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DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA



TRUMP'S CAMPAIGN HIGH ON RHETORIC. LOW ON ORIGINALITY RAISES \$50.5 MILLION

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Kharge remark sparks political firestorm

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

'slip of the tongue' by Congress president **∏**Mallĭkarjun Kharge regarding Article 370 escalated on Sunday, with the ruling BJPled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasising that the grand old party should cease to exist now as it never understands the distinction of this great nation. The Congress, on their part, claimed that Kharge's slip of the tongue during the Jaipur rally inadvertently exposed the Modi Government's game plan to change Article 371 of the Constitution.

The Prime Minister also came down heavily on Kharge, without mentioning him by

Kharge had objected to Modi mentioning Article 370 during his Friday's rally in Churu. However, the Congress chief mistakenly said 'Modi claims credit for abolishing Article 371'. Later Amit Shah slammed his remarks and called out the Congress chief for "horrendous mistake".

The post of the national president of the Congress is not a small thing. And the leader thinks Article 370 has nothing to do with Rajasthan. Is Jammu and Kashmir not an integral part of the country? His thinking betrays the mindset of tukdetukde gang," said Modi.

Addressing rallies in Bihar and West Bengal, Modi pointed out that security personnel from all over the country, including



Rajasthan and Bihar, have laid implement the Samvidhan of down their lives fighting terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir, and "their

bodies have reached their native places wrapped in Tricolour" "The INDIA Bloc talks a lot about the

Constitution. Their leaders should tell the people why they could not how the "Congress president has

Saheb Ambedkar fully in Jammu and Kashmir. Why did it take a Modi to do

> Kashmir in its election campaigns throughout the country the Prime Minister said,

so?" asked the PM.

Asking why the BJP

should not raise

been critising us for raising the Kashmir issue ... we are doing it because Kashmir is our crown and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee who was a son of Bengal had laid down his life for the cause of Kashmir ... and the Congress is pained and is crying because we have got rid of Article 370 from Kashmir... this shows the divisive mentality of the

Congress." Modi also warned after June 4

when the election results are out the third NDA Government would intensify its crusade against the corrupt.

Asking people to unite so as to "teach a corrupt Congress, TMC and the INDIA alliance a lesson, Modi said how the TMC had been running "syndicates Raj" ever since it came to power and asked whether the people supported the recent scams and torture on women that had taken place in Bengal.

The Prime Minister said the Congress, TMC and the Left had joined hands in the INDIA alliance to perpetrate the rule of corruption.

Reacting to Shah's dig at Kharge over a "slip of tongue", Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh clarified that by a slip of the tongue the Congress president mistakenly said Modi claims credit for abolishing Article 371 though he clearly meant Article

"Shah immediately pounced on the Congress president. But the truth is that Modi does indeed want to change Article 371-A relating to Nagaland, Article 371-B relating to Assam, Article 371-C relating to Manipur, Article 371-F relating to Sikkim, Article 371-G relating to Mizoram, and Article 371-H relating to Arunachal Pradesh," he said. He continued, "Shah got all excited and agitated because Kharge inadvertently exposed the Modi-Shah gameplan on Article 371; now that they have gotten Article 370 out of the



the party's national convener Arvind Kejriwal at Jantar Mantar on Sunday

AAP holds mass fast to protest against Kejriwal arrest

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Top AAP leaders, including MPs, MLAs, Councillors and Councillors supporters gathered at Jantar Mantar on Sunday for a day-long fast (upwas) to protest against the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with Liquorgate scam case, and accused the BJP of resorting to dictatorship. Kejriwal is also the

party's national Sunita convener. Kejriwal was not seen at the Jantar Mantar during a day-long fast. The leaders have announced

that the mass fast is not without water, and are urging people to keep hydrated. During the fast, several party volunteers and supporters took part in the national Capital event, singing patriotic songs and waving posters showing an image of Kejriwa

Some of them were chanting "Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram" while some found raising slogans "Inqilab Zindabad" and "Kejriwal Zindabad". They were also wearing caps with "Main Bhi Kejriwal" printed on them. Due to hot conditions, most of the supporters were carrying water

similar protests were being held in other States as well as by Indians abroad, including at Harvard Square in Boston, the Hollywood Sign in Los Angeles, outside the Indian Embassy in Washington DC, in New York Times Square and Toronto, London and Melbourne among others. Punjab Chief Minister

Bhagwant Mann joined the collective

AAP leaders claimed that

fast at freedom fighter Bhagat Singh's ancestral village Khatkar Kalan. Continued on Page 2

EC's Turning 18 initiative targets young, first time voters



RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

s urban and youth apathy is a Acause of concern to improve the voter turnout during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the Election Commission (EC) has launched a

variety of campaigns — 'Turning 18' and 'You are the One' across social media platforms to nudge young and urban voters to cast their ballot in the Lok Sabha elections.

