leveraging tourism to promote local entrepreneurship and jobs.

The manifesto's focus on can be a financial drain on increasing the number of middle class families as getting

promise of bringing them under the 'Ayushman Bharat' cover for health cost up to Rs 5 lakh irrespective of their family income will be a big helm to them.

The party also cited its promise of zero electricity bill through solar rooftops, including in

helm to them.

The party also cited its promise of zero electricity bill through solar rooftops, including in housing societies, and the expansion of IITs, IIMs and AIIMS to make its point.

The BJP's promise of new investments in aggicultural

always easy, the party said its

investments in agricultural storage will lead to not only farmers getting more remunerative prices but also lower and more predictable food prices for the consuming middle class, it said.

The manifesto's details on India's proposed foreign policy initiatives, promoting the country's ideas and values to the world and carving a place for it at the global level, also benefits the middle class the most as they will play a key role as its ambassadors to the world.

21 retired judges write to CJI against attempts to undermine judiciary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

A group of 21 retired judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts have written to the Chief Justice of India on the escalating attempts by "certain factions to undermine the judiciary through calculated pressure, misinformation, and public disparagement".

Congress alleged that the letter by 21 judges to the Chief Justice of India was part of an "orchestrated campaign of the prime minister" to "threaten, browbeat and intimidate" the judiciary that has flexed its muscles in recent months.

These critics are motivated by

narrow political interests and personal gains and are striving to erode public confidence in the judicial system, they said. Though the retired judges, including four from the apex court, did not specify the incidents which prompted them to write to the CJI, their letter came amid amid a war of words between the ruling BJP and opposition parties over

the actions against some opposition leaders in corruption

With affected leaders and their parties moving courts to seek relief, the BJP has often accused them of using judicial decisions selectively and cited any lack of relief for several arrested leaders to rebut the opposition's criticism.

The retired judges, including justices (retired) Deepak Verma, Krishna Murari, Dinesh Maheshwari and M R Shah, accused the critics of having insidious methods with clear attempts to sway judicial processes by casting aspersions

on the integrity of courts and the judges.

"Such actions not only disrespect the sanctity of our judiciary but also pose a direct challenge to the principles of fairness and impartiality that judges, as guardians of the law, have sworn to uphold," they said in the letter titled "Need to safeguard judiciary from unwarranted pressures".

The strategy employed by these groups is deeply troubling, ranging from the propagation of baseless theories intended to malign the judiciary's reputation to engaging in overt and covert attempts to influence judicial outcomes to their favour, they said.

"This behaviour, we observe, is particularly pronounced in the cases and causes of social, economic and political significance, including the cases involving certain individuals, wherein the lines between advocacy and manoeuvring are blurred to the detriment of judicial independence," they added.

The letter writers said they are particularly concerned about

and the orchestration of public sentiment against the judiciary.

"The practice of selectively praising judicial decisions that align with one's views while vehemently criticising those that do not, undermines the very essence of judicial review and the rule of law," they said. They urged the judiciary led by the Supreme Court to fortify against such pressures and

ensure that the sanctity and

autonomy of the legal system

are preserved. "It is imperative that the judiciary remains a pillar of democracy, immune to the whims and fancies of transient political interests," they said. Asked about the letter at a Press conference at the AICC headquarters, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that the "greatest threat" to judicial independence comes from the BJP. He also referred to name on that list and said it will give away the whole objective, background and authorship of the

Government issues high risk warning for Indian Microsoft users

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has issued high risk warning for Microsoft services users in India after multiple vulnerabilities were found in various Microsoft products. Vulnerabilities could allow hackers to gain control, steal information remotely.

The caution note issued by the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team(CERT-In) is for users of Windows OS, Microsoft Office, Bing, Outlook and other Microsoft services.

The Indian cyber security agency has found multiple vulnerabilities in Microsoft products and has issued a high severity rating to the issue. The vulnerabilities affect a number of Microsoft software, including Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Office, Microsoft Developer Tools, its Azure services, Bing, System Center, Microsoft Dynamics, and Exchange Server.

Microsoft Exchange Server is a tool used by businesses to help them work together. It has things like email, calendars, contacts, and schedules all in one place. People can check their emails using programs like Microsoft Outlook. Plus, it works well with other Microsoft Office programs. And the current set of vulnerabilities that have been found



by CERT-In affect all these services mentioned above. Which means, anyone using any of these services could be a possible target of vulnerability.

The CERT-In website reveals that multiple vulnerabilities were reported in Microsoft Products. Reportedly, these security loopholes could allow an attacker to "gain elevated privileges, obtain Information Disclosure, Bypass Security restriction, conduct remote code execution attacks, perform spoofing attacks, or cause denial of service conditions". This basically means that these vulnerabilities might let a hacker do things like get more around security rules, control your computer remotely, trick you with fake links, or even stop your computer from working. The vulnerabilities in Microsoft Windows could

allow an attacker into your

computer and take charge or steal information remotely. Such vulnerabilities take place

(GCCs), Global Tech Centres

Engineering Centres (GECs)

and making the country a

global hub will also help the

middle class, who will benefit

also from the resolve to make

Noting that medical treatment

for senior citizens, and those 70

years and above, is costly and

housing more affordable.

Such vulnerabilities take place because the computer does not protect itself well enough. One problem, according to CERT-In, is with a feature called Smart Screen, which is supposed to keep a device safe of malware. However, due to the vulnerability, it is actually letting the malware in.

This means, a hacker can take advantage of these security loopholes by sending special requests. If they succeed, they can take control of your computer or make it do things it should not.

How do you keep yourself safe from such vulnerabilities, you ask? Always ensure your device is up-to-date with the latest updates. These timely updates are meant to patch vulnerabilities or any security loophole that may exist in a product or software that you are using.

X bans over two lakh accounts in India over policy violations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Elon Musk-led X Corp has banned a staggering 212,627 accounts in India within the span of a month, marking a significant crack-down on content promoting child sexual exploitation and non-consensual nudity. The micro-blogging platform also took down 1,235 accounts for promoting terrorism on its platform in the country. X said it has implemented

X said it has implemented several measures that relate to the mitigation of child sexual exploitation and terrorism.

X, in its monthly report, said that it received 5,158 complaints from users in India in the same time frame through its grievance redressal mechanisms.

Most complaints from India were about ban evasion (3,074), followed by sensitive adult content (953), hateful conduct (412), and abuse/harassment (359). In addition, X processed 86

grievances which were appealing account suspensions. "We overturned 7 of these account suspensions after reviewing the specifics of the situation. The remaining reported accounts remain suspended," said the company. "We received 29 requests related to general questions about accounts during this



This information was released by Elon Musk-owned X (formerly Twitter) in its monthly compliance report. The company banned over 213,000 accounts in India between February 26 and March 25. It cited violations related to promoting child sexual exploitation and nonconsensual nudity as the primary reasons for ban. "There are many measures

that have been in place for a long time on our platform that relate to the mitigation of child sexual exploitation and terrorism activity. X does not tolerate any material that features or promotes child sexual exploitation. This includes computer-generated images," the report stated. Amid growing concerns over

the proliferation of harmful content online, platforms like X seem to be intensifying efforts to combat such activities and maintain a conducive environment for healthy discourse.

In response to user com-

plaints, the social media platform also reported receiving 5,158 grievances from users in India during the same reporting period. The ban is to highlight the platform's initiative to address user concerns promptly and effectively through its grievance redressal mechanisms.

for recovering advanced light helicopter from control failure

Pilot awarded gallantry medal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Commander Bhaskar Rajvanshi was on Sunday awarded a gallantry medal by the Navy for his exemplary professionalism and courage in recovering an advanced light helicopter (ALH) from a state of "catastrophic control failure", according to an official statement.

A Navy spokesperson in a statement said this was the "first ever documented instance" of a safe recovery from collective control failure emergency in the "entire ALH fleet across all services". "The pilot with his limited fly-

ing experience ensured safe recovery of the helicopter and aircrew in an extremely challenging scenario, thereby saving an asset worth over Rs 100 crore. The recovery of the aircraft has enabled the services to undertake accurate investigation of the failure towards putting remedial measures in place for the entire ALH fleet," read his citation for the Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry).

On March 8, 2023, IN 709, ALH MK III (MR) helicopter was disembarking from the aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant, to Mumbai with three personnel onboard." Flying at altitude 500 ft above mean sea level, the pilot suddenly encountered a

catastrophic control failure, wherein the aircraft suffered uncommanded loss of collective power, rapid descent without any warning or failure indication in cockpit," read the citation. With no collective control available, the situation was likely to turn into a "fatal disaster," it said.

However, Raiyanshi, captain

However, Rajvanshi, captain of the 321 Shikra ALH flight, did not surrender to the given circumstances, displaying tremendous courage and extraordinary piloting skills, he manoeuvred the helicopter with limited control available to effect an "extraordinary ditching at sea," the citation said.

The pilot ensured that the helicopter ditched clear of merchant and fishing traffic and thereby avoided loss of civil property or lives. Even after effecting safe touchdown over the sea surface, the helicopter remained extremely vulnerable to unbalanced aerodynamic forces that could lead to toppling and sure loss of machine or lives, it added.

"The pilot observed utmost discipline, maintained composure and guided his crew to safety by swift deployment of emergency floatation gear and safety equipment," the citation further said. The singular act of bravery, grit and presence of mind in the face of danger has upheld the Indian Navy's ethos, it said.

SC appreciates protective measures by railways to prevent train accidents, disposes of petition

PTI NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday appreciated the steps taken by the Indian Railways to prevent train accidents, including the automatic train protection system 'Kavach', to avoid collisions. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and K V Viswanathan dis-

posed of a petition that raised several issues related to passenger safety after taking note of multiple steps taken by the public sector behemoth to prevent accidents and promote safe travel.

"We appreciate the steps taken by the Railways," the bench said, while taking note of the status report filed by Attorney General R Venkataramani.

While hearing the plea filed by petitioner Vishal Tiwari on January 2, the apex court had sought to know about the protective measures, steps implemented so far or proposed to be taken by the Centre, including the 'Kavach' system.

It had asked the petitioner to hand over a copy of his plea to the office of the Attorney General.

Referring to the train accident in Odisha's Balasore district in June last year that had left 288 people dead, the petitioner had claimed non-implementation of the 'Kavach' scheme was resulting in accidents. He had said a lot of accidents have taken place in the past due to collision between trains.



to the Centre to set up an expert commission headed by a retired judge of the apex court and consisting of technical members to analyse and review the risk and safety parameters in the railway system and to suggest systematic safety modifications for strengthening the safety mechanism.

It claimed that non-implementation of 'Kavach' at the earliest had resulted in a massive loss of life and damage to public property which imputed direct liability of gross negligence and breach of duty of care to respondent authorities. It had also sought issuance of guidelines for implementation of the 'Kavach' system with immediate effect.

The petition was filed days after the crash involving Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express and Shalimar-Chennai Central Coromandel Express, which were carrying around 2,500 passengers, and a goods train in June last year near Bahanaga Bazar station in Balasore.



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Army Chief General Manoj Pande on Monday embarked on a four-day visit to Uzbekistan to explore new avenues of bilateral military collaboration.

He is scheduled to hold wideranging talks with the top military brass of the Central Asian nation besides visiting a number of defence establishments. The defence ministry described the Army Chief's visit to Uzbekistan as a "significant step" in bolstering defence cooperation between the two countries.

"The visit by General Pande aims at strengthening military cooperation between India and Uzbekistan besides exploring new avenues of collaboration between the two nations," it said.

Pande will hold talks with Lieutenant General Bakhodir Kurbanov, the Defence Minister of Uzbekistan; Major General Khalmukhamedov Shukhrat Gayratjanovich, the First Deputy Minister of Defence and Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces. "These dialogues are pivotal in fostering stronger military cooperation," it said in a statement.

On Tuesday, General Pande will visit late prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's memorial in Tashkent and pay homage to him, it said.

him, it said.

Thereafter, he will visit the Victory Park, commemorat-



ing Uzbekistan's contributions and sacrifices in the Second World War. On Wednesday, the Army Chief will travel to Samarkand where he will meet Commander of the Central Military District.

"The visit will culminate in Termez, on April 18, where the Army Chief is also scheduled to witness the joint exercise DUSTLIK between the armed forces of India and Uzbekistan, highlighting the interoperability and camaraderie developed between the two countries," the ministry said.

Meanwhile, the Indian Army contingent departed on Monday for the 5th edition of India- Uzbekistan joint military Exercise DUSTLIK. The Exercise is scheduled to be conducted from April 15-28 at Termez.

Exercise DUSTLIK is a yearly event conducted alternatively in India and Uzbekistan. Last edition was conducted at Pithoragarh (India) in February 2023.

The Indian Armed Forces con-

tingent comprising 60 person-

nel is being represented by 45

personnel from the Indian

Army, majorly from a battalion of the Jat Regiment, and 15 personnel from the Indian Air Force. The Uzbekistan contingent comprising approximately 100 personnel, from Uzbekistan Army and Air Force, will be represented by personnel from Southern Operational Command, part of South-West Military District. Aim of Exercise DUSTLIK is to foster military cooperation and enhance combined capabilities to execute joint operations in mountainous as well as semi urban terrain. It would focus on high degree of physical fitness, joint planning, joint tactical drills and basics of special arms skills. Tactical drills to be practiced

during the exercise will include creation of a Joint Command Post, establishing an Intelligence and Surveillance Centre, securing of landing site, Small Team Insertion & Extraction, Special Heliborne Operations, Cordon and Search Operations, Room Intervention Drills and Demolition of illegal structures.

The complexity of this edition of Exercise DUSTLIK has been enhanced with conduct of multi domain operations as the contingent comprises of personnel from combat support arms and services besides Infantry. Two Women Officers also form part of the Indian Army contingent, including one from the Regiment of Artillery and the second from the Army Medical Corps.

Expect India to play role in bringing stability to West Asia, says Israeli envoy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Israel is "strong and resilient" and, if needed, it will "confront Iran" after the recent attack, the Israeli envoy here asserted on Monday and said India should play a role in bringing at the latest and the strong and resilient the strong and resilient.

Asia region.
In an interview to PTI at the Israeli Embassy here, the country's ambassador to India Naor Gilon said that Israeli defence forces with the support of the US and "other friends in the region" were able to "intercept 99 per cent" of the UAVs and missiles fired by Iranians.

However, there was "minor

damage" suffered at Nevatim air base in the attack late Saturday, he said. With Iran's attack on Israel trig-

gering the spectre of a wider conflict in West Asia, India on Sunday said it is seriously concerned over the escalating hostilities between the two sides and called for an immediate halt to violence and return to the path of diplomacy.

External Affairs Minister S
Jaishankar held separate telephonic conversations with his
Iranian and Israeli counterparts
and underlined the importance of avoiding escalation
and exercising restraint.

Iran carried out the attack on Israel in response to a suspected Israeli strike on its consulate in Damascus on April 1 that killed seven Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards including a senior general.

Ambassador Gilon, in the



interview, said India as a "very respected player in the international arena should put its influence and weight" in bringing things back to normal. He was asked what role he expected from India in the present situation, given the telephonic conversations of Jaishankar with his counterparts in Israel and Iran.

"I think that we expect from India, as a friend, to be very strong in international community in making sure that Iran stops its destabilisation of West Asia.
"I think West Asia as a region

is also very important for India because there are millions of Indians working in that region. Many business connections, strong ones with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar. And, I think, this is very important that India will be active as a part of the international community, in stopping Iran," he said.

Gilon said the Iranians had shot about "350 different UAVs to cruise missiles to surface to surface missiles, all in all about 60 tonnes of explosives", trying to overcome the Israeli defence system by shooting simultaneously.

'Thanks to the US and other friends in the region, and the huge capacity of our air defence and air force, we were able to intercept 99 per cent of these missiles and UAVs and luckily, no casualty. There was one young, seven-year-old girl, a Bedouin Muslim girl from the south of Israel, who was severely wounded, I hope she comes out of it," the Israeli envoy said. Gilon alleged that the attack was a "clear continuation of the behaviour of Iran" for a very long time, bringing instability in West Asia.

Two days ago, they "changed mould and attacked Israel directly from the territory of Iran" and other territories and also proxies, he said.

"Iran cannot continue this behaviour, if we need we will confront Iran. It is not a choice of ours. We are merely the receiving side here, and we will probably find the right time and moment to retaliate or send back a message to Iran that this is unacceptable. "We should send the retaliating

message that this is unacceptable," the envoy said.

The Israel Defense Forces

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in a post on X on Sunday night had said that the close cooperation between the US military and the IDF has led to the "formation of a strong coalition that proved itself last night in the face of Iran's aerial attack".

Tripura's tribal areas



Vote for NDA to end goonda raj, dynasty politics in Bihar: Yogi

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday urged people in Bihar to vote for the NDA to put an end to "goonda raj" and "dynasty politics" in the state. Addressing election rallies in Bihar's Aurangabad and Nawada districts, Adityanath, without mentioning the Samajwadi Party by name, alleged, "Like the RJD here, we had a family ruling the roost in UP, unleashing goonda raj in the

"We put an end to this... Bihar was passing through an 'identity crisis' during RJD's goonda raj. People should ensure that they (RJD) are finished in this electoral battle.

"This election is about family first versus nation. The 'parivaarwadi' (family-centric) party pushed the country towards terrorism, separatism and corruption. Now, we have Narendra Modi's guarantee of a developed and self-reliant India. The country's prestige has grown all over the world under Modi ji's leadership. Its borders are secure," the chief minister asserted.

Adityanath said when the central government is focusing on digital India, RJD leaders are busy talking about the "lantern" (the party symbol).

Their leaders are "opposed" to digital India initiatives of the Centre and Lalu Prasad can't think "beyond his parivar (family)", he alleged.



They indulge in 'rangdaari' (extortion) and believe in brandishing the 'tamancha' (revolver). The party leaders are responsible for criminalising politics. I am sure the people of Bihar will give them a befitting reply this time," Adityanath

"Today, there is no curfew and riot in UP and everything is fine there. The BJP government stands by its promises and actions. Now, the mafia and criminals either languish in jail or rot in hell. No one dares to threaten women or businessmen in UP. If you indulge in wrong doing, you will be fin-ished ('Ram Naam Satya Ho Jayega')," the CM said.

The NDA government in Bihar will do the same and that is why people of the state must ensure a third term for Modi, asserted Adityanath.

He also alleged that the Congress and its Bihar ally RJD

of Lord Ram. "But after the Ram Lalla idol was unveiled in Ayodhya, they changed track and started saying Ram belongs to all," he claimed.

The BJP's manifesto is Modi's guarantee. It reaffirms the dedication to building a developed India, while also reinforcing the firm stance against corruption, Adityanath said.

He charged the Congress and RJD leaders with doing nothing for former Bihar chief minister Karpoori Thakur. "It was the NDA government at the Centre that honoured him with the Bharat Ratna They (the opposition leaders) are exposed now," the UP chief minister said.

The Aurangabad Lok Sabha constituency will go to polls on April 19. BJP's Sushil Kumar Singh is seeking re-election from the seat as NDA nominee, while Rajya Sabha MP Vivek Thakur is contesting from

nothing to do with general public: Nadda

aunching a vitriolic attack Lon the opposition INDIA bloc, BJP president JP Nadda on Monday said that it has nothing to do with the general public and all parties in it are concerned only about their

INDIA Bloc has

Addressing a poll rally in Mussoorie in support of BJP candidate from Tehri Garhwal Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah, Nadda said on one side there is the BJP's manifesto (Sankalp Patra) which lays the roadmap for a developed India and on the other side the INDIA bloc constituents who have their separate man-

"What will they do for development when they cannot even come together," he said. Describing the INDIA bloc as a conglomeration of the corrupt who are either in jail or on bail, he said that all they are concerned with is saving their families.

Naming Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and P Chidambaram, and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders Sanjay Singh, Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Satyendra Jain, Nadda said all of them are either in jail or on

The BJP president asked the general public whether they would vote for such people.

"They (INDIA bloc) have nothing to do with you. They are only concerned with their

families and saving themselves," he said.

Nadda said that all constituents of the opposition bloc have been involved in scams be it Rashtriya Janata Dal (RID) chief Lalu Yadav's fodder scam, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav's laptop scam or the numerous scams committed during the

The BJP president said it is also a gathering of family centred parties led by Lalu Yadav, Akhilesh Yadav, Mamata Banerjee (TMC) or Stalin (DMK).

month.

he said.

Measures for harmony between

communities and the develop-

ment of the state have been

ensured in the agreement, he

said, accusing the CPI(M)-led

Left Front of spreading misin-

Addressing an election rally in

Kumarghat, Shah alleged the

Congress and CPI(M) which

had ruled the state for several

years tried to belittle the con-

tribution of the erstwhile

'Maharaja' of the state, Bir

"It was PM Narendra Modi

who gave due respect to Maharaja Bir Bikram by nam-

ing the Agartala airport after

him, and installing his statue,"

Shah claimed that the Congress

and the Left never allowed

anyone from the tribal com-

munity to hold a higher posi-

"PM Modi, for the first time,

honoured tribals by giving

India a president from the

tion in government.

community," he said.

Bikram Kishore Manikya.

"The only ones who care about you are your Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party, "he

Nadda said this election is not as much about electing a local MP as about electing a government under the leadership of Narendra Modi for a developed India.

The BJP president spoke of a changing India under Prime Minister Modi's leadership. He said that Prime Minister

Modi has changed the definition of politics in the last ten

Even Europe could not deal with the challenge of the Covid 19 pandemic as efficiently as Modi. Within nine months India developed two anti-covid vaccines under Prime Minister Modi's leadership and gave it to 100 countries, he said.

priority for BJP: Shah Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said development of the tribal areas in Tripura is a priority for the BJP, and asserted that all issues of the community have been taken care of in the "historic agreement" signed with Tipra Motha, a party which joined the state government last

Rs 24,000 crore. Under PM Modi, it increased to Rs 1,25,000 crore," he added.

Shah said a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) was being set up in Sabroom at a cost of Rs 1,550 crore, and it will attract investments and create employment opportunities for the people of

Attacking the CPI(M), he claimed that the communists handed over guns to the youths, while PM Modi provided them with laptops. "It is PM Modi who facilitated

more than 10 accords in the Northeast, and paved the way for 10,000 youths to return to the mainstream," he said. Listing the development initiatives undertaken by the BJPled government at the Centre. Shah said Tripura got Rs 40,183 crore during 10 years of the UPA's rule, and during PM Modi's tenure, it got Rs 98,000

"Before 2014, the budget for the The union minister said the Ministry of Tribal Affairs was

who had fled their homeland Mizoram following ethnic violence in the late 1990s, were resettled in 2022 in Tripura after living there for years in penury.

He noted that under the Modi government's leadership, efforts were made to establish well-equipped villages to improve their living conditions.

The Union home minister criticized the communists for allegedly instigating conflict among the people of Tripura and failing to foster development in the state.

The CPI(M) ruled the state first for a decade from 1978 to 1988, and then for 25 years between 1993 and 2018.

Alleging that the Left provided shelter to illegal immigrants in Tripura, Shah urged the people to ensure a third term for PM Modi to stop cross-bor-

der infiltration completely. Responding to the Union minister's statement on the agreement with the Tipra Motha, CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chaudhury sought to know the roadmap of the pact and what exactly the Centre is committing to the indigenous people.

"Nothing is clear in the agreement, except a proposal for setting up a joint working group. I appeal to the Union minister to throw light on the agreement since he visited the state for the first time after signing the accord," he

Rajkot LS seat to remain BJP fortress: Analysts

 $E^{\text{ven as Parshottam Rupala,}}_{\text{the BJP's nominee from}}$ Gujarat's Rajkot Lok Sabha seat, is facing agitation by Kshatriya community members, political analysts and voters believe the Union minister will emerge victorious. While the analysts claim Rajkot is an "unbreachable fortress" of the BJP, voters laud the development works done by the government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

Rupala recently claimed the erstwhile 'maharajas' succumbed to the persecution of foreign rulers, including the Britishers, Despite Rupala's apology, the Kshatriyas, also called Rajputs, see his remarks as an insult to them and have asked dature or face defeat in Rajkot, a Patidar-dominated seat considered as BJP's stronghold.

Elections to all the 26 Lok Sabha seats in Gujarat will be held on May 7.

MP Mohan Kundariya and nominated Rupala, belonging to the Kadva sub-sect of Patidar community. The Congress has fielded former MLA Paresh Dhanani, a Leuva Patidar.

Rupala and Dhanani belong to neighbouring Amreli district. Three-term Rajya Sabha member Rupala is contesting the Lok Sabha election for the first time. He was an MLA from Amreli in 1991, 1995 and 1998. In the 2022 assembly polls, Dhanani defeated Rupala from Amreli. Dhanani also won the assembly seat in 2012 and 2017 but lost to BJP's Kaushik Vekaria in 2022. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Dhanani contested from Amreli but lost to BJP's Naran Kachhadia.

Rajkot Lok Sabha seat has near-- Kadva and Leuva - are a decisive force with around 5.8 lakh

There are also 3.5 lakh Koli voters, 2.3 lakh Maldharis (both OBCs), 1.5 lakh Rajputs, 1.8

ers from minorities and 3 lakh from Brahmin and Lohana communities. Talking to PTI, political analyst

> maximum damage Rajputs can do to Rupala is reduce his winning lead by around 50,000 On the possibility of Dhanani's

> Jagdish Acharya claimed the

win with the help of nearly 4 lakh Leuva Patidars and a few thousand anti-BJP Rajput voters, Acharya said the chances are remote. "It will not make much differ-

ence if a few thousand Rajput voters go with Congress. Moreover, all Patidars, be it Kadva or Leuva, are largely united and committed to the BIP. The Leuva Patidars would not opt for Congress just and BJP's is Kadva," he opined. For voters, PM Modi's name and developmental works here are enough reasons to support the

Rajkot Lok Sabha seat com-

all currently held by the BJP. The saffron party has been winning Rajkot Lok Sabha seat since 1989, barring 2009 when BJP's Kiran Patel lost to

Bavaliya joined the BJP in 2018 and is currently a state cabinet "In 2019, BJP's Kundariya won from Rajkot by over 3.68 lakh votes and by 2.46 lakh votes in 2014. This seat is like an

unbreachable fortress of the

Congress' Kunvarji Bavaliya.

Koli leader and Jasdan MLA

BIP," said Acharva. Even if the agitation against Rupala continues, Rajput voters don't have that power to make any difference to the end result. The BJP won with huge margins in the last two elections. A dent of 40,000 to 50,000 votes stop the BJP from winning," he

The general view of voters across all castes is that Rupala should be forgiven as he has apologised, Acharya said.

numbers and have shifted to the BJP since some time. Jasdan is a Koli stronghold and Bavaliya can play a crucial role in getting these votes in BJP's kitty. The maximum damage Rajputs can do is to reduce Rupala's lead," Acharya said. Unfazed by the controversy, the people of Rajkot seem to have already made up their mind.

Pragnesh Thakkar, a local senior citizen, said the Ram temple inauguration in Ayodhya and development of Rajkot city are the key issues on which many people like him will vote for the BJP. The issue of water shortage in Rajkot is a thing of the past now, he said. "Look at the number of flyovers and underpasses here today. What does the common man have to do like me vote for the BJP, irrespective of the candidate. And, how can we forget the inauguration of Ram temple by PM Modi," said Thakkar.

Congress Ghoshna Patra visionless: Rajasthan CM

 $R^{
m ajasthan\ Chief\ Minister}_{
m Bhajanlal\ Sharma\ on}$ Monday said the BJP's 'Sankalp Patra' is a vision document whereas the Congress' 'Ghoshna Patra' is visionless. He said the Congress does not open its 'Ghoshna Patra after formation of the government and its claims in the manifesto seems like fantasies.

"Congress has its 'Ghoshna Patra' whereas the BJP has 'Sankalp Patra'. Congress does not open its manifesto after formation of the government. You might remember that during UPA rule the condition of people had turned from bad to at a press conference here. "On one side the BJP's 'Sankalp Patra' is full of vision whereas the Congress' 'Ghoshna Patra' is visionless," he added.

He said that Congress had

during its 55 years of rule but did not eliminate poverty.

"In a similar manner, the claims made by them in the 'Ghoshna Patra' seems to be fantasies," he said.

The chief minister said the BJP's 'Sankalp Patra' has been prepared after collecting expectations of crores of people. He said the BJP's 'Sankalp Patra' is a guarantee to fulfill all promises. Sharma said it is an election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantees. Till now, the political parties only made announcements and never fulfilled them but Prime Minister Modi has has fulfilled the promises made in

"We have a proof of 10 years of golden tenure and leadership of PM Modi ji whereas the 'Gĥamandiya Gathbandhan' has no intention, no leader and no policy," he said. The Chief

worked considering service, good governance and poor welfare as its aim in the last 10

India was 11th largest economy in 2014 and it is the fifth largest economy today and it will turn out to be the third largest economy in the third term of PM Modi, he added.

"Modi ji's guarantee is like 24 carat gold guarantee," he said. Sharma said the BJP government has fulfilled all promises, including abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir or building the Ram Temple in Ayodhya or upliftment of poor from below poverty line.

has now promised to implement the Uniform Civil Code, One Nation - One Election and action on corruption in its 2024 Lok Sabha polls mani-

Mandaviya files nomination from Porbandar in Gujarat

PTI ■ PORBANDAR

Union Health and Family Welfare minister Mansukh Mandaviya, who is making his debut in the Lok Sabha elections, filed his nomination papers on Monday from the Porbandar constituency after leading a 2-km road show in the historic town. He was accompanied to the

district collector's (DC) office by BJP leader Arjun Modhwadia, formerly of the Congress and who also filed his nomination for the byelection of Porbandar assembly constituency. Mandaviya began his day

around 9.15 am by offering prayers at four prominent temples -- Bhojeshwar Temple, Kharwa Samaj (Panchyat Mandir), Kirti Mandir, Hanuman temple at Sudama Chowk -- before he set out to address a public gathering at Sudama Chowk.

Wearing a traditional Gujarati headgear 'pheta', the minister was accompanied by his wife, daughter and daughter-in law. His son also joined later.

At Kirti Mandir, Mahatma Gandhi's birth place, Mandaviya said, "I am visiting the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi before filing the nomination. We have to take inspiration from his life."

Mandaviya's cavalcade then proceeded to Sudama Chowk, next to Sudama temple, where he addressed a nearly 2,000strong crowd.



acknowledged India's management of the Covid crisis and the vaccination programme," said Mandaviya, who also holds the chemical and fertilisers portfolio.

People from different communities waving saffron flags thronged the five popular intersections of the city through which his road show passed and felicitated him at regular intervals. Mandaviya and Modhwadia were travelling together in a top open SUV.

People from different communities such as Kharva, Lohana, Dalit, Mher and Brahma as well as traders garlanded him.

The cavalcade, which started from Sudama Chowk, passed through Khadi Bhandar, Baluba Kanya Vidyalaya, Old Fountain chowk, Birla Hall, Tajavala Hall, Bhaveshwar Mahadev temple, Khijadi plot,

Baug. "We hope that such a high profile candidate will spur Porbandar's development and create employment opportunities and bring industries here," said 27-year-old Deveraj. He along with Modhwadia then went to the DC office where he filed his nomination Modhwadia, who was an

MLA from the Porbandar constituency, resigned from the Congress last month and joined the BJP. The proposers on the four

nomination forms for Mandaviya, who belong to the government's four priority groups — gareeb, yuva, annadata and nari (GYAN) (poor, youth, farmers and women) accompanied Mandaviya throughout the road show. These four are beneficiaries of the government's various pub-

lic welfare schemes including

Ayushman Bharat.

Ready to support Congress if it scraps Mhadei project: RGP

The Revolutionary Goans Party (RGP) on Monday said it is ready to ally with the Congress for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections if it works to scrap the Mhadei project and demolishes illegal slums in the

The Congress had appealed to the RGP to withdraw its candidates from the fray and support the INDIA bloc. The Congress has already

announced the names of former Union minister Ramakant Khalap and Viriato Fernandes as candidates for the North and South Goa Lok Sabha seats. Addressing a press conference here, RGP Chief Manoj Parab said the party is ready for "seat sharing" with the INDIA bloc if it is ready to fulfil its conditions about the Mhadei river, illegal slums and People of Goan Origin Bill.

"The RGP will offer support to the INDIA bloc but on the condition that it works towards scrapping the Kalasa-Bandura project on the Mhadei river and adds in its state manifesto that the river will remain with Goans," he said. The Congress high command

should give an assurance that

the government in Karnataka

will not allow diversion of

water from the river, he said.

Parab further said that the

party should also assure that



demolished and policies will be drafted to check the influx of

The RGP leader demanded that the INDIA bloc accept the Person of Goan Origin (POGO) Bill. The RGP has been demanding that all Goans who were born or whose family members were born in Goa before 1961, when the state was liberated from Portuguese rule, should be declared as "People of Goan Origin" and should be given priority in the government sector for employment

and other purposes. RGP MLA Viresh Borkar had tried to table the bill in the House, but other parties, including Congress, rejected it. "If they don't accept the POGO Bill, the Congress should define who is Goan according to

them," Parab said. Parab said that the RGP will wait for the response from INDIA Alliance till April 20. Goa will go to polls on May 7 and the counting of votes will be held on June 4.

BJP manifesto road map for developed India, says Dhami



PTI ■ DEHRADUN

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Monday said the BJP's manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls provides the road map for a developed India with the upliftment of every section of soci-

At a press conference held here on the party's 'Sankalp Patra' released on Sunday, Dhami said the document also states the need for a Uniform Civil Code for the entire country on the lines of the one passed by the Uttarakhand Assembly. It is a manifesto which provides

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantee of service, good governance, welfare of the poor, infrastructure development, women empowerment, taking the youth forward and taking development to the last person, Dhami said.

It also resolves to implement a stringent law to put an end to paper leaks across India as done in Uttarakhand which has introduced the "strictest" anticopying law in the country, he Implementation of the anti-

copying law in Uttarakhand has led to positive results with thousands of youth getting jobs in a fair and transparent manner, the chief minister said, adding the game of copying mafia is over in the state. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, India will fulfil the vision of Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, he said. Dhami said 'one nation, one election' guaranteed in the BJP's manifesto will lead to a "welcome change" as frequent elections and imposition of the model code of conduct

hamper development.

BJP unveils **Sankalp Patra** in Andaman and **Nicobar Islands**



PTI PORT BLAIR

The BJP in Andaman and Nicobar Islands unveiled its Sankalp Patra' (election manifesto) here on Monday in the presence of senior party leaders including its candidate Bishnu Pada Ray. The party unit in the Union

Territory (UT) has pledged to provide round-the-clock clean water and electricity to every household, regardless of its remoteness.

Additionally, the party promised to improve road transport infrastructure, including the completion of pending work on National Highway-4, which connects Port Blair to Diglipur.