The commission has also initiated a campaign urging people to first verify then amplify what information they get on social media related to

elections. Through engaging storytelling and captivating visuals like 'Whatever it takes - we walk the extra mile, so you don't have to, the campaign highlights the dedication and commitment of individuals in ensuring free, fair and participative elections. Currently the commission

has social media presence on major platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube with recent additions of Public App, WhatsApp

Channel and LinkedIn.
The EC's 'Turning 18,' in the run-up to the 18th Lok Sabha Elections, cifically targets young and time voters. The primary objective is to galvanise youngsters to participate in the upcoming elections and address the critical issues of urban and youth apathy noticed in previous elections while the campaign 'You are the One'aims to recognise and celebrate the invaluable contributions of various

electoral process. The 'Turning 18' campaign employs various compelling themes and strategies to capture the attention of its audience. The strategy involves branding of individual series with thematic logos for identification and association.
Additionally, the campaign portrays a comparison of past and recent

stakeholders involved in the

underscore the progress made over time. "By emphasising the significance of voting immediately upon turning 18, the campaign seeks to

elections, as 'then vs now' to

inspire a sense of civic responsibility among young voters. Furthermore, infographics, highlighting the growing of the women participation electorate, especially in the age bracket of 18-30 showcases the inclusivity of India's democratic process," it said.

Continued on Page 2

NIA officials face FIR after clash in Bengal



SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

The Bengal Police have registered an FIR bringing molestation charges against National Investigation Agency officials and CAPF men who had gone to Bhupatinagar in East Midnapore district to arrest some Trinamool Congress goons in connection with a blast in December 2022 leading to three deaths. The TMC threatened to move the Supreme Court against NIA action in Bengal to scuttle TMC's chances in the State.

The FIR was registered against the NIA team and CRPF officials based on a complaint from a woman who alleged that she and her husband were assaulted by the officers and that her modesty was outraged. The case was registered at Bhupatinagar Police Station under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), including 325, 34, 354, 354(b), 427, 448, and 509.

The police action came a day after the NIA officials were attacked by a band of local TMC men. The NIA picked up two local TMC leaders for questioning. In the skirmish that followed on Saturday a couple of officials sustained minor injuries while one of their vehicles was

damaged.

Saturday's incident came about four months after a team of Enforcement Directorate officials were attacked and injured by the men of Sheikh Shahjahan, a TMC strongman and a leader at Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas.

The FIRs come in tandem with serious allegations being leveled by senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh who said the NIA action was the product of a secret meeting between a BJP leader and an SP of the force. "On March 26 BJP leader Jiten Tewari was seen going to this SP's house at New Town in Kolkata with a packet ... let him contradict and

then we will release the relevant video that will land him and his political bosses in a bigger trouble," Ghosh said adding his party was considering filing a petition in the Supreme Court against the NIA

very much clear that they are digging up old cases and sending the ED, CBI, Income Tax and NIA to arrest and harass our workers... because they know that they will not win the elections," Ghosh said.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in an election rally at Dhupguri criticised the TMC Government for letting loose the TMC goons on the central agencies to stall investigations against corruption and other illegal activities.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on the other hand hit back at the Centre for sending agencies to disturb his party candidates.

Calling the attack on the NIA officials a Sandeshkhali 2.0 BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said, "It was not just a coincidence but a well thought out experiment. It was a state-sponsored attack on the NIA officials. The attack was organised by the ruling TMC," while BJP MP Samik Bhattacharya said "attacking a Central agency means attacking the Indian Constitution."

CPI(M)'s Sujan Chakrabarty too said the entire game plan is being planned by the Chief Minister. What do you expect when the CM herself is sending a message that the Central agency cannot act against them?" he said.



Manist hit areas of Singhbhum to see voting for first time

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE RANCHI/NEW DELHI

A history of sorts has been scheduled for May 13 Lok Sabha election as several interior areas in the Maoist den of Singhbhum Lok Sabha seat in Jharkhand will witness voting for the first time, or after decades-long

gap, as polling teams and materials will be air dropped from helicopters enable people living in Saranda, Asia's densest Sal forest, to

exercise their franchise. As many as 118 remote booths will be set up by personnel and materials dropped choppers. "We are committed to

ensuring that no voter is left out... We have identified many areas where polling will be conducted for the first time or after nearly two decades as

these locations were badly affected by Maoist insurgency, said Kuldeep Chaudhary, West Singhbhum Deputy

Commissioner cum District Election Officer. Despite improvement in the situation, West Singhbhum remains one of the worst Left-

Wing Extremism-affected districts of the country. It had witnessed 46 Maoist-related incidents resulting in 22 deaths last year.

Polling stations such as Middle School, Nugdi and Madhya Vidyalaya, Borero will witness voting for the first time this election, the DC said. "As many as 118 booths in

difficult locations such as Robokera, Binj, Thalkobad, Jaraikela, Roam, Rengrahatu, Hansabeda and Chhotanagra have been identified for air dropping.

Continued on Page 2

Devotees marvel at reflective mystique of Lakhamandal Shivlinga

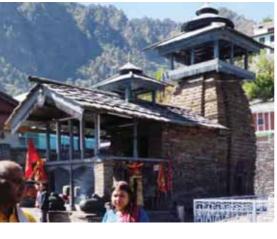
DEEPAK KUMAR JHA LAKHAMANDAL (TEHRI GARHWAL)

ust about 100 kilometres and a fourhour drive from Uttarakhand capital city of Dehradun, the ancient town of Lakhamandal traces its history within the pages of epic Mahabharata and is home to 'countless' number of Shivalingas which was worshipped by the Pandavas similar to the mention of While the Lakhamandal Temple, a

holy Shrine Kedarnath in Devbhumi. replica of the Kedarnath shrine structure, stands tall on the prime road connecting Dehradun to another holy place, Yamunotri, the main attraction is a huge Shivlinga on the premises. During Jal Abhishek rituals, when water is poured on it, devotees can see their reflection on

It is believed that the same linga was worshipped by the Pandava brothers, Bhima. This linga has been discovered in recent times by the villagers, and now it's a protected site of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which continues with its excavation process. "We used to play here where these

Shivlingas are placed or settled. It was observed by one of our neighbours when during digging of ground for step farming one such idol was noticed. Villagers took interest and they started digging more and realised there are several such sites. We informed the administration and now it's a protected area and it is now believed that there





could be thousands of such lingas beneath. Further excavation is halted as settlement and permanent structures have come up," said Sushil Gaur, a resident of Lakhamandal who grew up playing in this land where temple remnants have been discovered. Irrespective of any caste or sub-caste,

now the Lakhamandal Temple priests are those whose homes are within the precincts of the temple as the same has been their ancestral property.

The image reflection property of the Shivling is because it's made of graphite which shines on pouring water where one or those standing around can see their image on the surface of Shivlinga. This means that the Lord Shiva is

conveying that all of you are within me

one of the priests at the Lakhamandal Temple. Members of the villages are working for the publicity of the holy place so that footfall increases and that the area becomes a notified spiritual place for the visitors and tourists enroute Yamunotri. Lakhamandal is situated in the Jaunsar-Bawar region of Dehradun district in the State of Uttarakhand and it gets its name from the two words: Lakha (Lakh) meaning "many" and mandals meaning "temples" or "lingam". Plenty of artistic works have been found

and protecting you," said Mayaram Gaur,

in the ASI excavations and according to officials at ASI the temple is constructed in ancient Nagara style of North Indian architecture. Continued on Page 2

NEW DELHI I MONDAY I APRIL 8, 2024 The pioneer The pioneer Mehbooba to contest from Anantnag Rajouri seat | Khadse home coming boost

hief of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti has now thrown her hat in the poll arena by deciding to contest the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat.

The prestigious seat, which may witness a quadruple contest, is set to become the main battleground of all the politivill go to polls in the third phase on May 7, 2024.

So far National Conference has given its mandate to one of the tallest Gujjar leaders and fivetime party MLA Mian Altaf Ahmed. Another former Chief Minister and Chairman of the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) Ghulam Nabi Azad is also in the fray.

Now all eyes are on the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) as it is yet to announce the name of the party candidate from the In case the BJP decides against

fielding its candidate the Lok Sabha seat will witness a triangular contest.

Post Delimitation exercise the

and Poonch can tilt the balance in favour of the winning can-

Out of eight Assembly segments, seven fall in the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat. Both Congress and the National Conference enjoy the support of the electorate in the

twin border districts of Rajouri eyeing the support of the ner. Mehbboba won the Lok

Paharis and Gujjar, Bakerwals after it fulfilled its promise of granting scheduled tribe status to the Pahari ethnic group.

The National Conference candidate Mian Altaf Ahmed also enjoys the support of Paharis and Gujjars in the region. With the entry of Mehbooba Mufti into the poll arena the On the other hand, the BJP is contest has become multi-cor-

Sabha seat in 2014 while she was pushed to the third spot in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Meanwhile, addressing a press conference in Srinagar on Sunday Chairman of the PDP Parliamentary Board Sartaj Madni told reporters the name of PDP Chief Mehooba Mufti has been cleared to contest Lok Sabha polls from Anantnagur-Rehman Parra will contest elections from the Srinagar seat, and Fayaz Mir, a former MP will be fielded from north Kashmir's Baramulla segment, Madni said.

Accepting the challenge Mehbooba Mufti claimed I am a fighter. I will continue to raise my voice in support of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. She maintained the decision to field PDP candidates on three Lok Sabha seats was taken after the National Conference leadership, one of the main constituents of the INDIA bloc, unilaterally decided to contest all three Lok Sabha

Responding to inquiries about her campaign promises, Mufti reiterated that her voice for the people served as her manifesto, underlining her unwavering dedication to amplifying their concerns and aspirations. "Meri awaaz hi Mera

Manshoor hai"she said. In response to questions regarding the PDP's role in INDIA alliances, Mufti affirmed the party's unconditional support for the Congress on two seats in Jammu.

for BJP in North Maharashtra

T N RAGHUNATHA

Tn a development that would Lome as a big boost to the ruling party in north Maharashtra ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, senior NCP leader Eknath Khadse on Sunday formally confirmed that he would formally return to the ruling BJP in the next 15 days.

Talking to media persons, 71-year-old Khadse said: "I have already met BJP president J P Nadda and expressed my intention to join his party. I will join the BJP at a party function to be held in New Delhi in the next 15 days".