Other commitments include

initiating land conversion for commercial to residential purposes, ensuring 100 per cent job reservation for Islanders, advocating for the inclusion of certain settler communities in Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the OBC category, enhancing sports facilities to state-ofthe-art standards, promoting tourism activities to meet international standards, and improving the quality of eduwww.dailypioneer.com

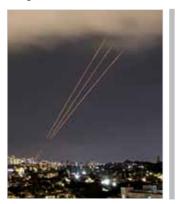
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PAPER WITH PASSION-

Damage control

World leaders scramble to soothe tempers after Iran's retaliatory attack on Israel for Damascus

■he fragile peace equilibrium in West Asia has been hit once again, with Iran launching a direct attack on Israel and escalating tensions. Fresh apprehensions reverberated globally, prompting swift diplomatic action from President Joe Biden who, besides conveying to Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the US will not be part of any retaliatory action, has convened the G7 nations to address the urgent matter. The missiles-and-drones attack, which targeted strategic locations including military installations and civilian areas in Israel, has escalated the situation to a dangerous level. While casualties and damages are still being assessed, the brazenness of this assault has sent shockwaves across the region and beyond. Iran, a key player in the region, has often found itself at odds with Israel, citing ideological differences and regional power struggles. However, the direct military engagement between the countries represents a dangerous escalation that could have far-reaching consequences. Israel, known for its



robust defence capabilities, has vowed to respond to Iran's aggression, raising concerns of a prolonged and devastating conflict. The events of April 1 in Damascus marked the onset of a fresh chapter in the ongoing regional strife between the countries. That assault, resulting in the loss of several high-ranking Iranian military officials, signified a shift from indirect hostilities to confrontation. Subsequently, Iran initiated its longanticipated reprisal against Israel, deploying numerous drones and ballistic missiles. Despite indications of this impending attack during discreet negotiations between the US and Iran, most of the strikes were intercepted en route Israel.

Meanwhile, Israeli authorities, particularly Netanyahu, have endeavoured to depict their nation as the target of unwarranted Iranian aggression. President Biden has responded swiftly by convening a meeting of the Group of Seven (G7) nations. The G7, consisting of the world's leading industrialised democracies, serves as a forum for coordinating responses to global challenges, including security threats. Though the US may have fostered conditions conducive to Netanyahu's actions, Israel acted independently to trigger the latest escalation. Therefore, to be fair to Iran, its reaction has not been an unprovoked attack. Lately, Netanyahu has been drawing flak for his misadventures at home and abroad, and the US support for his military campaign is also waning. So he played the Iran card to win brownie points and, with Iran being the West's favourite punching bag, it bolstered Netanyahu's standing whereas a gullible Iran took the bait and allowed itself to be drawn into a war in which it had no role so far. An individual's obstinacy has now put the entire region at heightened risk of volatility. As G7 deliberates on the appropriate response, efforts must be focused on de-escalating tensions and facilitating dialogue between the conflicting parties. Diplomatic channels should be utilised to engage Iran and Israel in constructive dialogue to find a peaceful solution to their grievances.



Devotees perform 'Arghya' ritual on the last day of 'Chaiti Chhath' festival, in Patna

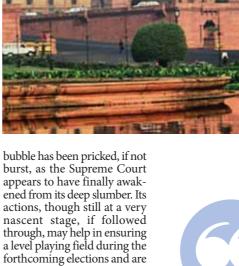
Avoiding icebergs in troubled times



Amid escalating unease surrounding the credibility of Government agencies, the path to assuaging these concerns and reinstating trust lies in conducting a transparent inquiry

learly, in these dystopian times reality has come to be stranger than fiction and social mores turned on their head. In an earlier time, actions seen as abhorrent or distasteful, when caught, would be immediately disavowed. Today they are brazenly flaunted as a badge of honour and attempted to be normalised. The blatant misuse of our Central Agencies to hound and arm-twist opposition politicians, journalists, businessmen and corporates being one such. What could be more unconscionable than a politician publicly claiming personal credit for an initiative after our Supreme Court has declared it unconstitutional? That too, because it violates the citizens fundamental right to informa-

In fact, not only did he attempt to justify his action using that tired old cliché, "it was for our own good", but also added to good effect that those critical would subsequently regret it. An implied threat perhaps? The reasoning in support was that we would never have come to know the specifics of political donations if not for this initiative, which while accurate, could not be further from the truth. There can be no dispute that was certainly not the intention to begin with, otherwise why the secrecy in the first place? Moreover, it was the Government's top lawyers who made every effort to convince the court that the ordinary citizen had no right to such information. While it may have just been an attempt to brazen through in view of the elections, one cannot help but feel that the Government believes it has not erred and is thus unrepentant and likely to be pushed through again. The Belgian painter and author, Erik Pevernagie, makes a very pertinent point when he writes "politicians are but tantalising storytellers, as they mix facts with fiction, grab our emotion and tell things, they want us to believe. Their factoids are unremittingly reiterated, take a life on their own and in the end become the very truth... until the bubble bursts." Unfortunately for this Government it seems that the also be viewed with suspicion,



Moreover, details of alleged linkages that are emerging from the Electoral Bonds issues suggest humungous malfeasance and sordid corruption at an unimaginable scale indulged in by the richest and most powerful within the country for their own personal gain. All of this has been at the cost of the ordinary tax payer. Moreover, we have yet to learn whether foreign entities have channelled in funds through domestic players, as is a distinct possibility. Such interference, if it has occurred, should be a matter of great concern given the impact it may have on nation al security. In this context, the functioning of the Prime Minister's Cares Fund must

therefore exceedingly wel-

come. More importantly, it has

put the bosses of our public

institutions, be it public sector

companies, the central inves-

tigative agencies or the

Election Commission on



IN THESE

CIRCUMSTANCES, THE ONLY CREDIBLE **OPTION REMAINING** IS FOR THE SUPREME COURT TO ORDER A JUDICIAL INVESTIGATION UNDER ITS OWN AEGIS, WHICH SHOULD BE **BROADCAST LIVE TO** ENSURE COMPLETE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

given its lack of transparency and the various allegations made against it.

Both these initiatives were conceived and implemented by the present dispensation in power, which in all probability, will return. It is extremely unlikely therefore, that they will undertake a credible or fair investigation of allegations made. Moreover, our premier investigative agencies also find themselves under a cloud for their acts of omission and commission. For example, the Enforcement Directorate has since 2005 registered approximately 5900 cases. It has completed and chargesheets in only 1142 cases and disposed of just twenty-five of these, with twenty-four ending in convic-

What is worse is its biased actions in investigating politicians. As media reports show, since 2014 the Directorate has probed 121 prominent politicians of which 115, or 95 per cent, belong to the opposition. As per these same reports the Central Bureau of Investigation mirrored the pattern followed by the ED. in these circumstances, the only credible option remaining is for the Supreme Court to order a judicial investigation

under its own aegis, that

should be broadcast live to ensure complete transparency and accountability. One does not need to be a soothsaver to suggest that if such a strict and non-partisan step is not initiated at the earliest, we will always remain at the mercy of leeches who will suck the life

blood out of our democratic

norms, right to good gover-

nance and the rule of law. Finally, from the proceedings in Supreme Court on the Electoral Bonds case one can infer that the manner in which the Chairman, State Bank of India, used the resources entrusted to him by the depositors to defy and hamper the directions of the Court render him patently unfit to hold that appointment.

Just because the party in power appoints him and others to head public institutions and agencies, they cannot see themselves as mere factotums of those who appointed them and do their bidding. One expects far more of them, not least to show integrity of character and follow rules without fear or favour.

(The author, a military veteran, is a visiting fellow with tne Observer Kesearch Foundation and a senior visiting fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai, views are personal)

HE EDITOR **Urban farming**

Screenwriters as architects of emotion



PAWAN SONY

They are the true magicians. Their contributions extend far beyond the screen, touching hearts and shaping societal narratives

¬he magic of cinema is not just seen; it's heard in the echo of words that linger long after the screen goes dark. Screenwriters, the unsung architects of moments, weave dialogues and scenes that shape our emotional landscapes, often becoming a part of our very identity.

Take the classic scene from 'Deewar', where Amitabh Bachchan, embodying the success and arrogance of his character, delivers the powerful lines, "Aaj mere paas gaadi hai, bungla hai, paisa hai... tumhare paas kya hai?" To this, Shashi Kapoor responds with the iconic, "Mere paas, maa hai." This exchange transcends its cinematic origin, showcasing the screenwriter's ability to capture the essence of human values and emotions in a few, yet pro-

found, words. This is the essence of screenwriting—not just creating dialogues but sculpting moments that become landmarks in cinematic history. It's about crafting narratives that engage, enterof emotions, from the laughter that bubbles up during the light-hearted moments in '3 Idiots' to the tears that unknowingly fall for the poignant scenes in 'Taare Zameen Par'.

Screenwriters delve into the depths of the human experience, drawing upon themes of love, loss, victory and defeat to create stories that resonate across tain and evoke a spectrum cultures and generations. ences. In the realm of cin-

Through their words, characters come to life, embarking on journeys filled with challenges, joys, sorrows and ultimately, growth. Movies and shows like Mohabbatein' and 'Maharani' which challenge the values of "Parampara,

Pratishtha, Anushasan," not

only entertain but also

inspire reflections and con-

versations among audi-

ema, screenwriters are the true magicians, crafting the spells of dialogue and narrative that enchant us, make us reflect and sometimes even change our perspectives. Their contributions go beyond the screen, touching hearts and shaping societal narratives.

As we recount memorable lines or find solace in the cinematic moments that have moved us, let's remember the architects behind emotions-the these screenwriters. Their mastery over words and their deep understanding of the human condition empower them to create stories that entertain, enlighten and endure.

In celebrating their craft, we acknowledge the profound impact of their work, not just on cinema, but on culture and society at large. For in the hands of a skilled screenwriter, words become the bridge between the world of the film and the heart of the viewer, making the cinematic experience truly unforgettable.

(The writer is Co-Chair, Media Sub Committee, SWA; views are personal)

POLITICAL CHESSBOARD

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Battle lines drawn in western UP", published on April 13, this is my response. In the heartland of Uttar Pradesh, a political battlefield is shaping up unlike any seen before. With the looming Lok Sabha elections, Western Uttar Pradesh finds itself in the eye of the storm, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vigorous campaigning seeks to consolidate Hindu votes against a backdrop of shifting alliances and historical legacies. The region's intricate social fabric, woven by dominant communities like the Jats, Muslims and Dalits, carries the weight of political dynasties and ideological realignments. From the legacy of Charan Singh's Kisan politics to the emergence of new power centres like the BJP and BSP, each move on this electoral chessboard is strategic, aiming to capture seats and the narrative of Uttar Pradesh's political future.

As the BJP navigates through the complexities of caste dynamics and minority representation, the challenge lies in maintaining its Hindu vote bank while facing the formidable opposition bloc, now bolstered by the BSP's calculated manoeuvres. In this high-stakes game, the fate of Uttar Pradesh hangs in the balance, awaiting the verdict of its diverse electorate.

Abhijeet Nand Bhopal

EXPLORING HUMAN LEARNING

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Education's cultural impact is profound", published on April 12, this is my response. The enduring belief that "man is a learning animal" has shaped civilizations, but a deeper examination reveals nuances. While youth and adulthood foster comprehensive learning, its impact wanes with age. The persistence of certain knowledge over time underscores the need for continual renewal and tailored educational approaches. In India, where knowledge, behaviour and spirituality form the essence of personalitv. there's a call to integrate these elements into education. To achieve this, the curricu-



propos the news article, "Cultivating sustainability through urban farming", published on April 11, this is my response. The Pioneer's succinct write-up of urban farming as a climate change solution is commendable. Climate change's urgency demands immediate action and urban farming offers a multifaceted response. It not only addresses food security but also mitigates environmental degradation and fosters com-

ing needs, ensuring skills remain relevant amidst life's challenges.

Each subject demands a unique learning approach, suggesting teachers articulate specific methods for effective internalisation. Embracing learning theory in pedagogy promises a more pragmatic education system, resonating with the ethos of a nation aspiring to be a global leader. Ultimately, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of learning enriches our collective understanding, enhancing not only individual lives but also the fabric of society. It's time to imbue education with the wisdom that "man is a learning animal," fostering a culture of continuous growth and adaptation.

Shihaab Khan | Hyderabad

A CHAMPION OF JUSTICE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "A harbinger of justice and equality", published on April 13, this is my response. The legacy of Dr BR Ambedkar, a towering figure in India's history, continues to inspire millions worldwide. His tireless efforts towards lum must evolve to address lifelong learn- social justice, equality and inclusivity have

munity cohesion. The article rightly emphasises the need for supportive policies to scale up urban farming initiatives. Governments must incentivise and facilitate urban agriculture to make it accessible to all communities. Additionally, community engagement plays a pivotal role in its success, fostering social bonds and economic opportuni-

Urban farming's transformative potential lies in its ability to convert urban spaces into sustainable ecosystems. By repurposing vacant lots and rooftops, cities can combat the urban heat island effect and reduce carbon emissions from food transportation. In essence, urban farming represents a promising pathway towards a more resilient and sustainable future. Its integration into policy frameworks and community initiatives is crucial in tackling the imminent challenges of cli-

Khirabdi Tanya Nayak | Noida

left an indelible mark on the nation's conscience. Born into poverty, Dr Ambedkar overcame numerous obstacles to become an intellectual powerhouse and a relentless

advocate for the oppressed. His vision of a just society, rooted in education and empowerment, remains as relevant today as ever. Dr Ambedkar's emphasis on dialogue, non-violence and co-existence underscores the path towards societal harmony. His contributions to India's legal framework, particularly in llabourrights, are foundational to the country's progress. As we commemorate his birth anniversary, let us not only hhonourhis memory but also recommit ourselves to the ideals he espoused. Let us strive for a nation where every individual, regardless of caste or creed, enjoys equal rights and opportunities. Dr Ambedkar's teachings resonate as a beacon of hope, guiding us towards a democratic, secular and inclusive future

Priyanka Sharma | Delhi

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he pioneer

FIRST COLUMN

BALANCING WELLBEING IN WORK AND LIFE

In the intricate dance of work and life, boundaries save individual sanctuaries



oundaries serve as the invisible fences that portrays an individual's personal as well as professional spaces, safeguard the individual wellbeing and preserve harmony in their interactions. Be it in the workplace or in life, setting and maintaining boundaries is paramount for fostering healthy relationships, achieving balance and nurturing self-respect. In today's world, where the pace of life is often hectic and boundaries can easily be overlooked or disregarded, establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries is essential for promoting individual well-being, healthy relationships and a more compassionate and equitable society. Moreover, boundary setting is an indispensable aspect of both the workplace and life at large.

When talked about the workplace, setting boundaries are essential for maintaining professionalism, productivity and helps the employees reduce misunderstandings, conflicts and instead maintain a healthy work-life balance, prevent burnout and improve job satisfaction. It also promotes efficiency, prevents distractions, safeguard individuals from exploitation, harassment and undue stress.



In a competitive and demanding work environment, it becomes crucial to set limits on workload, deadlines and expectations to prevent overcommitment and exhaustion. Numerous studies have also highlighted the importance of setting boundaries to maintain a healthy work-life balance. By defining clear limits on workload, working hours and availability, employees can better manage their work-related stress and maintain a positive attitude towards their jobs. In doing so, they can protect themselves from intrusive inquiries or demands that encroach upon their emotional well-being. Furthermore, boundary setting cultivates respect and professionalism in workplace dynamics and encourages others to treat self with similar respect. By clearly communicating the expectations and limits, the individual establishes a culture of mutual respect and accountability in the workplace. When individuals assert their boundaries assertively yet respectfully, it communicates self-confidence and self-worth, fostering a culture of mutual respect and dignity. Respect for boundaries encourages open communication, empathy and understanding, strengthening interpersonal relationships and teamwork.

Beyond the workplace, boundary setting is equally indispensable in personal relationships and daily life too. In interpersonal relationships, boundaries define acceptable behaviours, emotional intimacy and personal space. Healthy boundaries empower individuals to prioritise their needs, values and aspirations, fostering relationships based on mutual respect and reciprocity. Whether it's setting limits on time spent with certain individuals or communicating preferences regarding personal space, boundaries nurture healthier and more fulfilling connections. Remember, setting boundaries is not about being selfish or uncooperative rather it's about taking care of individual self and ensuring that one can perform their best while maintaining the individual well-being. When done thoughtfully and respectfully, setting boundaries can strengthen the individual's professional relationships and enhance their effectiveness at work.

Remember, boundaries are never about telling other people what they can and cannot do. It is about telling people what they will and will not do. Setting boundaries is an act of self-love and self-respect which is essential for individual wellbeing. Setting boundaries around leisure time, self-care routines and social engagements will allow an individual to recharge, replenish their energy and cultivate resilience in the face of challenges. By honouring their boundaries, individuals assert their agency and reclaim control over their time, energy and emotions.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Challenges galore for NATO@75



KS TOMAR

The alliance confronts formidable challenges amidst mounting criticism from European nations and the surge of right-wing nationalist movements



ne of the biggest challenges being faced by the North Organisation (NATO) on its 75th anniversary pertains to combating and addressing the severe criticism from some European countries and the spread of right-wing nationalist movements. Hence, it needs to adopt a cautious and balanced approach to stay relevant in the 21st century.

Challenges ahead to stay relent: NATO, with 32 member states and five aligned nations including Japan, New Zealand, Israel, Australia and South Korea, must enhance defence capabilities and security arrangements to ensure mutual trust and better cooperation. NATO also called Washington Treaty, was created on April 4, 1949 to counterweight to Soviet military forces stationed in Central and Eastern Europe after world war 2nd, has traversed a hazardous journey and sus tained faith of security and protection from aggressors hinges on its commitment to stay united and germane.

Secondly, NATO's military potential is being perceived as a tool and weapon of the United States to ensure its hegemony over nations that do not pose military threats.

There is a calamitous need to dispel such impressions of supremacy, evident from its 200 military interventions worldwide in 75 years, including 20 major ones like the questionable outcome of combating terrorism in Afghanistan, unlawful interference in Syria, invasion of Iraq, bombing of Yugoslavia, destabilisation of Libya and the creation of ISIS.

Thirdly, as a parting gift, NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg has proposed a \$100 billion package of military aid to Ukraine for five years, aimed at avoiding a potential halt in aid if Trump wins the 2024 American presidential elections.