Confirming Khadse's impending return to his party, Maharashtra BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule said in Pune: "In consultation with the state party, the BJP's central leadership will take a formal decision on Khadse's formal return to our party. Contrary to speculation in the media, deputy chief minister and senior party leader Devendra Fadnavis never opposed Khadse's return Khadse, it may be recalled, had joined the then united NCP in the presence of party president Sharad Pawar on October 23, 2020, two days after he resigned from the primary membership of the BJP.

Khadse, who is currently an MLC of the NCP (Sharad Pawar), said: "I am very grateful to Sharad Pawar ji. He stood by me in difficult days of my political career. But, I have now taken a decision to return to the BJP". Khadse, who had been associated with the BJP for more than 40 years before he quit and joined the NCP in October 2020, was elected to the State Assembly for six terms from 1989 till 2019, from his home town Muktainagar.

Khadse was a minister in the Sena-BJP government (1995-1999). Subsequently he became a Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly. He was a strong contender for the chief minister when the BJP came to power in the state in 2014. However, Devendra Fadnavis pipped him to the post.

Khadse was the number two in the Devendra Fadnavis-led BJP

crucial portfolios with him. However, Khadse was sidelined within the BJP after he resigned from his post as the State Revenue Minister on June 4, 2016 over irregularities in the purchase of a plot of land at Bhosari in Pune district. Later in May 2018, Maharashtra's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) had reportedly given a clean chit to Khadse in the alleged Pune land scam. He finally quit the

Cabinet. At one stage, he held 10

BJP to join the NCP more than three and a half years ago. Khadse belongs to the Leva-Patil community, which forms a part of the OBCs. A grassroots politician, he hails from Muktainagar in Jalgaon dis-

Khadse is a respected leader from north Maharashtra comprising five districts --- Nashik, Ahmednagar, Jalgaon, Dhule and Nandurbar which collectively account for eight Lok

The BJP has re-nominated Khadse's daughter-in-law and sitting MP Raksha Nikhil Khadse as its candidate from Raver constituency.

Utkal Divas celebrated with enthusiasm

PNS GUWAHATI

overnor of Assam Gulab Chand Kataria extended warm wishes on the occasion of Utkal Divas which was celebrated with enthusiasm in Guwahati. Organised by Raj Bhavan Assam in collaboration with Kalinga Sanskritika Sansada, Guwahati, the event was graced by the presence of Governor Kataria and other distinguished guests, including Dr Ravi Kota, IAS, Chief Secretary of Assam, MK Yadav, Special Chief Secretary to Government of Assam, SN Singh, IPS, Director General of Civil Defence and Home Guards, Assam, Meenakshi Sundaram, IAS, Commissioner and Secretary to Governor of Assam, Dhurba Charan Bal, General Manager, State Bank of India, Guwahati Circle, and Dr. R P Das, Vice Chancellor of KK Handique Open University, Guwahati.

In his address, Governor Kataria extended warm wishes to the citizens on Utkal

Divas, commemorating the among the diaspora in Assam foundation of Utkal Prant as India's first linguistic State on April 1, 1936. He emphasized the invaluable contributions of iconic figures like Madhusudan Das, Utkal-Mani Gopabandhu Das, Maharaj Krishna Chandra Gajapati, and others who played pivotal roles in shaping Odisha's rich heritage and identity.

Highlighting the spiritual and cultural connections between Assam and Odisha, Governor Kataria emphasized the deeprooted historical and civilization ties that transcend geographical distances. He praised the efforts of Kalinga Sanskritika Sansada in fostering cultural bonds and recalled the contributions of eminent personalities like Srimanta Sankardeva, whose legacy continues to strengthen the bond between the two states.

Manoranjan Dash, of Kalinga Sanskritika Sansada, Guwahati reiterated the importance of preserving Odia culture and heritage

and highlighted the ongoing efforts to construct a Jagannath Temple cum Vedic cultural center in Guwahati. PK Mishra in his speech recalled the history of freedom movement in Odisha and the heroes of making Odisha a state on the basis of language. He reflected on the historical significance of Utkal Divas, marking Odisha's journey towards statehood and its enduring cultural legacy.

Dr RP Das, VC, KK Handique Open University, in his speech reiterated the history of Odisha and the significance of celebration of Utkal Divas elaborately. On this occasion Governor of

Odisha Raghubar Das sent a message highlighting the history of Odisha and Utkal Divas and extending the greetings to Kalinga Sanskritika Sansada and Odia brothers and sisters in Assam for organising Utkal Divas at GMCH Auditorium Guwahati.

Mamata slams Modi for fake guarantees SAUGAR SENGUPTA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for peddling false dreams and fake guarantees and asked the people to remain alert against the BJP's game plans to trigger communal riots ahead of the elections. Addressing the Prime

Minister as Modi Babu, Banerjee told an election rally at Purulia that "the samples of Modi Babu's guarantees are nothing but sending central agencies, CBI, ED and Note Bandi," challenging the BJP leader to prove the charges of corruption that were being brought against her government.

This was the first time after many months that the Chief Minister had directly attacked the Prime Minister by his

Alleging how the Central Government schemes were



used to advertise the Prime Minister, Banerjee said, 'Modi Babu's guarantees are his ration bags of rice and wheat — price of which are half-borne by the State Government $\stackrel{\cdot}{-}$ and which carry his pictures ... the guarantee of Modi Babu are his pictures and nothing else." 'You have sent 136 commit-

into the corruption charges ... but I challenge you to make public those report and prove our involvement," Banerjee said comparing Bengal with Uttar Pradesh where she said "there has been 85 lakh corruption cases whereas in Bengal there were some minor incidents in about 28 places which too we have promptly taken care of."

In an apparent reply to the Prime Minister's earlier speeches where he alleged that the TMC had allowed the institution of corruption to the panchayat levels Banerjee said "all the panchayats were not run by the TMC. "Many of them are run by the BJP and yet many others by the CPI(M) and the Congress jointly ... so why should we be responsible for all the scams.'

Comparing the Central schemes with the ones in Bengal she said, "we give Swasthya Saathi to all the 9 crore citizens of this State whereas they will not give Ayushman Bharat to you if you have a cycle or a motorcycle at your house ... we have schemes that have been acclaimed around the world unlike their limited schemes which are nothing but lies." Asking the people to vote carefully instead of getting swayed by the Prime Minister's guarantees, Banerjee said "if they come to

power I don't know how ruthlessly CAA, Uniform Civil Code will be implemented and whether reservations (in government posts and schemes) will be allowed to continue." Warning that if the BJP came

to power "they will seize your religion, your caste, your choice of food and everything" Banerjee said adding "they may trigger communal riots" just before the first phase of elections on April 19. They may trigger riots on April 17 to polarise vote against which we will have to remain cautious ... but remember that no one should get into their communal trap." Asking the Election Commission of India to offer a level-playing field for all the political parties, Banerjee said, "ECI should remember that the generations of India and the world will never forgive them if they allow Indian democracy to be destroyed ... I will request them to work impartially."

EC's Turning 18 initiative targets young, first...

campaign is substantial widespread amplification facilitated by State Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) and the national public broadcaster, DD News and Akashvani. Moreover, the EC has collaborated with its popular network of National and State SVEEP icons to have a multiplier effect," the EC said.

"Building on 'Turning 18' campaign, EC launched another campaign titled 'You Are The One.' This initiative aims to recognise and celebrate the invaluable contributions of various stakeholders involved in the electoral process. From voters and political parties to Booth Level Officers (BLOs), ground staff, polling administrative parties, personnel, media professionals, central forces, and security personnel, each

Through storytelling and captivating visuals (like 'Whatever it takes - we walk the extra mile, so you don't have to') dedication and commitment these individuals, inspiring pride in their roles and responsibilities within the democratic framework". "It involves highlighting the key stakeholders, interesting anecdotes, and stories from the elections of the past, and videos/reels that unravel the tireless efforts of polling teams working behind the navigating scenes, challenging terrains to

ensure every voter is reached. There are various other interesting features of the campaign like 'chunaavi kisse' sharing interesting election

From Page 1 stakeholder plays a vital role previous elections. Then A- in ensuring the integrity and Z of Indian elections series "In some areas," elections related terms and processes. Word play with the EC is another series where users are engaged to hunt for election related terms. 'Sawal jawab' series to the campaign highlights the answer the most relevant questions related to the electoral process. Through polls and pixel series, the EC shares a visual journey of Indian elections since

inception. response to the proliferation of fake news and misinformation online, the poll body said it has introduced the 'VerifyBeforeYouAmplify'

initiative as highlighted by Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar recently. The campaign seeks to bust fake news and urge people to exercise caution and diligence before sharing information on from social media platforms.

Maoist hit areas of Singhbhum...

tees to Bengal to investigate

We are ensuring that no area remains untouched this time," Chaudhary said. Thalkobad and about two

dozen other villages were earlier dubbed as "liberated zones" but the administration succeeded in establishing its presence through massive operations by security forces, including Operation Anaconda. A total of 15 new camps of security forces have been established in the region. "Besides helicopters, polling parties will travel through trains and roads. As many as 121 teams will be dispatched by trains, for which dry runs have been conducted. Teams on foot have to reach cluster points, and then go to polling stations. By 5.30 am on the polling date, all teams must reach the stations to conduct

mock polling," he said. The DC said the constituency has over 62 voters who are over 100 years of age. One are women.

Manoharpur police station who told the DC that he would not be able to walk to the polling booth. Chaudhary said he will get the option to exercise his franchise at his

"For these 62 voters, and 3,909 electors aged above 85 years, besides 13,703 persons with disability, we have ensured that they get the option of home voting," he said.

administration resorting to innovative ways, including putting up a giant sky balloon at a height of 100 feet, and running 1,284 'Chunav Pathshala' under the Systematic Voter's Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) to make people aware of the need to exercise their franchise.

Singhbhum, which is a reserved constituency for Scheduled Tribes, has 14.32 lakh voters, of whom 7.27 lakh

"In some areas, polling parties among them is Walter Lakra Sitting MP Geeta Kora, the Madhu Koda, has been fielded from the seat by the BJP. Kora, who was the lone

Congress MP from Jharkhand in the outgoing Lok Sabha, joined the saffron camp recently. INDIA allies are yet to declare any candidate for the seat.