Former President Trump has made it



NATO MUST ADOPT A **COMPREHENSIVE** STRATEGY THAT

PRODUCTIVE AND FRUITFUL ONLY IF IT INTEGRATES

ITSELF WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS. **BESIDES** STRENGTHENING ITS MILITARY **CAPABILITIES**

clear to keep his country away from such conflicts and he is seen as pro-Putin, which might upset NATO. Experts feel that NATO members should get this propos-al approved at the upcoming meeting in Washington and counter Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

NATO Needs Reforms: Foreign policy experts argue that NATO needs to focus on non-traditional threats such as terror attacks, disinformation campaigns, cyber assaults and risks to disrupt supply chains to preserve its allies. Otherwise, it will lose its credentials and effectiveness.

Secondly, NATO must adopt a comprehensive strategy that will be productive and fruitful only if it integrates itself with international organisations besides strengthening its military capabil-

ities.
Thirdly, it should put in place an effective mechanism to foster a shared sense of purpose and make relentless efforts to ensure cohesiveness and unity among the member states. Consensusbuilding should be the primary motto of the alliance, guided by essential elements like discussion, dialogue, unified planning and political alignments. Fourthly, transparency is obligatory to create mutual trust and internal synergy, as well as to improve coordination among the five main policy formation committees, including the executive working group, political committee, policy formalisation group, military group and senior resource board. Why did India reject the US offer to be part of NATO? From the Indian perspec-

tive, experts say that India has already rejected the US offer to be

part of an alliance to safeguard against Chinese aggression. India is capable of independently countering such threats and, therefore, does not need the assistance of a military grouping like NATO. If India joins NATO, it will pave the way for the US to establish military bases, which is unacceptable to Delhi. US allies like Australia, Israel, Japan and South Korea have permitted military bases, but India cannot allow the infringement of its sovereignty and degradation of its positioning in the world arena. While maintaining strategic autonomy, India will never jeopardise its age-old trustworthy ties with Russia, which is at odds with America and its allies after the Ukraine conflict. A United States Congressional committee had recommended that the US should strengthen NATO Plus to safeguard borders from China and enhance its capabilities to counter Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region hence it warrants India's inclusion in the organisation.

The successes and failures of the organisation go hand in hand, but conflicts' contamination is spreading among major powers and frozen encounters may always heat up in the future, attributed to growing state brittleness and spillover threats, thereby disturbing the world order.

The recent Global Risk Report has come out with curious findings pertaining to the Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS) which is the culmination of the analysis of fifteen hundred global experts

risks through three time frames to support decision-makers responsible for balancing current crises and long-term policies and prior-

One major failure of NATO relates to the lack of allocation of 2 per cent of funds by defence ministers of state members of their GDP agreed upon in 2006 towards security - related expenditures, especially when the United States accounts for twothirds of the alliance's spending, which needs to be shared by other nations in the organisation. NATO had focused on restricting communism, discouraging militant nationalism and controlling the Soviet Union during the Cold War, but now the situation has become volatile in post-Cold War era as Kussia nas induiged in annexing neighbours, posing a threat to other smaller nations as well. Analysts feel that as NATO celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2024, it stands at a vintage point of passing through a litmus test of its core mission of safeguarding the security and freedom of its members, based on a principleoriented international order and

mandate. Trump's potential return to the White House may jeopardise the existence of NATO as it may encourage aggressors like Putin and give a boost to China's overambitious expansion policy to annex Taiwan in the future. Trump may encourage Putin to continue his onslaught on Ukraine, putting Europe's security at risk

(The writer is a political analyst based in Shimla; views are personal)

A call to vote responsibly beyond party lines

With focus on accountability and progress, it's imperative to scrutinise governmental performance across key sectors

ndia is undeniably a youthful nation, with a significant Leportion of our population comprising the younger generation. Every year, countless young individuals come of age, reaching 18 years and gaining eligibility to vote. This message is directed not only to those who have recently attained this milestone but also to those who did so in the past few years. With the power to vote comes a profound responsibility—the responsibility to elect leaders who possess the competence and integrity to effectively govern

our nation. As citizens, it is imperative that we transcend party lines and critically evaluate the progress of our nation. Are we moving in the right direction? Are there tangible improvements



RAVI KOCHHAR

in various sectors? Are we receiving value for the taxes we pay? These are fundamental questions we must ask ourselves as we assess the state of

While political parties often prioritise winning elections, it is our duty as responsible citizens to vote for candidates who prioritise the welfare of the people and deliver on their promises. Over the past 75 years, India has made remarkable strides, earning recognition as a responsible global player. Whether it's our nuclear capabilities or our humanitarian efforts during crises, we have demonstrated our commitment to progress and compassion.

The electoral process grants us the opportunity, every five



accountable for their actions. We must evaluate their performance across various sectors, including:-

Infrastructure **Development:** Assess the improvement in infrastructure, particularly in terms of years, to hold our leaders connectivity by rail, road and

waterways, which directly impacts ease of doing business and facilitates movement across the country.

2.Industrial Growth and **Policies:** Evaluate the government's plans and policies for industrial growth and decision-making processes, ensur-

ing there is no policy paralysis hindering progress.

3. Impact on Poor and Middle Class: Examine how Government policies impact the poor and middle class, with a focus on initiatives aimed at upliftment and improvement.

4. Healthcare Sector
Performance: Evaluate the government's performance in the healthcare sector and assess the affordability and accessibility of healthcare for all citizens. 5.Education and Skill Development: Analyse initiatives in education and skill

development, focusing on improving literacy rates, bridging urban-rural gaps and empowering the youth. 6.Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity: Assess improve-

ments in digital infrastructure

and connectivity, particularly

formance in foreign policy and international relations, considering India's standing on the global stage. Remember, our national identity, symbolised by our flag, transcends religious and caste

in urban-rural sectors and

7. Agriculture and Rural

Sector: Review Government

initiatives in agriculture and

rural development and their

impact on rural communities.

8. Transparency and Accountability: Ensure trans-

parency and accountability in

public administration, with

efforts to curb corruption and

promote good governance.

9.Foreign Policy and

International Relations:

Evaluate the government's per-

divisions, uniting us as one

nation. As we exercise our

how they benefit citizens.

right to vote, let us remember the significance of our national flag and the unity it represents. Your vote holds immense power. History has witnessed elections being decided by a single vote. Therefore, before casting your vote, consider crucial factors such as the government's performance and policies, rising above religious and caste affiliations for the greater good of the nation

While this list is not exhaustive, it underscores the importance of informed decision-making and prioritising the wellbeing of our nation. Let us unite in our commitment to building a stronger, more prosperous

(The wrtier is group Pro VC Amity University; views are personal)

Israeli military warns Palestinians not to return to Gaza

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

The Israeli military renewed warnings on Monday for Palestinians in Gaza not to return to the embattled territory's north, a day after Gaza hospital officials said five people were killed as throngs of displaced residents tried to reach their homes in the wartorn area.

Northern Gaza was an early target of Israel's war against Hamas and vast parts of it have been flattened, forcing much of the area's population to flee south. While around 250,000 people are said to be living in the north, the Israeli military has prevented most displaced people from returning throughout the sixmonth-long war, saying the area is an active battle zone. The military has reduced the number of troops it has in Gaza and has said it has loosened Hamas' control over the north, but Israel is still carrying out airstrikes and targeted operations in the area

against what it says are reor-

ganizing militants, most prominently at Gaza's main hospital, Shifa, which is in ruins after a two-week raid and fighting last month.

Israeli military spokesman Avichay Adraee wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that Palestinians should stay in southern Gaza, where they have been told to shelter, because the north is a "dangerous combat zone.

People appeared to be heeding the new warning, especially after the violence on Sunday. Hospital authorities in Gaza said that five people were killed by Israeli forces while trying to travel north to their homes. Their bodies were taken to the Awda hospital in the urban Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, hospital records showed. A further 54 were wounded in the incident, the records showed.

The Israeli military had no immediate comment and the precise circumstances behind the deaths were not immediately clear.

Anaam Mohammad, who was



ran's U.N. Ambassador, Amir Saeid Iravani, top left, listens to Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, Gilad Erdan's address in the United Nations Security Council chamber during an emergency meeting at U.N. headquarters, on Sunday.

displaced from the northern titary was allowing women did not make room for them

trying to return, said the mil- when a group of Palestinians

city of Beit Hanoun and was and children to cross, but to pass, two tanks arrived and opened fire. Forces also

threw smoke bombs, dispersing the crowd.

'People started to run away. People were afraid and could not take the risk and enter a dangerous area," she said.

Ahead of the violence Sunday, throngs of people crowded a coastal road and moved north by foot and donkey cart. The returnees said they were prompted to make the dangerous journey because they were fed up with the difficult conditions they are forced to live under while displaced.

We want our homes. We want our lives. We want to return, whether with a truce or without a truce," said Um Nidhal Khatab, who was displaced from the north.

Northern Gaza and the return of its population is a key sticking point between Israel and Hamas in negotiations underway to try to bring about a cease-fire in exchange for the release of hostages taken by the militant group. Israel wants to try to delay the return to prevent militants from regrouping in the north,

while Hamas says it wants a free flow of returnees.

The war has had a staggering toll on civilians in Gaza, with most of the territory's 2.3 million people displaced by the fighting and living in dire circumstances, with little food and often in tents and no end in sight to their misery. Large swaths of the urban landscape have been damaged or destroyed, leaving many displaced Palestinians with nowhere to return to.

Six months of fighting in Gaza have pushed the tiny Palestinian territory into a humanitarian crisis, leaving more than 1 million people on the brink of starvation.

Famine is said to be imminent in the hard-hit north, where aid has struggled to reach because of the fighting. Israel has opened a new crossing for aid trucks into the north as it ramps up aid deliveries to the besieged enclave. However, the United Nations says the surge of aid is not being felt in Gaza because of persistent distribution difficulties

Monday said it managed to deliver fuel and wheat flour to a bakery in isolated Gaza City in the north for the first time since the war started.

The conflict started on Oct. 7 when Hamas killed 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, in a surprise attack and incursion into southern Israel. Around 250 people were seized as hostages by the militants and taken to Gaza. A deal in November freed about 100 hostages, leaving about 130 in captivity, although Israel says about a quarter of those are dead.Israeli bombardments and ground offensives in Gaza have killed more than 33,700 Palestinians and wounded over 76,200, the Gaza Health Ministry says.

The ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its tally, but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead.

Israel says it has killed over 12,000 militants during the war, but it has not provided evidence to back up the claim.

FBI opens probe

into Baltimore

PM Sunak's Rwanda bill returns to House of Commons

 $B^{\text{ritish Prime Minister Rishi}}_{\text{Sunak's flagship legislation}}$ aimed at flying illegal migrants out to Rwanda, which has been plagued with delays and parliamentary hurdles, returns to the House of Commons on Monday on its journey towards becoming law. The Safety of Rwanda Bill returns to the Lower House after the House of Lords made amendments and sent it back to the Commons, triggering a democratic process referred to as parliamentary ping-pong between the two chambers.

The peers want to water down the hardline legislation that seeks to deem the East African country safe in law to block legal challenges to migrants being flown out to Rwanda while their asylum claims are assessed. It returns its voting journey as Parliament resumes after an Easter recess and the fresh wrangles over the bill

'Police officer,

shooter killed

in exchange

of gunfire in

Liverpool (New York) (AP): A

police officer and a sheriff's deputy in upstate New York were shot and killed Sunday

night in an exchange of gunfire

with another person, who also

was killed, police said. The

shooting took place shortly

after 8 pm in Liverpool, about

6 miles (10 kilometres) north

of Syracuse. The Syracuse Police

Department and Onondaga

County Sheriff's Office were

tracking a vehicle that had

eluded police earlier, Syracuse

Police Chief Joseph Cecile said

Two Syracuse police officers unsuccessfully attempted to

stop a suspicious vehicle but got

the license plate and tracked it

to an address on Darien Drive

in Liverpool. They requested

assistance from the sheriff's

office after learning the vehicle's driver might be armed, Cecile

The officers found the vehicle at the home and saw what

appeared to be guns inside the auto. They then "heard what sounded like someone manip-

ulating a firearm from inside

At least one person then

exchanged gunfire with the

officers. The Syracuse officer,

sheriff's deputy and the suspect

were shot and brought to

Upstate University Hospital in

All three were pronounced

dead at the hospital, Cecile said

Their names were not immediately released. "We lost two

heroes tonight," Cecile said. The

Post-Standard of Syracuse

reports the officers were the

first law enforcement officers to

be killed in the line of duty in

Onondaga County since Officer Wallie Howard Jr. was

shot to death during an under-

cover drug operation in October 1990.

Cecile said the Syracuse officer

who was killed had been with

the department for three years

Syracuse.

working.

the residence," Cecile said.

during a news conference.

upstate³

unfold against the backdrop of small boat crossings by asylum seekers across the English Channel hitting a new daily high for 2024 - at 534 on

It will be seen as a fresh blow to Sunak, who has made "stopping the boats" a central plank of his leadership as the UK prepares for a general election later

We remain committed to building on the successes that saw arrivals drop by more than a third last year, including tougher legislation and agreements with international partners, in order to save lives and stop the boats," said a UK Home Office spokesperson. Flying out these migrants to Rwanda while their asylum claims are assessed is a key aspect of the Sunak-led government's immigration strategy and expected to act as a signif icant deterrent for migrants making treacherous journeys to arrive at UK shores.

Blinken calls Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi FMs

AP WASAHINGTON

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Sunday reached out over phone to the foreign ministers of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt, while Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin had calls with his Saudi and Israeli counterparts, amid signs of an escalating crisis in the Middle East following Iran's strikes on Israel. Iran fired more than 300 drones

and missiles at Israel, which Tehran said was in response to the April 1 strike on its consulate in Syria. Almost all Iranian drones and missiles were shot down by Israeli, US and allied forces before they reached their targets. The diplomatic overdrive to fight the crisis came soon after US President Joe Biden had a conference call with G-7 leaders and had separate telephonic conversations with King Abdullah of Jordan and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. In all the calls, the American leadership emphasised on the need to avoid further escalation in the region and reaffirmed America's ironclad commitment to the security of

They also reaffirmed the importance of diplomatic efforts to achieve an enduring end to the crisis in Gaza that provides lasting peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike, the state department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a readout of the calls that Blinken had with Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan

Blinken thanked Fidan for Turkish's ongoing engagement to prevent further escalation in the region, and discussed with Shoukry the importance of ongoing efforts to increase humanitarian assistance to Gaza and protecting Palestinian civilians, as well as achieve an immediate ceasefire that secures the release of all hostages. Blinken thanked Jordan for its

leadership in providing life-saving humanitarian aid to Palestinian civilians, including through joint US-Jordan airdrops and overland deliveries," Miller said.

In his call with Saudi Arabia

Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud, Blinken reiterated that while the US does not seek escalation, it will continue to help Israel defend itself. The secretary and the foreign minister agreed on the importance of a coordinated diplomatic response, Miller said. According to Pentagon Press Secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder Austin, in his call with Saudi Minister of Defense, Khalid bin Salman, emphasised that US does not seek escalation, and will continue to defend Israel and U.S. personnel.

Austin underscored the importance of the enduring US defence partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and reiterated the US commitment to working with the Kingdom and other partners to deescalate tensions in the region, Ryder said.

"Austin also briefed Gallanton his consultations with partners and allies to reinforce international resolve in the face of Iranian aggression," Ryder said.

Meanwhile, Biden reached out to the Congressional leaders on the greatest foreign policy crisis of his presidency. "Biden convened a call this afternoon with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer,

Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell, Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries to discuss Iran's unprecedented attack against Israel. On the call, the president discussed the urgent need for the House of Representatives to pass the national security supplemental as soon as possible," said the White At the UN headquarters in New

York, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told members of the Security Council, during an emergency meeting, that it is vital to avoid any action that could lead to major military confrontations on multiple fronts in the Middle East.

'Regional and indeed global peace and security are being undermined by the hour. Neither the region nor the world can afford more war," he said. Schumer told reporters in New York that Iran is becoming more and more isolated due to its "evil" actions.

'The best way to help Israel rebuild its anti-missile and antidrone capacity is by passing that supplemental immediately. As I said, Israel expended about over a billion dollars in defending itself and the security supplemental would replenish the kind of anti-missile and anti-drone defences that are in the Arrow, in the David's Sling, and in the Iron Dome," he said. White House National Security

Communications Advisor John

Kirby joined several shows where he asserted that Biden and the US are 'making good on its ironclad commitment to defend Israel. He also made clear that the United States is not seeking a conflict with Iran. "Several hundred drones and missiles launched in the course of several hours and all most every single one of them knocked out of the sky. That's not by accident. That's terrific testament to the superiority of the Israeli military and also to our own military superiority and the effort, the resources President Biden committed to helping defend Israel," Kirby told Fox News.

military superiority that Israel demonstrated to the whole world and showed that Israel has friends and is not isolated on the world stage," Kirby told NBC News"Now, whether and how the Israelis will respond, that's going to be up to them.

It's an extraordinary example of

on Monday.
The 2.6-km-long, four-lane

found. The Washington Post reported on Monday that the FBI has

serious systems problems." The report said that federal

"Less than an hour after the sun rose at 6:30 a.m., a succession

"About 6:50 a.m. Monday, people wearing yellow or orange life jackets entered the Dali through a lower door and climbed a ladder to the ship's bow. About a half-hour later,

"The FBI is present aboard the cargo ship Dali conducting

Man arrested after US Prez Biden to host Iraqi leader on economic, trade and energy Israel through Iraqi airspace 2021 elections. Sadr ultimately **AP** ■ WASHINGTON

stabbing at church service in Sydney

Sydney (AP): Police in Australia say a man has been arrested after a bishop and three churchgoers were stabbed in Sydney. There are no life-threatening injuries. It occurred during a televised service at the church on Monday evening, police said. The Orthodox Assyrian church streams services online. A video on social media shows a man dressed in black approaching a cleric at the altar identified as the bishop at Christ the Good Shepherd in suburban Wakely and appearing to stab him repeatedly in the head and

upper body. Members of the congregation are seen screaming and rushing to the bishops aid. The church website identified the bishop as Mar Mari Emmanuel.