Singhbhum Lok Sabha seat Assembly six constituencies --Seraikela, Majhganon, Chaibasa, Jagnathpur, Manoharpur and Chakradharpur. Barring Seraikela which falls in Seraikela-Kharsawan district, the remaining segments fall in West Singhbhum district.

Lok Sabha polls in Jharkhand will be held in four phases on May 13, 20, 25 and June 1. In the 2019 general elections, the BJP had bagged 11 seats, while its ally AJSU had secured one. Both the JMM and Congress had won one

Devotees marvel at...

Lakhamandal temple is Lord Shiva's abode in mountains and is estimated to be constructed circa 12th to 13th century.

'We have heard that once upon a time a dead person is reborn in this temple. If a dead body is taken to this temple, it becomes alive," said Pandit Mayaram.

But according to mythology, it is believed to be the spot where Duryodhana, a key

character in Mahabharata, attempted to burn the Pandavas alive in a lakh house. Twin statues of Danav and

Manav are located beside the main shrine. The statues are its dwarpals (doormen). Some people believe these statues to be those of Pandava brothers Bhima and Arjuna. They also resemble Jai and Vijay, the doormen of Lord Vishnu.

BJP exhorts workers to intorm voters of achievements

STAFF REPORTER NOIDA/NEW DELHI

 $B_{\text{president Bhupendra}}^{\text{JP's Uttar Pradesh unit}}$ Singh Chaudhary on Sunday exhorted party workers in Gautam Buddh Nagar to reach out to every home and inform voters about the achievements of the government in view of upcoming

Lok Sabha polls. Chuadhary said this while addressing a booth-level conference of the party at Chitehra village in the Dadri area, organised to shore up support for BJP candidate Maĥesh Sharma.

Gautam Buddh Nagar goes to polls on April 26 and has over 26 lakh registered voters.

AAP holds mass fast to protest against Kejriwal...

The stage in which the AAP leaders were seated during the six-hour fast had an image of Kejriwal behind bars in the backdrop. Portraits of B R Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh flanking Mahatma Gandhi's photo were kept in front of the stage. The AAP shared photos of protests held in various cities, including Mumbai, Kolkata Bengaluru and Pune, on its social media

handles. leaders, Senior including Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel, Deputy Speaker Rakhi Birlan, Ministers Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bharadwaj, Kailash Gahlot and Imran Hussain attended the day-long 'Samuhik Upwas' at Jantar Mantar from 11 am.

Addressing the protesters at

Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, who was recently granted bail by the Supreme Court in the Delhi excise scam case, asserted "Kejriwal was, is and will remain

He questioned Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement remain honest." Directorate, claiming the AAP national convener's name was mentioned by just four of 456 witnesses of the CBI and ED probing the case.

"People know very well under what situation these witnesses named Kejriwal," Singh said.

He called upon AAP volunteers to work harder to ensure the victory of party candidates and those of the INDIA Bloc in the Lok Sabha polls to pave the way for the exit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home

power.

Addressing the protesters at Jantar Mantar, the AAP's Rajya Sabha Singh, who was recently granted bail by the Supreme Court in the Delhi excise scam case, asserted "Kejriwal was, is and will

"They (BJP) are not going to get 400 seats... If a person is raising slogans of 400 paar will he arrest a sitting CM? Will they freeze the account of the Congress party? No party which is that confident of getting 400 seats in the LS polls, will do such things,"

said Singh at the protest.

He questioned Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate, claiming the AAP national convener's name was mentioned by just four of 456 witnesses of the CBI and ED probing the case.

under what situation these witnesses named Kejriwal," Singh said. He called upon AAP

volunteers to work harder to ensure the victory of party candidates and those of the INDIA Bloc in the Lok Sabha polls to pave the way for the exit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah from

Delhi Minister Atishi accused the BJP of resorting to dictatorship and claimed the fast by the AAP will give "sleepless nights" to the saffron party. There was anger among people over Kejriwal's arrest and it will prove to be the "final nail in the coffin" of the BJP, she claimed.

"Bapu kept nearly 18 fasts, his longest upwas lasted 21 days, not just once but he kept 21-day long fasts thrice...he used to say that he keeps these fasts to fight for what's right, in fact one of these fasts was against his own arrest by the British government," the moderator of the programme, Dilip Pandey said.

The AAP's Delhi unit convener Gopal Rai had appealed to people to join the fast to protest against Kejriwal's arrest. He alleged that Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a case linked to the Delhi excise policy-linked scam case was part of the BJP's conspiracy to finish the AAP. Kejriwal, arrested on March 21, is in judicial custody till April 15.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had given the call for a nationwide collective fast to protest the arrest of Kejriwal, who is also the party's national convener.

Mann, along with several Ministers and AAP MLAs, gathered at Khatkar Kalan in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district for a day-long fast to protest the arrest after the Aam Aadmi Party gave the call for a nationwide collective fast. Addressing the gathering, Mann alleged that the BJP was "unnerved" at the expansion of the AAP which became a national party in 10 years.

"We formed Governments in two States in 10 years. We have MLAs in Gujarat and Goa and a mayor in Chandigarh.

We have 10 Rajya Sabha members. So they (BJP) got scared as no party expanded so quickly," said Mann. Haryana AAP chief Sushil

Gupta, along with party leaders and workers of the State unit, gathered in Haryana's Kurukshetra for a day-long fast.