NSW Ambulance service said it had treated a man in his 50s for multiple cuts and taken month.

him to a hospital, and three others were treated for one or more cuts at the scene.

"A large police response is underway and the public is urged to avoid the area," police said. Crowds gathered outside the church and the hospital. The premier of New South Wales, Chris Minns, described the scenes as "disturbing" on social media and urged the community to remain calm and "stick together." Religious leaders expressed shock and condolences.

Australians are still in shock after a lone assailant stabbed six people to death in a busy Sydney shopping mall on Saturday and injured more

than a dozen others. There was no immediate indication the two stabbings were linked. Christ the Good Shepherd had been preparing for Palm Sunday later this

issues that have become a major

President Joe Biden is set to host Iraq's leader this week for the Middle East have soared over the war in Gaza and Iran's unprecedented weekend attack on Israel in retaliation for an Israeli military strike against an Iranian facility in Syria.

The sharp rise in security fears has raised further questions about the viability of the twodecade American military presence in Iraq, through which portions of Iran's Saturday drone and missile attack on Israel flew or were launched from. A US Patriot battery in Irbil, Iraq, knocked down at least one Iranian ballistic missile, according to American officials.

In addition, Iranian proxies have initiated attacks against US interests throughout the region from inside Iraq, making Monday's meeting between Biden and Prime Minister Moĥammed Shia al-Sudani all the more critical. The talks will include a discussion of regional stability and future US troop deployments but will also focus priority for Iraq's government, according to US officials.

to address the US troop presence in meetings with al-Sudani. "It is not the primary focus of the visit . but it is almost certainly going to come up," one senior US official said last week

The US and Iraq began formal talks in January about ending the coalition created to help the Iraqi government fight the Islamic State, with some 2,000 US troops remaining in the country under an agreement with Baghdad. Iraqi officials have periodically called for a withdrawal of those forces.

The two countries have a delicate relationship due in part to Iran's considerable sway in Iraq, where a coalition of Iran-backed groups brought al-Sudani to power in October 2022.

The US in recent months has urged Iraq to do more to prevent attacks on US bases in Iraq and Syria that have further roiled the Middle East in the aftermath of Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel. Iran's weekend attacks on

have further underscored US withdrew from the political concerns, although al-Sudani had already left Baghdad and Biden and Defence Secretary was en route to Washington were launched.

The US has also sought to apply financial pressure over Baghdad's relationship with Tehran, restricting Iraq's access to its own dollars in an effort to stamp out money laundering said to benefit Iran and Syria.

Most previous Iraqi prime ministers have visited Washington earlier in their tenure. Al-Sudani's visit was delayed because of tensions between the US and Iran and regional escalation, including the Gaza war and the killing of three US soldiers in Jordan in a drone attack in late January. That was followed by a US strike that killed a leader in the Kataib Hezbollah militia whom Washington accused of planning and participating in attacks on U.S. troops.

Al-Sudani came to power in late 2022 after a power struggle between prominent Shiite cleric and political leader Muqtada Sadr and opposing Shiite factions that are close to Iran after the

process, giving the opportunity to the remaining Shia politicians to form a government headed by

Since then, al-Sudani has attempted to maintain a balanc ing act between Iran and America despite being seen as being close to Tehran and despite several incidents that have put his government in an embarrassing osition in relation to Washington. Early in al-Sudani's term, a U.S. citizen, Stephen Edward Troell, was shot and killed by armed men who accosted him as he pulled up to the street where he lived in Baghdad's central Karrada district with his family. An Iraqi criminal court convicted five men last August and sentenced them to life in prison in the case, which officials described as a kidnapping gone wrong.

A few months later, Elizabeth Tsurkov, an Israeli-Russian doctoral student at Princeton, was kidnapped while doing research in Iraq. Al-Sudani's visit will come about a year after Tsurkov's abduction. She is believed to be held by Kataib Hezbollah.

bridge collapse New York (PTI): The FBI has opened a criminal investigation into the deadly Baltimore bridge collapse incident that will also look into whether the ship, mostly manned by Indias,

left the key US port "knowing the vessel had serious systems problems," a media report said

Francis Scott Key Bridge over the Patapsco River collapsed on March 26 after the 984-foot ship 'Dali' collided against it. The crew onboard the Dali included 20 Indians and one Sri Lankan. Six construction workers who were repairing potholes on the bridge plunged into the Patapsco River and died. Of the six victims killed, the bodies of three have been

opened a criminal investigation focusing on the massive container ship that brought down the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore last month — a probe that will look at least in part at whether the crew left the port knowing the vessel had

agents appeared to board the ship on Monday morning to

of three boats pulled to the port

nearly a dozen more people wearing dark clothing pulled up in a smaller boat and climbed aboard," it said.

court-authorised law enforce-ment activity," the report said, quoting a statement by the FBI. US attorney for Maryland Erek Barron said in a statement in the Washington Post report that his office will not confirm the existence of or otherwise comment about investigations. "However, the public should know, whether it's gun violence, civil rights abuse, financial fraud, or any other threat to public safety or property, we will seek accountability for anyone who may be responsi-ble," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a videoconference meeting with Astrakhan Region governor Babushkin in the Kremlin in and was ambitious and hard-

Trump in court for historic hush money trial **AP** ■ NEW YORK

Donald Trump arrived Monday at a New York court for the start of jury selection in his hush money trial, marking a singular moment in US history. It's the first criminal trial of any former US commander-in-chief and the first of Trump's four indictments to go to trial. Because he is also the presumptive nominee for this year's Republican ticket, the trial will produce the headspinning split-screen of a presidential candidate spending his days in court and, he has said, "campaigning during the night." There could be some legal arguments and housekeeping before jury selection begins. When it does, scores of people are due to be called into the courtroom to start the process of finding 12 jurors, plus six alternates. Judge Juan M. Merchan has

written that the key is "whether

the prospective juror can assure us that they will set aside any personal feelings or biases and render a decision that is based on the evidence and the law." Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records.

Prosecutors say he was trying to conceal an alleged effort to keep salacious — and, he says, bogus stories about his sex life

from emerging during his 2016 campaign. The charges centre on USD 130,000 in payments that Trump's company made to his then-lawyer, Michael Cohen. He had paid that sum on Trump's behalf to keep porn actor Stormy Daniels from going

Prosecutors say the payments to

Cohen were falsely logged as

legal fees in order to cloak their

public, a month before the election, with her claims of a sexual encounter with the married mogul a decade earlier. ity for the American political

actual purpose. Trump's lawyers say the disbursements indeed were legal expenses, not a cover-

Trump himself casts the case, and his other indictments elsewhere, as a broad "weaponisation of law enforcement" by Democratic prosecutors and officials. He maintains they are orchestrating sham charges in hopes of impeding his presidential run.

After decades of fielding and initiating lawsuits, the businessman-turned-politician now faces a trial that could result in up to four years in prison if he's convicted, though a no-jail sentence also would be possible. Regardless of the eventual outcome, the trial of an ex-president and current candidate is a moment of extraordinary grav-

system, as well as for Trump

himself. Such a scenario would

have once seemed unthinkable

to many Americans, even for a president whose tenure left a trail of shattered norms, including twice being impeached and acquitted by the Senate.
The scene inside the court-

room may be greeted with a spectacle outside. When Trump was arraigned last year, police broke up small skirmishes between his supporters and protesters near the courthouse in a tiny park, where a local Republican group has planned a pro-Trump rally Monday. Trump's attorneys lost a bid to

get the hush money case dismissed and have since repeatedly sought to delay it, prompting a flurry of last-minute appeals court hearings last week. Among other things, Trump's lawyers maintain that the jury pool in overwhelmingly Democratic Manhattan has been tainted by negative publicity about Trump and that the case should be moved elsewhere.

Israel response to Iranian attack shows what Kyiv needs: Kuleba

The success of Israel and its allies in largely thwarting a massive Iranian missile and drone attack shows what Ukraine could achieve against Russian aerial barrages if it had more support from its partners, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Monday.

A recent Russian aerial campaign targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure and other targets has wrought extensive damage, and Ukrainian officials have pleaded with the country's Western allies to provide more air defence systems as the war stretches into its third year. Israel's defence system, with assistance from the US and Britain — countries that are also supporting Ukraine's war effort — is credited with preventing serious

Sunday's attack by Iran using more than 300 drones and

Kuleba, speaking to reporters in Kyiv, urged Ukraine's allies to "give us what we need and we will do the rest of the job." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made the same point late Sunday, referring to the Iranian attack.

"The whole world sees what real defense is. It sees that it is feasible," he wrote on Telegram. Russia last week fired nearly 130 exploding drones, more than 80 Russian missiles and nearly 700 guided aerial bombs at Ukraine, Zelenskyy said Sunday on the social platform X. He has pleaded with allies to send more Patriot systems. However, the Institute for the Study of War noted there are key differences between the challenges faced by Israel and

launch drones and missiles from throughout occupied Ukraine and in close proximity to Ukraine from within Russia, affording Ukrainian air defenders a fraction of the time that Israel and its allies leveraged to successfully blunt the mass Iranian missile and drone strike," the Washington think tank said in an assessment late Sunday. The scale and improved accuracy of recent Russian attacks have unnerved Ukraine's defenders. They say Kremlin forces now have better intelligence and fresh tactics in their campaign to destroy Ukraine's power grid and crush its economy. Moscow has also apparently learned how to

exploit gaps in air defences across the huge country.
That development has added to Ukraine's problems, as the Kremlin's forces seize the bat-

time, Ukraine is struggling with shortages of ammunition and troops. Ukraine's military chief on Saturday warned that the battlefield situation in the industrial east has recently significantly worsened. A crucial hurdle to receiving more air defense supplies is the hold-up in Washington of House approval for a US aid package that includes roughly \$60 billion for Ukraine. House Speaker Mike Johnson said Sunday he will try to move the package forward this week.

The exhaustion of US-provided air defences resulting from delays in the resumption of US military assistance to Ukraine combined with improvements in Russian strike tactics have led to increasing effectiveness of the Russian strike campaign in Ukraine," the Institute for the Study of War said



In this photo released by the Russian Defence Ministry Press Service on Monday, April 15, 2024, Russian soldiers participate in a military exercise somewhere in

Top diplomats meet in Paris to mobilise aid for war-ravaged Sudan

A yearlong war in Sudan has devastated the country and pushed its people to the brink of famine. Top diplomats and aid groups are meeting Monday in Paris to drum up humanitarian support for the northeastern African nation to prevent further collapse and misery. Sudan descended into conflict

in April last year when simmering tensions between the military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum and elsewhere across the country. Members of Sudan's civil soci-

ety and local NGOs are involved in the Paris meeting, but neither the Sudanese army nor its rival the RSF have been represented.

The UN humanitarian campaign needs some USD 2.7 billion this year to get food, health care and other supplies to 24 million people in Sudan nearly half its population of 51 million. So far, funders have given only USD 145 million, about 5 per cent, according to the UN's humanitarian office. known as OCHA.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged the international community to donate generously and support the UN's life-saving efforts to help Sudanese

people, trapped in the "night-mare of bloodshed".

More than 14,000 people have been killed and at least 33,000 have been injured in a yearlong war. Nearly 9 million people have been forced to flee their homes either to safer areas inside Sudan or to neighbouring countries, according to the United Nations. Hunger and continued displacement are rampant and much of the country's infrastructure homes, hospitals and schools
— has been reduced to rubble.

"We cannot let this nightmare slide from view," Guterres said in a video message to the Paris conference. He added: "It's time to support the Sudanese people. It's time to silence the guns." French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne said the aim of Monday's conference is to mobilise humanitarian funding to help Sudanese people, who have been victims of both a "terrible war" and "international indifference.

"It's a colossal task," Sejourne said. "It's a war the Sudanese people did not want, a war that only produces chaos and suf-fering," he added. The European Union's crisis management commissioner, Janez Lenarcic, said the 27-member bloc seeks to ensure that Sudan is not forgotten as wars in Gaza and Ukraine dominate the international news.

Review says Abbey Gate bombing wasn't preventable As an example, the new review

AP WASHINGTON

The suicide bombing at the Kabul airport that killed US troops and Afghans in August 2021 was not preventable, and the "bald man in black" spotted by US service members the morning of the attack was not the bomber, according to a new review by US Central Command. The findings, released on

Monday, refute assertions by some service members who believed they had a chance to take out the would-be bomber but did not get approval. And, for the first time, the US military is confirming that the bomber was Abdul Rahman al-Logari, an Islamic State militant who had been in an Afghan prison but was released by the Taliban as the group took control of the country that summer. The Abbey Gate bombing during the final chaotic days of the Afghanistan withdrawal killed 13 US service members and 170 Afghans, and wounded scores more. It triggered widespread debate and congressional criticism, fuelled by emotional testimony from a Marine injured in the blast, who said snipers believe they saw the possible bomber but couldn't get approval to take him out.

Former Marine Sgt Tyler Vargas-Andrews told the House Foreign Affairs Committee last March that Marines and others aiding in the evacuation were given descriptions of men believed to

be plotting an attack. Vargas-Andrews, who was injured in the blast but not interviewed in the initial investigation, said he and others saw a man matching the description and might have been able to stop the attack, but requests to take action were denied. In a detailed briefing to a small

number of reporters, members of the team that did the review released photos of the bald man identified by military snipers as a potential threat and compared it with photos of al-Logari. The team members, who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity to provide details not yet made public, described facial recognition and other analysis they used that they said confirmed those were not the same man.

"For the past two years, some service members have claimed that they had the bomber in their sights and they could have prevented the attack. We now know that is not correct," said a team member. They said they also showed the photo of the bald man to service members during the latest interviews, and that the troops again confirmed that was the suspicious man they had target-The review notes that the bald

man was first seen around 7 am and that troops lost sight of him by 10 am. The bombing was more than seven hours later, and the US says al-Logari didn't get to Abbey Gate until "very shortly" before the blast took place. They declined to be more specific about the timing, saying details are classified. Family members of those killed in the blast received similar briefings over the past two weekends and some are still unconvinced.

"For me, personally, we are still not clear. I believe Tyler saw what Tyler saw and he knows what he saw. And it was not the guy that they were claiming was the man in black," Jim McCollum, the father of Marine Lance Cpl Rylee McCollum, told The Associated Press.

He said the team went into "pretty good detail, not trying to discredit Tyler, but effectively saying he was wrong. However, that ended up being as clear as mud to us".

And Mark Schmitz, the father of Marine Lance Cpl Jared Schmitz, questioned the photo itself. "They kept saying this is who Tyler Vargas-Andrews was looking at and we were thinking to ourselves, well thinking to ourselves, well, that's interesting. Why is this a picture of a picture from a Canon camera?" he said. "To me it felt like they were trying to find the guy in those cameras that may have come close to looking like somebody of interest that they can try to sell

The families, however, also said they were relieved to get more details about their loved ones' deaths, saying the initial briefings were not as good.

Schmitz said that Army Gen Eric Kurilla, head of US Central Command, was part of the lat-

est briefing and apologised for how the families were treated during the initial probe. This time around officials were able to share with Schmitz for the first time exactly where his son was when the bomb went off and that he was unconscious almost immediately, and therefore did not feel the impact of the shrapnel that went through his left torso, hitting a primary artery.

That to me was, first and foremost, the best news I could have gotten," Schmitz said. That gave me a little bit of closure that my son didn't suffer, which made me feel really

good? Team members said they also are planning to speak with the troops who were interviewed this time, to share the results of the report. They said the review also could not completely rule out claims that militants did a test run of the bombing several days earlier. But after reviewing photos and other intelligence, the team concluded it was unlikely that three men seen carrying a large bag which troops deemed suspicious — were doing a trial run. More broadly, the team said the review brought some new details to light, including more discussion about the possible bombing test run. But they said overall it confirmed the findings of US Central Command's initial investigation into the bombing: that it was not preventable and that reports of threats prior to the bombing were too vague.

noted that threat reports talked about a possible bomber with groomed hair, wearing loose clothes, and carrying a black bag. That description, the review said, could have matched anyone in the enormous crowd desperately trying to get into the airport. The team said they conducted

52 interviews for the review adding up to a total of 190 when the previous investigation is included. Service members were asked about 64 questions, and the sessions lasted between one hour and seven hours long. A number of those questioned

weren't included in the original investigation, many because they were severely wounded in the attack. The new review was ordered last September by Kurilla, largely due to criticism of the initial investigation and assertions that the deadly assault could have been stopped.

Members of the team said the Islamic State group put out the bomber's name on social media, but US intelligence was later able to independently confirm that report.

US Central Command's initial investigation concluded in November 2021 that given the worsening security situation at the airport's Abbey Gate as Afghans became increasingly desperate to flee, "the attack was not preventable at the tactical level without degrading the mission to maximize the number of evacuees".

Singapore PM Lee to step down on May 15, Wong to succeed

Singapore (PTI): Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced on Monday he will step down on May 15 after step down on May 15 after nearly 20 years of heading the government of the economical-ly prosperous country as part of the long-planned leadership transition and will be succeeded by his deputy Lawrence

Wong.
Lee is handing over the reins later than intended, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and after a hiccup in succession plans. Lee, 72, was sworn in as Singapore's third Prime Minister on August

In a Facebook post, Lee said leadership transition is a significant moment for any country. "Last November, I announced my intention to step down as Prime Minister this year. I will relinquish my role as Prime Minister on May 15, 2024, and DPM (Deputy Prime Minister) Lawrence Wong will be sworn in as the next Prime Minister on

the same day

"For any country, a leadership transition is a significant moment. Lawrence and the 4G team (fourth generation) have worked hard to gain the people's trust, notably during the pan-demic. Through the Forward Singapore exercise, they have worked with many Singaporeans to refresh our social compact and develop the national agenda for a new generation," he said. The 4G team are committed to and moving ahead. These will always be top priorities for the government. I ask all Singaporeans to give Lawrence and his team your full support, and work with them to create a brighter future for Singapore," Lee said. The political succession in Singapore's ruling People's

But in April 2021, Heng, then 60 years old, stepped aside as a candidate for the top job, citing his age as the reason. PAP has ruled the city-state ever since

Action Party (PAP) appeared to

be taking shape from 2018 when

Deputy Prime Minister Heng

Swee Keat was tipped to be the

next Prime Minister.

independence.