On the occasion, Gupta targeted the ruling BJP at the Centre and alleged that "it is adopting a dictatorial attitude".

"The BJP is killing democracy... Honest people are being put in jail," he said, adding neither Kejriwal nor the AAP workers are afraid of the "tactics" adopted by the ruling party.
The AAP claimed that its

supporters living in 13 countries across the world observed a mass fast. The mass fast was observed in various countries, including US, UK, Canada, Australia, Germany, Norway, Ireland. Here too, Indians started their fast with the hymns of 'Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram, Patit Pavan Sita Ram' and blessed Arvind Kejriwal for his long life. According

information, people at Harvard Square in Boston, Hollywood Sign in Los Angeles, Lake Elizabeth in San Francisco, Indian Embassy in Washington DC, Times Square in New York, Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Plaza in Dallas, Brampton City Hall in Toronto, Canada, Holland Park Downtown in Vancouver, Federation Square in Melbourne, Australia; Parliament Square in London, UK; O'Cannell Street Upper in Dublin, Ireland; Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany and the Norwegian Parliament in Oslo, Norway observed mass fast as per local time.







BJP holds Sharab se Sheeshmahal campaign against Liquorgate

The BJP on Sunday here organised the "Sharab (alcohol) se Sheeshmahal" campaign in Connaught Place to protest against the liquor scam. The protest was led by state BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva.

On this occasion, a large model representing the cor-ruption Sheesh Mahal palace of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was placed outside the main gate of Palika Market in Connaught with models of alcohol bottles featuring pictures of Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, and Sanjay Singh which both turned into a selfie point for thousands.

Workers also distributed anticorruption pamphlets to peothroughout the day. Sachdeva said this palace of corruption is like Taj Mahal of corruption, which is built with the hard-earned money of Delhi's taxpayers.

The journey from Sharab (alcohol) se Shishmahal is a testimony to how Arvind Kejriwal has plundered the people of Delhi. He mentioned how Kejriwal

indulged in the alcohol poli-cy scandal to raise election funds and blatantly violated urban art regulations, municipal laws, and environmental regulations to build his palatial mansion.

Today, the people of Delhi cannot even cut a branch of a tree in their homes, but Arvind Kejriwal has cut hundreds of trees for his palace. Even the Punjab Police is ple coming out of metro gates now deployed in his security,



would never take security. Sachdeva claimed as soon as he came to power, Kejriwal's gaze was fixed on big mansions, and during the ČOVID era, he neglected public service and built his Sheeshmahal bungalow. Furthermore, several "AAP"

leaders' eyes are on Sheeshmahal these days, including Sanjay Singh, who went straight to Sheeshmahal as soon as he was released from jail.

The Delhi BJP President stated there is a government in Delhi which is embroiled in internal conflict. The alcohol scandal happened, the whole party knows it, but no one is accepting it; instead, they are sweeping their mistakes under the carpet and blaming each other now.

been better if the Kejriwal party collectively atoned for corruption today instead of resorting to a group fast. Addressing the protest, New

Delhi BJP candidate Bansuri Swaraj said the Aam Aadmi Party is playing the drama of fake empathy, but the people of Delhi understand everything, and they are ready to give an answer in the upcoming elections to the way Delhi's youth are being pushed into addiction and alcohol shops are being

opened against women. The people of Delhi will punish the Aam Aadmi Party in the elections by wiping them out on all seven seats.' Speaking on the occasion, Kapil Mishra said, "Arvind

country, who is doing exactly the opposite of what he promised before coming into Despite swearing on his chil-

dren, if someone does all this work, then it can be understood how trustworthy Repentance for Kejriwal's sins

will not come from fasting for a day because the entire party has committed so many sins that even fasting for a lifetime won't absolve them." The campaign was also

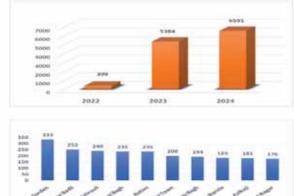
addressed by Co-Incharge Dr. Alka Gurjar, National Media Co-Chief Sanjay Mayukh, Frontal In-charge Sumit Bhasin, Lok Sabha candidate and Kamaljeet Sahrawat, National Spokesperson Shaziya Ilmi

City sees surge in cases of drunk driving

SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

In the first quarter of 2024, Delhi witnessed a surge in cases of drunk driving. From January 1 to March 31, a record-breaking 6,591 violators were booked, marking a sharp rise compared to the previous year's figure of 5,384 and a massive jump from 333 in 2022. Rajouri Garden recorded the highest number of challans at 333, followed by Samaypur Badli with 252 and Mehrauli with 240.
The data showed an astro-

nomical surge of 1500 per cent in the drunk driving casesbetween 2022 and 2024 in the national capital, highlighting an alarming trend in the city. According to the lat-Delhi Traffic Police, from 399 cases in Delhi in 2022, in the period between January 1 to March 31, the numbers jumped significantly in 2024 with as many as 6591 violators booked for drunk driving by the Delhi traffic police.