After a year of deliberation, Finance Minister Lawrence Wong was named the successor and, shortly after, he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister. The 51-year-old will be appointed Prime Minister when Lee steps down. The transition comes 12 years after Lee pronounced in 2012 that he did not want to be Prime Minister beyond the age of 70, according to a report by Channel News

Iran Prez to visit Pak on April 22

Islamabad (PTI): Amidst spiralling tensions in the Middle East, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi is set to visit Pakistan on April 22 and hold meetings with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari and the military leadership, according to a media report on Monday.

The 63-year-old leader's expected visit will take place days after Tehran launched more than 300 drones and missiles at Israel in retaliation to an alleged Israeli airstrike on its Damascus consulate in Syria that killed several people, including two senior commanders of Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Geo News reported. The visit also assumes signifi

cance as it comes amidst ongo ing efforts by Pakistan and Iran to deepen their cooperation which received a temporary setback earlier this year. In January, Pakistan, in retali-

ation to Iran's cross-border strikes, carried out precision strikes using killer drones and rockets to target terrorists inside Iranian territory, the report said.

Two bases of the Sunni Baloch militant group 'Jaish al-Adl' in Pakistan's unruly Balochistan province were targeted by missiles and drones, Iranian state media reported. Jaish al-Adl, or the "Army of Justice", is a Baloch Sunni militant group founded in 2012 that largely operates in Pakistan. Pakistan had even withdrawn its ambassador from Iran and announced that it would not allow the Iranian envoy, who was visiting his home country at that time, to return as a ges ture of protest against the breach of its sovereignty by Iran, Geo News reported.

Bilawal urges politicians to unite around 'Charter of Reconciliation'

PTI ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has proposed that all politicians should unite around a "Charter of Reconciliation" as he accused them of playing with the cash-strapped country's fate because of their egos, media reports said on Monday.

Bilawal, a former foreign minister, was speaking at a public gathering on Sunday in the Larkana district of the Sindh province of Pakistan to mark the 45th death anniversary of PPP founder and his grandfather, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Former Pakistan prime minister Bhutto, 51, was executed by the military regime in 1979. Bilawal emphasised the necessity for political figures to unite around a 'Charter of Reconciliation, as he urged them to engage in constructive

political dialogue at the table, The Business Recorder newspa-per reported. He urged politicians to have a political dialogue to improve the country's system, democracy, and institutions through amendments. Asserting that political stabili-

he said that the PPP will be at its forefront, the Dawn newspaper reported. Rather than playing dharnadharna, we should sit on the table and have a political dialogue to bring improvement in our system, democracy, and

ty can only be achieved through

the 'Charter of Democracy'

and 'Charter of Reconciliation',

ments," he said. Bilawal also said certain politicians are driven by personal ego and are willing to jeopardise the nation for their own gain, in an apparent reference to jailed former prime minister İmran

institutions through amend-

Khan, who has been accusing the current government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of stealing the mandate of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in the February 8 general elections. Warning of the looming threat of military intervention if politicians failed to prioritise national reconciliation and persisted in trading insults, he cautioned against the detrimental consequences, according to The Express Tribune newspaper. "It won't foster Pakistan's development or strengthen its economy; rather, it will only undermine democracy and harm the people," Bilawal was quoted as saying. Underscoring the necessity for judicial reforms, he noted that 90 per cent of the Charter of Democracy points had been accomplished, with only the remaining 10 per cent about the

Bushra Bibi moves HC for medical exam at hosp run by Imran trust

Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's wife, Bushra Bibi, on Monday moved the Islamabad High Court seeking a medical examination at a hospital after alleging that she was poisoned while incarcerated at their private residence, which was

turned into a sub-jail. The plea was filed in Islamabad High Court (IHC) by Shoaib Shaheen on behalf of Bushra Bibi, seeking the former first lady's medical examination in the Shaukat Khanum Hospital. which is owned by Khan's charitable organisation, ARY news channel reported. It stated that Bushra, 49, was poisoned in sub-jail Bani Gala (İmran Khan's home in Islamabad), and therefore, her medical examination should be conducted, the report said. Earlier this month, during the hearing of a corruption case in the Adiala jail, the

Islamabad (PTI): Jailed ex- Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party founder Khan informed the judge that there had been an attempt to poison his wife and said that she had marks on her skin and tongue as a side effect of the "poisoning".

However, Bushra Bibi's personal physician conducted a medical checkup and ascertained that she had not been given any

poisonous substance. In a statement, PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said they would only accept the medical reports issued by a personal physician, demanding medical examination at Shaukat Khanum Hospital. Khan, 71, has been lodged at the Adiala Jail since August last year, while Bushra Bibi, was imprisoned at Khan's Bani Gala residence that had been turned into a sub-jail since she was sentenced in the 'un-Islamic nikah' case in February.

ASEEFA TAKES OATH AS PAKISTAN MP

Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari, the youngest daughter of slain former Pakistan prime minister Benazir Bhutto, on Monday formally launched her political career after taking oath as a Member of Parliament.

She was elected unopposed as a member of the National Assembly last month from NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad (formerly Nawabshah) area of her native Sindh province. The seat was vacated by her father Asif Ali Zardari after he was elected as the President.

In a related development, her victory was challenged in the Sindh High Court by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed independent candidate Ghulam Mustafa Rind who named the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and Aseefa as respondents.

18 killed in landslides at Indonesia island

Asearch and rescue team found 18 people killed by landslides on Indonesia's Sulawesi island and are still looking for two missing, officials said on Monday.

Rescuers found about 14 bodies in Makale village on Sunday afternoon and four in South Makale, said Mexianus Bekabel, the chief of Makassar Search and Rescue.

"We are still looking for two more victims, but fog and drizzle made the search difficult and officers in the field were overwhelmed," Sulaiman Malia, chief of the Tana Toraja district Disaster Management Agency, said on Monday.

Loosened by forrential rain,



(BASARNAS), rescuers search for survivors at a village hit by a landslide in Tana Toraia district of South Sulawesi province, Indonesia, on Monday

hills onto four houses just before midnight Saturday in the Tana Toraja district of South mud poured from surrounding Sulawesi province, said local

police chief Gunardi Mundu He said a family gathering was being held in one of the houses when the landslide hit.

Dozens of soldiers, police and volunteers joined the search in the remote hillside villages of Makale and South Makale, Mundu said. Rescuers early Sunday managed to pull out two injured people, including an 8-year-old girl, and rushed them to a nearby hospital.

Downed communications lines, bad weather and unstable soil were hampering the rescue efforts, Muhari said.

Tana Toraja has many popular tourist attractions, including a traditional houses and wooden statues of bodies buried in caves, known as tau-tau. Seasonal downpours cause frequent landslides and floods in Indonesia, a chain of 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or fertile flood plains.

Germany's Scholz warns against dumping during China visit industries and instead "could news agency dpa. "Of course we

AP ■ BEIJING

¬erman Chancellor Olaf Scholz called for fair competition in trade relations with China while warning about dumping and overproduction as he spoke to students in Shanghai on Monday.

Scholz is visiting China against the background of looming EU tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles and other trade-related tensions. The two countries are also split over how to handle Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The one thing that must always be clear is that competition must be fair," Scholz told students at Tongji University in Shanghai, according to German

would like our companies to have no restrictions, but conversely we behave exactly how we are demanding here," he said, adding there must be no dumping or overproduction. The European Union is mulling

tariffs to protect its producers against cheaper Chinese electrical vehicle imports, which some fear will flood the European market. The head of Germany's auto industry association, the VDA, expressed opposition to such tariffs ahead of Scholz's visit. Hildegard Müller told the Welt am Sonntag newspaper in comments published Saturday the tariffs would not help the

European and German auto

quickly have a negative effect in a trade conflict." "Current business with China secures a large number of jobs

here in Germany," Müller said.

Scholz made comparisons to

reservations years ago when

Japanese and Korean automakers entered the German market. 'There was great agitation in the newspapers: Now the Japanese cars will come and clean up' nonsense," he told the Tongji University students. He said there are German cars in China that were made with Chinese manufacturers, and at some point there would also be Chinese cars in Germany and

Sensex, Nifty tank over one per cent

Change -246.90

tock markets took a Sbeating on Monday with benchmark Sensex and Nifty tumbling over 1 per cent as escalating conflict in the Middle East and weak trends from global markets unnerved

Extending losses to the second session, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 845.12 points or 1.14 per cent to settle at a more than two-week low of 73,399.78. During the day, it plunged 929.74 points or 1.25 per cent to 73,315.16. The NSE Nifty declined 246.90 points or 1.10 per cent to finish at 22,272.50. Key indices had plunged by over 1 per cent in the previous session on Friday due to profit taking by investors at record high levels. Sensex lost 1,638 points or 2.19 per cent while Nifty plunged 481 points or 2.13 per cent to slip below the 22,300 level in

two straight sessions. Foreign fund outflows and hotter-than-expected inflation data also played spoilsport for the markets.

Analysts said the renewed



conflict in the Middle East, proposed changes in the India-Mauritius tax treaty and the hotter-than-expected inflation proved to be major drags. From the Sensex basket, Wipro, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, Tech Mahindra and HDFC Bank were the major laggards.

Nestle, Maruti and Bharti Airtel were the gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower while Shanghai ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading on a mixed note. Wall Street ended significantly lower on Friday. "Geopolitical tensions and

higher-than-expected inflation impacted investor sentiment and dragged the indices to a lower note. The major casualties were the midand small-cap indices due to their rich valuation and expectation of moderation in

earnings growth in Q4FY24. "On the other hand, the European market opened on a positive note while oil prices inched lower as market participants expected that the diplomatic efforts were likely to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 1.04 per cent to

marginally to 0.53 per cent in March compared to 0.20 per cent in the preceding month due to an increase in prices of vegetables, potato, onion and crude oil.

Retail inflation declined to a five-month low of 4.85 per cent in March, inching towards the Reserve Bank's target of 4 per cent, according to official data released on Friday.
India's industrial production

growth accelerated to a four-month high of 5.7 per cent in February 2024, mainly due to the good performance of the mining sector, according to official data released on Friday. The Income Tax Department on Friday said the amended India-Mauritius protocol on double taxation avoidance agreement (DTAA) is yet to be ratified and notified by the department.

India and Mauritius on March 7, 2024, signed an amendment to the DTAA and included a principal purpose test (PPT) in the pact which aims to curtail tax avoidance by ensuring that treaty benefits are granted only for transactions with a bona fide purpose.

Ola Electric cuts prices of entry level e scooter

Wholesale inflation inches up marginally to 0.53 per cent in March

Wholesale inflation in the country rose marginally to 0.53 per cent in March compared to 0.20 per cent in the preceding month due to increase in prices of vegetables, potato, onion and crude oil. The Wholesale Price Index

(WPI)-based inflation was in the negative zone from April to October and had turned positive in November at 0.26 per cent. The inflation in March 2023 was 1.41 per cent.

"The annual rate of inflation based on all-India Wholesale Price Index (WPI) number is 0.53 per cent (provisional) for the month of March, 2024 (over March, 2023)," the commerce and industry ministry said in a statement on Monday

Food inflation moved up marginally to 6.88 per cent in March from 5.42 per cent in the same month a year ago, data showed. Inflation in vegetables was 19.52 per cent, up from (-2.39) per cent in the same month a year ago.
WPI for potato witnessed a

jump of 52.96 per cent against a deflation of 25.59 per cent, while for onion 56.99 per cent as compared to (-) 36.83 per cent in March 2023.

The data showed that inflation in the crude petroleum segment rose by 10.26 per cent in March this year against a deflation of 23.53 per cent in March 2023 due to hardening of crude prices globally.

However, retail inflation declined to a five-month low of 4.85 per cent in March mainly

due to cooling food prices. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation was 5.09 per cent in February and 5.66 per cent in March 2023. Previously, CPI-based inflation

was the lowest at 4.87 per cent in October 2023. The inflation in the food basket was at 8.52 per cent in March, down from 8.66 per cent in February, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office

(NSO) last week.



Report: Flexi staffing industry grows 3.6 per cent in December quarter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The staffing industry grew 3.6 per cent in October-December 2023 as compared to the previous quarter, the Indian Staffing Federation (ISF) said on Monday.

ISF, the apex industry body representing manpower outsourcing industry, released the Flexi Staffing Industry Employment growth report for FY2024 (October-

December 2023). industry staffing witnessed a 3.6 per cent growth in December quarter FY24 in period, recording a robust demand for flexi (contract) workforce, ISF said in a

statement The staffing industry grew at 16.4 per cent year-on-year in the period January-December

The rise in employment was particularly notable in key sectors such as e-commerce, retail, FMCG, logistics, manufacturing, hospitality, tourism, aviation, energy etc, it

The report highlighted that as of December 2023, the total

formal flexi workforce employed by members of ISF reached 1.62 million.

The reported figures for new flexi jobs by ISF represent the combined contribution of both General Flexi Staffing and IT Flexi Staffing industries.

General Flexi Staffing (i.E. Excluding IT Flexi Staffing) contributed with new employment growth at 3.8 per cent quarter-on-quarter in Q3

However, the IT staffing witnessed a decline from past quarters in Q3 at (-)0.4 per cent QoQ.

said, the flexi staffing industry continued a double-digit new employment growth trend at 16.4 per cent YoY, reflecting its strong performance. The industry is currently at Rs 1.34 lakh crore.

ISF is the apex body representing flexi staffing companies, formed to provide platform for recognized employment, work choice, even compensation, social security and health benefits for the temporary workforce; that constitutes a sizeable segment

of India's total workforce.

Rupee falls 6 paise to settle at 83.44 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined 6 paise to settle at 1 83.44 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, in line with deep losses in equity markets and an elevated dollar against major rivals overseas

amid geopolitical tensions. However, weakening crude oil prices in the international markets and positive domestic macroeconomic data restricted the rupee's fall, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.46 and traded between 83.42 and 83.47 against the greenback. The local unit finally settled at 83.44 (provisional), registering a loss of 6 paise from its previous close.

On Friday, the rupee declined 7 paise to settle at 83.38 against the US dollar. Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst

Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the Indian rupee weakened on a strong US

dollar and a decline in domestic

Ola Electric on Monday slashed prices of its entry-level scooter S1

X by Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 across

variants, bringing it at par with

The new S1 X was launched in

Rs 79,999 to Rs 1,09,999 across three

In a virtual address, Ola Electric Chief

Marketing Officer Anshul Khandelwal

said the prices of the company's entry-

level scooter have been reduced with

immediate effect and deliveries would

Under the new prices, S1 X with 4kWh

battery will now cost Rs 99,999, down from Rs 1,09,999 announced earlier.

Similarly, S1 X with 3kWh battery has

conventional scooters.

variants.

start next week.

markets. However, the sharp downside in the rupee was contained amid upbeat domestic macroeconomic data and possible intervention by the central

Suman

TOP LOSERS

Bajaj Finserv Wipro

CC Ban

USD 89.51 a barrel.

tensions in

declines,

Foreign institutional investors

(FIIs) offloaded equities worth

Rs 8,027 crore on Friday,

"The escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia

prompted a decline in the 30-

share BSE Sensex and the NSE

Nifty. Market indices traded

lower, influenced by the

heightened tensions between

Iran and Israel, leading to

losses across major sectors.

Notably, the broader small and

midcap segments also saw

Bannerjee, CIO of hedge fund

released on Monday showed

that wholesale inflation rose

Hedonova. Official

said

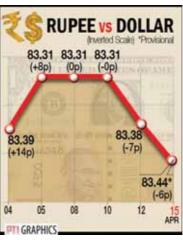
according to exchange data.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on heightened global tensions in the Middle East, which could impact global equities and strengthen the dollar further," Choudhary said, adding that "traders will take cues from India's trade deficit and US retail sales data. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.20 to Rs 83.80".

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.15 per cent lower at 105.68. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.94 per cent to

USD 89.60 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front,



Nifty fell 246.90 points, or 1.10 per cent, to close at 22,272.50.

According to the latest government Sensex declined 845.12 points, or 1.14 data released on Monday, the wholesale per cent, to settle at 73,399.78. The price index-based inflation in the

country rose marginally to 0.53 per cent in March compared to 0.20 per cent in the preceding month due to increased prices of vegetables, potatoes, onion and crude oil. Another data released on Friday showed retail inflation declined to a five-month low of 4.85 per cent in March mainly due to cooling food

prices, inching towards the Reserve Bank's target of 4 per cent. The country's industrial production growth accelerated to a four-month high of 5.7 per cent in February 2024, mainly due to the good performance of the mining sector, according to official

data released on Friday. India's forex reserves jumped by USD 2.98 billion to a fresh peak of USD 648.562 billion for the week ended April 5.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Friday as they sold shares worth Rs 8,027 crore, according to exchange data.

ensure that we give you everything and

much more than a petrol scooter," he

Ola Electric's announcement comes just

over a week after rival Ather Energy

introduced a range of family electric

scooter 'Rizta' priced between Rs

1,09,999 lakh and Rs 1,44,999 (ex-

2kWh variants, respectively. It has a top speed of 90 kmph in 4kWh and 3kWh

variants, and 4.1 seconds and 85 kmph in the 2 kWh variant, Ola Electric said.

Khandelwal said electric scooter

adoption in India as of March 31, 2024,

stood at 25 per cent and 9 per cent in

the overall electric two-wheeler market.

adding the "future is truly electric".



Private equity investment in real estate dips 16 per cent last fiscal: Anarock

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Private equity funding in the real estate sector fell 16 per cent last fiscal to USD 3.67 billion on lower interest from foreign investors, according to Anarock.

In its report, Capital FLUX, real estate consultant Anarock pointed out that the private equity (PE) deals in Indian real estate have declined to USD 3,674 million in 2023-24 from USD 4,358 million in

the previous year. The PE inflow in real estate stood at USD 5,138 million in 2020-21, USD 4,236

The company said the S1 X range marks its entry into the mass market million in 2021-22 financial segment. It comes with an 8year/80,000 km complimentary battery 'The decline in PE investments in Indian real The entry-level electric scooter offers estate has been due to lower an IDC-certified range of 190 km, 143 km, and 95 km in 4 kWh, 3 kWh, and activity by foreign investors,

due to global macroeconomic factors and geopolitical instability," said Shobhit Agarwal, MD & CEO of Anarock Capital. The share of foreign capital in total investments declined to 65 per cent in FY24, against 76 per cent in the previous year. As per the report, PE investments by domestic investors have increased to 29 per cent of the total capital inflows into Indian real estate during the last fiscal as compared to 24 per cent in

the previous year. Out of the total PE inflow in FY24, Anarock said the share of pure equity deals stood at 73 per cent while debt 24 per

cent. In the previous year, the share of equity deals was 66 per cent

and debt 32 per cent. The office

dominated PE transactions in FY24 with a 57 per cent value

share. This was largely due to the GIC-Brookfield REIT deal, which accounted for about 40 per cent of the total transaction value last fiscal,

"While there has been a consistent share of PE investments in residential real estate at 28 per cent, there is a yearly decline of 17 per cent

Agarwal.
"This is due to a very high base in FY23, investments had doubled over the previous years," he

FY24 is largely constant, the aggregate deal value has reduced due to a sharply

The average ticket sizes have reduced to USD 75 million in

lakh, he said adding consumers have been priced at Rs 84,999 instead of Rs "We feel that India needs much more. given feedback that they would think 89,999 earlier. The S1 X 2kWh battery India needs a price at which they variant will cost Rs 69,999 (introductory price), reduced from Rs (consumers) can truly adopt EVs," about electric scooters when prices are at the price of petrol scooters. "We thought why not do that. Let's just Khandelwal said. An average scooter is priced at Rs 1 79,999 earlier, he said. Power Ministry asks imported coal based

plants to run full capacity till October 15

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Power has asked all thermal plants using imported coal to operate at full capacity for another three and a half months till October 15 to avoid electricity shortage amid rising demand in the country.
The ministry has projected peak

power demand of 260 GW during the summer season (April to June) in view of longer heat wave duration. Peak power demand had touched all-time higher of 243 GW in September 2023. The India Meteorological

Department (IMD) has predicted above-normal maximum temperatures in most parts of the country during summer

this year. A power ministry notice to 15 imported coal-based thermal power projects on April 12 stated, "It has now been decided to extend the time period for Section 11 directive to generating companies having imported coal-based plants, up to October 15, 2024.

In October 2023, the ministry extended the deadline for these imported coal-based plants to operate at full capacity from



In February 2023, the ministry

had invoked Section 11 of the

Electricity Act 2003 to avoid any outage due to a sudden rise in power demand.

The direction was for three

months from March 16 to June 15, 2023, which was extended till September 30, 2023 and later till October 31, 2023.

In October, the duration for running these imported coal based power plants at full capacity was further extended till June 30,

Peak power demand was estimated to touch a record high of 229 GW during summer in 2023.

However, unseasonal rains affected demand as people used fewer cooling appliances like air conditioners which guzzle elec-

Deepak Thakur, CEO & MD. Maĥindra Susten, added, "We youth announce our foray into the projects, much more.

International Youth **Economic Forum to** be held on June 8

warranty.

PNS NEW DELHI

organised by the Roscongress Foundation, will be held on the last day of Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum 2024 (SPIEF) on June 8. It will bring together young entrepreneurs, managers, talented students, postgraduates and scientists, including those awarded scholarships, grants and prizes of the president of the Russian Federation, said the SPIEF.

The agenda of the (SPIEF 2024) Youth Day is to cover all areas of self-fulfilment of younger generation including business support measures, development of youth professional communities, international scientific and technological tourism, environmental protection and

'This year, the format of the SPIEF 2024 Youth Programme will be conceptually changed in favour of practice-oriented

and it will contain new The International Youth Forum, formats aimed at creating opportunities for self-fulfilment of young talented leaders, developing the institute of mentorship and involving young people in addressing issues on the global socio-economic agenda," said Anton Kobyakov, adviser to the president of the Russian Federation and Executive Secretary of the SPIEF Organising Committee. He said the main goal will be to create a permanent, innovative

content at the Forum venue

and inspiring platform for talented young people and a talent pool will be formed for leading Russian companies. In order to ensure that SPIEF functions as an effective mechanism for interaction, business communications and fruitful dialogue between the youth community, representatives of the authorities and world-class experts, the SPIEF Organizing

Committee will accredit Youth

Day participants without a

registration fee.

the consultant said. in the same by value," said

explained.

While the number of deals in lower average deal size.

FY24 from USD 79.2 million in FY20.

Mahindra to invest ₹1,200 crore to set up 150 MW hybrid project will have more than 80 per businesses, as the developer facility is expected to generate (IPP) business. The project also marks 460 million kilowatt-hour cent locally manufactured of the project."

Mahindra Susten on Monday said it will foray

into the hybrid renewable energy segment by setting up a Rs 1,200-crore 150-megawatt solar wind energy project in Maharashtra. includes project installation of a 101 megawatt (MW) wind and 52 MW solar

capacity, Mahindra Group

(kWh) of clean energy, offsetting 420,000 tonne of Co2 emissions.

Mahindra Group will develop a 150 MW hybrid RE (Renewable Energy solar + wind) project at a total project cost of about Rs 1,200 crore, said Mahindra Susten, a part of Mahindra Group

Mahindra Susten's foray into the 'hybrid RE' segment and will be one of the largest colocated solar + wind hybrid projects in Maharashtra to deliver clean energy to commercial and Industrial (C&I) customers, the statement said.

The company aims to capacity, Mahindra Group and a leader in renewable commission the project consumer of green power, said in a statement. The Independent Power Producer within the next two years. It and building 'Planet Positive' commission the project

components, the company said. Anish Shah, CEO & MD,

Mahindra Group, said, "Energy transition is a key global and national priority to address climate change. This project is a tangible example of our commitment to sustainability, as a

hybrid RE space and deliver clean, green power at competitive rates to large C&I consumers. This project will the immense showcase potential of hybrid RE helping in solutions companies transition towards green operations."

BAYER LEVERKUSEN WINS FIRST BUNDESLIGA TITLE

Tt's "Neverkusen" no more. Coached by Xabi Alonso, Bayer Leverkusen won the Bundesliga title for the first time Sunday to end Bayern Munich's 11-year reign as champion. In the end, it wasn't even close - Leverkusen leads second-place Bayern by 16 points after stretching its German record unbeaten run to 43 games across all competitions this season.

Florian Wirtz scored a hat trick as Leverkusen routed Werder Bremen 5-0 and the game ended with a pitch invasion Sunday to secure the club's first-ever German league title with five games remaining.

"It's indescribable ... I don't think it's possible, or I personally can't even realize it yet," Wirtz told broadcaster DAZN. "I need a little more time in the locker room to really get my head around what we've achieved. But yeah, so far it's just been nice to party outside with the fans and also have a bit of a party in the locker room.

Fans had already stormed onto the field when Leverkusen

secreta its fourth goal with seven minutes to go, and the final minutes were played in thick red smoke from supporters' pyrotechnics while players on Leverkusen's bench clapped along to congre clapped along to songs, danced and hugged one

The fifth goal in the 90th brought more fans onto the field - hundreds this time - and the referee ended the game amid confusion and jubilation.
Thousands of supporters crowded the field waving flags, flares and cardboard copies of

the Bundesliga trophy.

Leverkusen finally shed its reputation as perennial runner-up after five secondplace finishes in the league and one in the Champions League. Alonso, who took over as coach when Leverkusen was in the relegation zone in October 2022, reflected on ending Bayern's dominance.

"Perhaps it's healthy for the Bundesliga, also for German football, for another team to win," said Alonso, who won three Bundesliga titles with Bayern as a player from 2015 Bayern as a player from 2015-

"It's a great joy and we have to enjoy it. We need a bit more



time to realize what we've achieved. But it's a super moment and yes, we'll see what happens next," Alonso said, referring to the other trophies that his team can win this season. "But now is the time to celebrate."

Victor Boniface — starting a Bundesliga game for the first time since December because of injury — settled Leverkusen's nerves with the settled opening goal from the penalty spot before Granit Xhaka hit an audacious long-range shot to make it 2-0 with half an hour to go.

Bremen folded after that with substitute Wirtz scoring a goal very similar to Xhaka's, then another on the counter in the 83rd and a third to end the game, his first career hat trick. Leverkusen is aiming for a historic treble of trophies. historic treble of trophies. Alonso's team will play s e c o n d - d i v i s i o n Kaiserslautern in the German Cup final in Berlin on May 25 and has a 2-0 lead over West Ham after their Europa League quarterfinal first leg. The title puts the spotlight firmly on an industrial city of just under 170,000, which has been overshadowed by larger,

"Not in Cologne and Duesseldorf, no, we're at home here," is the third line of the club song played just before kickoff. Soccer is how

Leverkusen stands out. The club started as a workers' team for the Bayer pharmaceutical giant 120 years ago and is a rare exception in Germany, where most clubs are majority-

controlled by members under the so-called 50+1 rule. Twelfth-place Bremen was in difficulties even before kickoff as the club accused midfielder
Naby Keita of walking out on
the squad after he was
disappointed not to be in the
starting lineup. Leverkusen
goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky
dealt with the few chances
Bremen created Bremen created.

In the early game, Ritsu Doan's first-half strike was enough for Freiburg to win 1-0 at last-place Darmstadt, which moved closer to automatic relegation. Darmstadt, with 14 points, was 12 points from the relegation playoff spot with five matches to play. No team in the Bundesliga has ever overcome such a deficit at this stage of the season to survive.

Another ankle injury

forward Haller out of

Champions League

AP ■ DORTMUND (GERMANY)

Borussia Dortmund forward Sébastien Haller has been ruled out of Tuesday's

Champions League quarterfinal second leg against Atlético Madrid with a recurrence of his left ankle

rules Dortmund



Fans get a new track colour and maybe record breaking times at Paris Olympics

AP ■ PARIS

 $F_{\text{the Olympics when athletes}}^{\text{ans will be seeing purple at}}$ try to set records at this summer's Paris Games.

In a move away from a more traditional red-brick clay color, an Olympic track is going purple for the first time.

The pieces of vulcanized rubber track were produced at a factory in northern Italy and workers have been laying them down at Stade de France, the

Workers even appeared to be doing an event of their own. Call it track rolling.

Getting down on their hands and knees, and with their hard hats on, they patiently and meticulously unfurl each strip before hammering a nail in to keep it in position. More than 1,000 such rolls will be used for the track, which requires about one month's work and 2,800 pots of glue in total.

Three years ago, three world records and 12 Olympic marks were set on the red-brick track

Mondo has provided the track at every Summer Games since

Montreal in 1976, and the company hopes to do even better in Paris. New generation granules are more elastic and cohesive, while multiple algorithms create a more optimal shape and dimension for the air cells inside the track, reducing energy loss and thereby improving performance.

Expect more records to fall at the Stade de France, said Alain Blondel, the sports manager overseeing athletics events at Games and the Aug. 28-Sept. 8 Paralympics.

"The first indications are that it will be a very, very good track," said Blondel, a former Olympic decathlete. "If we see athletes with personal bests on the scoreboard, it means we did a good job. They will come into their best form, best shape of

their life?

But why choose purple? "That's one of the colors of the Games that we have (along) with, blue (and) green," Blondel said. "The rubber itself is a perfect quality, the best quality. I'm pretty confident that we will have something exceptional in this stadium.

After troubled start to season, Jehan Daruvala bags first points in Formula E

PTI ■ MISANO (ITALY)

India's Jehan Daruvala has scored his first points in Formula E after enduring a troubled start to his rookie season in the all-electric racing

Daruvala, who came to Formula E after four mixed seasons in Formula 2, finished ninth in race two here of the Misano E-Prix on Sunday to collect two points for Maserati MSG Racing.

His previous results in the FIA World Championship status series included two retirements besides a 16th, 20th, 15th and 17th place

The team entered the second race of the weekend after

finishing on the podium on Saturday, with driver Saturday, Maximilian Günther gaining following third disqualification of Antonio Felix da Costa after a technical breach.

In Qualifying for Race Two, the 26-year-old narrowly missed out on the duels and started from 12th while Daruvala lined up 21st after failing to set a representative lap time in the session.

By securing a strong getaway, Max moved up to seventh on lap one while Daruvala lost ground after struggling for traction off the line.

After activating his first Attack Mode on lap five, Max danced between fifth and ninth before a Safety Car, caused by an



accident for Robin Frijns, paused the race on lap eight.

This race neutralisation provided a critical opportunity for Daruvala to close in on the

the Indian racer set out on a strong recovery drive. With the pack punched up,

Daruvala vaulted from 20th to 16th on the restart and field and when the race was continued to fight forward, resumed at the end of lap nine, using surplus energy to continued to fight forward,

negotiate his way into the top 10 on the final lap. "It feels good to score my first points in Formula E. We were starting from the back row, but as a team, we decided on a strategy which we executed very well

"We stuck to our plans, our communication was clear, and it resulted in my first top 10 finish of the season. I'm very happy, and from here, the goal is to fight for more in the future.

Dortmund coach Edin Terzic said Monday that Haller "injured his ankle again unfortunately. He will now "Even after six races, I'm learning all of the time, and I have complete rest for a week. There will be a final diagnosis know that there's still scope for me to learn from today's race. on Saturday to determine the Monaco is up next and it's a circuit that I've had some downtime a little more precisely. We assume he won't be available for two to three success at before," said Daruvala.

Haller scored a late goal in Dortmund's 2-1 loss at Atlético in the first leg on Wednesday, but got injured early in the team's Bundesliga win at Borussia Mönchengladbach on

He recovered from a left ankle injury to play for Ivory Coast at Africa Cup of Nations - scoring to win the title - bu returned with a recurrence of the injury and made only substitute appearances for Dortmund until getting his first league start since mid-September on Saturday. He

training with us." Jadon Sancho missed the trip

Bayern faces uncertain future and tough transfer decisions after losing the Bundesliga title

AP ■ DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)

Three of Bayern Munich's senior fig-L ures did something Sunday that no one at the club had done since 2012. They congratulated another team on winning the Bundesliga

President Herbert Hainer, CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen and sporting director Max Eberl each offered praise for new champion Bayer Leverkusen and coach Xabi Alonso - who Bayern had been keen to sign - and each vowed Bayern would fight to reclaim the trophy it held for 11

The goal for FC Bayern now is: the trophy must come back to Munich!" Hainer

The question is how.

Bayern didn't just lose the Bundesliga title to Leverkusen, it lost it by 16 points with five games to go. Bayern wrapped up the

crown that early only three times in its sive rebuild is looming.

Bayern's 2023-24 season isn't over yet, and coach Thomas Tuchel could yet salvage some pride in the Champions League before he leaves. It's not impossible that Wednesday's quarterfinal second leg against Arsenal, poised at 2-2, could be Bayern's next step to the June 1 final and a first trophy for Harry Kane. Despite the jibes on social media about

how the England captain managed to join Germany's perennial champion team and still not win a league title, Kane has been a resounding success in Munich with 39 goals in the Bundesliga and Champions

A year ago, Bayern's need for a striker was clear when the team held onto the Bundesliga on goal difference as a strong Borussia Dortmund challenge crumbled.



Tuchel, though, argued Bayern needed a defensive midfielder as well, and was concerned that the central pairing of Leon Goretzka and Joshua Kimmich were both too keen to make impactful attacking runs, leaving a gap. After wrapping up the

Kane deal in August for over \$100 mildefensive midfielder Joao Palhinha and even got him to Munich for a medical before the deal broke down. With Eberl heading into his first trans-

fer window in overall charge of Bayern's sporting approach, he will have to decide how to fix the problem Tuchel identified a year ago, and how much to allow the club's new coach - whoever that may be to shape the team.

Eberl may also need to replace left back Alphonso Davies, whose contract is due to expire at the end of next season amid reported interest from Real Madrid He's one of seven starters from Bayern's 2020 Champions League final win who are still at the club and whose places in the lineup - with the exception of goalkeeper Manuel Neuer - no longer seem quite as secure.

had to go off in the ninth minute. English forward Jamie Bynoe-Gittens also went off with a back problem but Terzic said he "already feels better and we hope he can take part in

to Mönchengladbach with illness but was back with his teammates on Sunday and looked set to return to the squad for Atlético.

Augusta Masters: Bhatia T-35, Theegala T-45; Scottie Scheffler wins again

Indian American golfers, Akshay Bhatia and Sahith Theegala finished Tied 35th and Tied 45th respectively even as World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler secured a four-shot win at Augusta National to claim his second Masters in three years.

Bhatia (72,75,74), who was making his debut, carded a one-over 73 in the final round, while Theegala, who was playing for the second time after being in the Top-10 last year, stumbled to a three-over 75 after three successive 74.

Bhatia, who has had a whirlwind fortnight including a win and a spot into the Masters, said, "I haven't truly understood what's happened the last couple Everything about it is amazing. Volunteers, all the green jackets, they were so kind, so welcoming, so congratulating.

"I think being my first Masters, it's pretty cool kind of being the last person in. All in

all, it was an awesome week. Had a lot of family out there, and it was a special week for a lot of us? Theegala said he made few

"mental mistakes". "I was just so happy last year with how I played. I played great all week last year. My

game feels better than it did last year. I just made so many mental mistakes. "Just got a little antsy and tried

to push things, and my short game was off. I putted probably four or five threeputts today." Scheffler lived up to his billing to win a second Green Jacket

in three years at Augusta National Golf Club. Scheffler, who started as a big favourite, opened the week with a 66 and had rounds of 72 and 71 in the tougher windy conditions. He entered the final day with a one-shot

advantage. Scheffler pulled away to sign for a 68 and finish at 11-under, while Swede Ludvig Aberg carded 69 to be the nearest challenger at seven-under on



his Major Championship

debut. Aberg was three shots clear of Ryder Cup team-mate Tommy Fleetwood and American duo Homa and Collin Morikawa.

Korea's Byeong Hun An The 32-year-old signed off on

posted his best Masters Tournament finish with a tied 16th but was left ruing a cold putter which saw him miss out on an automatic return to Augusta National by a single

his fifth appearance at the year's opening major with a 3over 75 where his scorecard included a mix of five birdies, six bogeys and a double bogey. The top-12 finishers and ties earn invitations back to next year's Masters.

Tom Kim fired the day's lowest of 66, highlighted by eight birdies, to share 30th place with amongst others, compatriot Si Woo Kim, who signed off with a 70 in what was his eighth successive Masters appearance. Japan's Hideki Matsuyama, the lone Asian to win the Masters in 2021, closed with a 74 for tied 38th. For some time, Scheffler did have to share the lead. Yet, a hat-trick of birdies from the eighth steadied him and there was no scare after that. He survived Amen Corner in level par while his challengers faced

a lot of problems. Scheffler arrived at Augusta on the back of finishing first, first and second in his last three starts, with top 20s in each of his four Masters appearances, including his win in 2022.

As well as the favourite's tag, he also had the possibility of having to withdraw mid-event with wife Meredith expecting the couple's first child imminently but he took it all in his stride and produced one. in his stride and produced one of the most dominant Masters performances of recent years. "It's a very special time for both of us. I can't put into words what it means to win this tournament again. I really can't put into words what it's going to be like to be a father for the first time. I'm looking forward to getting home and celebrating with Meredith," he said.

"It's been a long week here without her but I'm just looking forward to getting home. I will definitely enjoy the birth of my first child but with that being said, I still love competing. My priorities will change here very soon. "My son or daughter will now be the main priority, along with my wife, so golf will now be probably fourth in line. But I still love competing. I don't plan on taking my eye off the ball anytime soon, that's for

Fleetwood made birdies on the first, seventh and 13th in a bogey-free 69 to finish two shots clear of Bryson DeChambeau and Cameron Smith, with Xander Schauffele the only other player in red numbers at one under.

Indian team leaves for Special Olympics South Asia football tourney in Dhaka

PTI ■ FARIDABAD

A^{28-strong} Indian comprising both men and women, left for Dhaka on Monday participate in the Special Olympics South Asia Unified seven-a-side football

tournament. The contingent includes 22 players, and five coaches representing eight different states and was given a sendoff here on Monday.

"We are assured of bagging one medal from the female team of SOB for sure, the men's team however has to improve their skills a bit more, the important thing is to defend the goal, but we are hoping for the best," Harpreet Singh, the sports director of Special Olympics Bharat, said at the ceremony. Special Olympics Bharat is a National Sports Federation for with intellectual people disabilities. It is recognised by

the sports ministry.

Intellectual disability

characterised by significantly below-average intellectual functioning (generally regarded as IQ below 70) combined with impairment in carrying out varying aspects of daily life and adapting to the normal social environment.

"This is my first time working with SOB, and it has transformed me very much. I have become understandable, compassionate and hardworking," said captain of the women's football team, Ankita. "I want to make India and my parents proud. They (the team)

are performing well and from the first camp to the last camp, we have developed more skills. We will give our hundred percent to get the gold" she added. The players underwent a

training camp here as part of their preparations for the tournament which will also feature Indonesia, Hong Kong and Maldives.

RR BRACE FOR NARINE SPIN TREAT AS KKR EYE TOP SPOT

Rajasthan Royals' star-studded batting will face the serious challenge of decoding Sunil Narine's mystery at Eden Gardens when they take on two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders in a top-of-the-table IPL clash here

Narine, who is one month shy of turning 36, had played a pivotal role in KKR's twin triumphs under former skipper Gautam Gambhir in 2012 and 2014.

Ever since joining the side way back in 2012, Narine has sizzled at Eden Gardens with his crafty bowling, proving to a big threat to opposition betters opposition batters.

Now after reuniting with Gambhir, who returned to the team as their mentor, Narine dished out an allround show, reigniting their title hopes again and a win against RR will hand them the pole position in the 10-team standings ahead of the halfway stage of the season.

eight overs where he did not concede a single boundary made all the difference in the end for

he pioneer

Phil Salt may have walked away with the player-of-the-match award in their solid eight-wicket win over LSG here on Sunday, but it was Narine, who choked LSG in the middle overs to limit them to a below-par 161 for 7.
Come Tuesday, the likes of Sanju

Samson, Riyan Parag and Shimron Hetmyer -- who all have struck at the rate of more than 155 this season -- will be up against the Narine challenge.

It remains to be seen if Jos Buttler is fit to be included in the playing XI after missing their last fixture against Punjab Kings.

With his ability to express himself at the top, Narine, who has a strike-rate of 183.51 and averages 33-plus this season, has a Rashid Khan-like aura at KKR. Their IPL record buy Mitchell

His 1/19 against the Sunrisers Starc has also shut all the noise to Hyderabad or 1/17 against return to his elements, claiming Lucknow Super Giants may have two wickets in the last over for his



In such a scenario, the top-of-the-table contest may well boil down to KKR's bowling versus RR's

batting.
KKR's only weaklink could be their skipper Shreyas Iyer's poor form with the bat.
Even though he remained unbeaten on a run-a-ball 38 in their 162-run chase against LSG, Shreyas looked tentative both against the pacers and spinners against the pacers and spinners and KKR's batting may well get exposed if RR manage to give early

breakthroughs.
KKR's batting has largely depended this season on Salt-Narine's fireworks at the top and Andre Russell's blitz at the death, as their Indian batters have not been tested much.

Rinku Singh has had a quiet season with 63 runs from four innings and has not got much opportunity, while team vice-captain Nitish Rana is sidelined

with an injury. RR have a formidable bowling lineup in Trent Boult, Avesh Khan, Yuzvendra Chahal and Keshav seen if Ravichandran Ashwin is fit for the match.

TEAMS (FROM): Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas

Iyer (c), KS Bharat, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Suchaman Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Singh, Varun Narine, Chakravarthy, Sunil Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain and Mujeeb Ur Rahman. **Rajasthan Royals:** Sanju Samson

(c), Jos Buttler, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruy Jurel, Riyan Parag, Donovan Ferreira, Kunal Rathore, Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Sen, Navdeep Saini, Sandeep Sharma, Trent Boult, Yuzvendra Chahal, Avesh Khan, Royman Powell, Shubham Dubey, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Abid Mushtaq, Nandre Burger, Tanush Kotian, Keshav Maharaj.

CSK have a man behind stumps telling them what is working: Pandya pats Dhoni

PTI MUMBAI

Indians Hardik gave Pandya could not hide his appreciation for Mahendra Singh Dhoni's balls remaining made the tactical acumen following his difference between victory

Skipper Flatdik gave Dhoni a huge on why he did not open distinction innings and instead sent Ajinkya Rahane with Rachin Ravindra, Gaikwad said, "Nothing, Jinks (Rahane) was team's 20-run loss to Chennai Super Kings at the Wankhede Stadium here on Sunday.

While Dhoni's barrage of three sixes and a hurriedlycompleted two runs off the fourth and last delivery was something that gave CSK the winning cushion, it was the former India skipper's reading of the game from behind the stumps that Pandya felt made the difference on a belter of a track.

"They (CSK) were smart with their plans and used the longer boundary well. They got the hang of it and they have a man behind the stumps telling them what's working," said Pandya after his side failed to chase 206 Rohit Sharma smashing his second IPL

CSK skipper Rututaj Gaikwad said.
gave Dhoni a huge On why he did not open the

and defeat.

Dhoni, 42, scored 20 off four deliveries, which in the end made the difference to the match's outcome.

"Our young wicketkeeper (MSD) scoring three sixes down the order helped a lot and I think that was the difference. To start off, on this kind of ground, you need 10-15 extra runs. We were looking at 215-220, but Bumrah bowled well," said Gaikwad, who took over the captaincy duties from Dhoni this season.

"Bowling-wise, we were spoton with our execution. Even in powerplay, I would have taken six overs for 60. These kinds of venues demand both skills: batting and bowling. Malinga (Lasith) Pathirana) (Matheesha

century and batting from bowled exceptionally well start to finish.

carrying a bit of a niggle. Thought it was better for him to open and get away quick ľm batting runs. fine anywhere."

Player of the Match, Pathirana, who grabbed his best IPL figures of 4/28, said he was a bit nervous as he was coming back into the side after recovering from a

'When we bowled in powerplay, I was nervous. I don't think about results and I just think about execution. First of all, I was having a niggle before two weeks and all support staff and players helped me.

"That's the main thing to have my form," said the Sri Lankan, who has modelled his action on the lines of the legendary Malinga

Absolutely ordinary bowling, ordinary captaincy: Gavaskar slams Hardik

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Star India all-rounder Hardik Pandya faced scathing criticism from prominent former players after Mumbai Indians' fourth loss in the ongoing IPL with the great Sunil Gavaskar slamming him for his "absolutely ordinary bowling and ordinary captaincy" so far

Booed and heckled by fans ever since he took over MI's captaincy, Pandya found himself in the line of fire of the legendary Gavaskar and former England captain Kevin Pietersen after his team slumped to yet another defeat, this time to Chennai Super Kings, here on Sunday night. It was the 26 runs that Pandya conceded in the final over with Mahendra Singh Dhoni going hammer and tongs,

which proved to be decisive as Chennai Super Kings notched up a 20-run win over MI.

"Oh, absolutely ordinary bowling, ordinary captaincy. They should have been restricted despite the fact that Ruturaj Gaikwad had batted so well along with Shivam Dube. I do believe that they should have been restricted to 185-190," Gavaskar said.

"Probably the worst kind of bowling that I've seen for a long, long time," Gavaskar said on Star Sports during the innings break after CSK posted 206 for 4.

'It almost looks like I've had this embrace with my hero. I've got the kind of deliveries that he's gonna hit for sixes. One six is fine. The next one is a length ball when you know this batter is hunting for a length ball that he wants to



"Third ball is again a full toss on the legs when you know he (Dhoni) is looking for a six." Pandya finished with figures of 2 for 43 from his four overs and also had a tough time with the bat, managing a mere two runs off six balls at a crucial juncture of the game as MI ended at 186 for six despite a fine 63-ball 105 by

former skipper Rohit Sharma. Pandya has faced fans' ire right from the first match and even at the Wankhede Stadium, boos have followed him, forcing Rohit (against Rajasthan Royals) and Virat Kohli (in MI's game against Royal Challengers Bengaluru) to ask the crowd to calm

Pietersen feels the outside noise is taking a toll on the flamboyant all-rounder. "I actually think, with Hardik

Pandya, everything away from the game is affecting him so much. He's smiling too much when he does the toss. He's trying to act like he is so happy. He is not happy. I have been there. I have been in the firing line. And I can tell you now, it affects you.

"The boos we have been hearing just now and I know they are happy to see former CSK captain (Dhoni), the lion, smacking him (Hardik) all over the park, it hurts you. Because he has emotions. And he is an Indian player and he doesn't want to be treated like this. So when this is happening, it's affecting him, it's affecting his cricket and something needs to

Pollard defends Pandya, says sick & fed up of people pinpointing individuals for team losses

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians batting coach Kieron Pollard is "sick and fed up" of people pinpointing particular individuals for the team's losses as he urged fans not to "nitpick" struggling captain Hardik Pandya after MI lost to Chennai Super Kings by 20 runs in their Indian Premier League match here. CSK legend MS Dhoni took 26 runs off Pandya's final over with the help of three consecutive sixes as the MI skipper struggled for right line and length while

also bowling two wides at a cru-

cial time. Pandya finished with figures of 2 for 43 from his three overs and also had a tough time with the bat, managing a mere two runs off six balls at a crucial juncture

of the game.

'You're going to have those days. I'm sick and fed up of just looking to pinpoint at individuals. Čricket is a team sport at the end of the day," Pollard said at the post-match press conference Sunday night.

"He (Pandya) is a confident guy. He has been great around the group. In cricket, you have good days and you have bad days. I'm seeing an individual who's working bloody hard to continue his skill and to ply his trade."

Pollard reminded fans about the possibility of Pandya being picked for India's T20 World Cup campaign, saying if that happens everyone would be 'singing his praises'.

'This is an individual that's going to represent the country in less than six weeks' time. We're all going to be cheering for him and want him to do well," said



the West Indian who himself is a MI legend. "It's about high time that we try to encourage and try to stop nitpick. See if we can get the best out of one of the great all-rounders India could ever produce.

"He can bat, he can bowl, he can field. He has an X factor about him. I hope very well deep down within my heart that when he comes out on top, I'll sit back and I'll watch everyone sing his praises."

The match witnessed intermittent booing of Pandya who struggled with both bat and ball and also received criticism from former England captain Kevin Pietersen who claimed that the

MI skipper has been 'smiling too much. Pollard said he is seeing Pandya evolving and backed him to turn things around. "As an individual, you have to evolve as well. When you're

young and there's that youthful exuberance, you go out and you do things in a certain manner. But the older that you get, at times, responsibility sort of kicks in, accountability to teams sort of kicks in," he said.

'What I'm seeing is a guy that is evolving. Obviously, we as individuals, we want to see certain things, but sometimes the game does not demand certain things? Pollard said while Mumbai Indians would revisit their plans on Dhoni but added that anyone could have been at the receiving end of the former CSK skipper's onslaught, like Pandya experienced Sunday night.

Cricket brings happiness for Afghan public but cannot help if Australia refuses to play us: Rashid

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

~~ ou can't do anything about it," ■ Rashid Khan conceded as he tried to make sense of Australia's refusal to play bilateral cricket with Afghanistan men's team, which he believes, achieves nothing beyond denying happiness to his people. Cricket Australia cancelled an ODI series Down Under in 2023 and as recent as last month, refused to play a T20 series scheduled in the UAE later this year due to its government's concerns over "marked deterioration" of treatment of women in the Taliban-ruled state.

But Afghan players, including Rashid, continue to be welcome in the Big Bash League.

"I want, all the players want, to play cricket because that is the only source of happiness for people back home in Afghanistan and if you take that away, there is nothing that people could celebrate or enjoy," Rashid told PTI during an exclusive interview on Monday. In 2023, Rashid had threatened to pull out of the Big Bash League over Australia's refusal to play bilateral cricket with them. The 25-year-old has many Australian friends but he hasn't actually spoken to any of them about the issue.

"Well, I have never discussed it with anybody (Australian cricketers) as I haven't had that opportunity to discuss all those things with them, something which is not in your hands or you have no control over, you can't do anything about it.

'It's not a cricketing reason or matter that you think about it, it is about two governments and as a player you can't do anything about it. What we can do is whenever we get an opportunity to play cricket, ve go with full pride while representing our country.

Having played over 400 T20 games and being the most sought after freelancer in the T20 universe, Rashid feels privileged about being the face of Afghanistan cricket.

"Before 2017, we never thought about playing the IPL. It was hard (far-fetched) thought for us to even think of playing in the biggest T20 league in the world.

"The hardest part is to get into the system and when I (first) got the opportunity, I knew okay, I got that opportunity now I have to do the



best where it helps me promote my cricket and also help my country where youngsters can get inspired to get into cricket more and more," the eloquent Pathan said.

Apart from Rashid, Noor Ahmed and Azmatullah Omrzai are playing for Gujarat Titans in the ongoing IPL. Mohmmed Nabi is repre-

Rahmanullah Gurbaz is part of the KKR squad.

"Back in 2017, it was only me and (Mohd) Nabi, who were there and senting Mumbai Indians and now we have 7-8 players who are

with different franchises, and it is so good to see them not just being a part of the team but also performing," he said. "At the end of the day, it is helping Afghanistan cricket and youngsters back home. So I am quite happy, and blessed to be one of those who brought about this change in mindset of people about cricket in Afghanistan."

DIFFICULT TO HIT RHYTHM

IMMEDIATELY **AFTER SURGERY:** Rashid had undergone

a major back surgery last year, which didn't allow him to play the India series in January. It was a hard time but now he feels he is back in rhythm.

"For me, those three to four months were hard but I tried to make sure that I am relaxed and when I get back on field, I am fully ready and prepared for it," the champion spinner said.

"The main focus for first four months was on getting back on track, it is hard when you are not playing but these are things which are attached to your career, and it is important as a player that you take (accept) that process, you make sure that you look after your-

"I made sure that I spent time with my family and looked after my body. MISSING SHAMI BUT HAPPY

WITH GT BOWLING UNIT: Gujarat Titans have had a bumpy ride with three wins and an equal number of defeats in the season thus far. While the absence of a game-changer like Mohammed Shami is being felt massively, Rashid stood by the bowling unit.

"Shami played a main role for us in last two seasons, both with new ball and old ball, and the way he has delivered for the team actually made mine and others job easier, especially in the middle overs," he had no hesitation in admitting. "We have started the season with a

positive mindset and everyone is taking responsibility and delivering best for team but sometimes result doesn't go your way but we are quite happy with bowling unit.

'T20 is all about making right decisions at the right time. Spencer Johnson, Darshan Nalkande, Azmat, Umesh have all delivered and most importantly, Mohit (Sharma) bhai as well.'