A 20 percent jump was seen curb drunk driving, leading to between the cases of prose- more checks and prosecucution in 2023 with as many as 5,384 violators booked by Zone 1 HGS Dhaliwal said. the police from the cases of These drivers are not just alcohol in 2024 in just a span of three months. "Increased enforcement efforts by Delhi Traffic Police can be the reason for the surge in prosecution of drunk driving violations in Delhi as we have been carrying out special drives to

ty but of other commuters and pedestrians too. A report by the Ministry of Road Transports and Highways revealed that 196 cases of accidents happened due to driving under influence leading to death of 51 people and

336 people being injured in 2022. On analysing further, the

police identified 10 areas from where the maximum number of cases of prosecutions in driving under the influence have been reported. "This analysis sheds light on areas where traffic violations are most prevalent, allowing for targeted enforcement for targeted enforcement efforts to improve road safety and compliance with traffic laws," the officials said. Karol Bagh, Rohini, Model Town, Punjabi Bagh, Narela, Kalkaji and Lajpat Nagar are also in the top 10 traffic circles with the highest number of challans issued in 2024. On of challans issued in 2024. On being asked the reason for these areas reporting such a Dhaliwal said, "There is no specific reason as to why the 10 areas mentioned in the data reporting the highest number of drunk driving cases. However, traffic patterns in these areas may be a

He added that there is no specific reason as such to pinpoint, although factors such as more number of restaurants in an area and major corridors from where heavy traffic passes can be some.

"In response to this concerning surge in cases, the Delhi Traffic Police have intensified their efforts to crack down on drunken driving. Strict enforcement measures, including increased checking, and breathalyser tests, are being implemented to deter individuals from engaging in this hazardous behaviour," said the traffic police in a press note, stating that the consequences of such irresponsible behaviour can be devastating and irreparable. emphasise the importance of community involvement in combating the menace of drunken driving, encouraging citizens to report any instances of suspected drunken driving to make the roads safer for the general public.

Dry days declared in April, June

Kejriwal is not only the most

deceitful Chief Minister of

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government **⊥** released a list of dry days during April-June in the national Capital on Saturday. In addition to festivals, the excise department of Delhi has declared the dry day schedule for the 18th Lok Sabha polls.

Sabha polls.
An order issued by the excise department said that the liquor stores in Delhi will be closed on Id-ul-Fitr (April 11), Ram Navami (April 17), Mahavir Jayanti (April 21), Buddha Purnima (May 23), and Id-ul-Zuha (June 17).
All the licensees will exhibit

All the licensees will exhibit the dry day order at some conspicuous place of their licensed premises.

recently, the department said that dry day will be observed (before 48 hours of end of poll) from 6 PM of April 24 to 6 PM of April 26 on account of Lok Sabha polls in Baghpat, Ghaziabad and Gautam Budh Nagar districts



of Uttar Pradesh. It will be applicable for all the licensees whose vends/premises are situated

within 100 metres of the borand Gautam Budh Nagar districts of Uttar Pradesh. In a separate notification the excise department said that different kinds of liquor stores and other licensed premises in the National Capital Territory of Delhi will be

closed (before 48 hours of end of poll) from 6 PM of May 23 to 6 PM of May 25 due to voting in the seven Lok Sabha seats in the city. The liquor stores in the city

will also be closed on June 4

(full day) when the counting of votes for the Lok Sabha polls will be held, it added. Previously, the Delhi govern-ment announced six dry days within the capital city, which include Republic Day on January 26. In an official directive, the excise department outlined that Republic Day on January 26. Curv Day on January 26, Guru Ravidas Jayanti on February 24, Swami Dayanand Saraswati Jayanti on March 5, Maha Shivaratri on March 8, Holi on March 25, and Good observed as dry days, during which the sale of alcohol will be prohibited. In addition, states like Uttar Pradesh also declared a 'dry day' on January 22 because of the Ram Temple consecration

Atishi: EC not addressing party grievances regarding objectionable BJP hoardings

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has alleged that the Election Commission (EC) has not addressed the grievances raised by the party regarding the objectionable hoardings placed by the BJP throughout the city while calling it a display of 'apparent bias' on Sunday. "Despite multiple complaints

lodged by the AAP, the Election Commission has remained inert, refraining from taking any decisive action against the contentious displays," the party said, adding that 48 hours have passed since the initial complaint in the matter was filed before the EC. "The absence of any summons or notices directed towards the BJP further exacerbates concerns surrounding the Commission's impartiality," the party claimed. Senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Atishi, while expressing her disappointment on the matter on X (formerly Twitter) said, "48 hours have passed since the AAP filed a complaint with Election Commission of India against BJP's objectionable hoardings, across Delhi. Till now no notice has been issued by the Election

only send notices to opposition Meanwhile, Delhi BJP

Commission to BJP so far.

Will the Election Commission

President Virendra Sachdeva said, "World over we see that the people who are losing in a game raise suspicion on the conduct of the umpires in the game and this is what Atishi is doing today in India." He added that it is shocking

that AAP Minister Atishi 'who has pledged to the constitution is tarnishing the image of an constitutional body Election Commission of India for petty political motives'.

According to the AAP, the saffron party has put up objectionable hoardings across Delhi and subsequently they filed a complaint in the matter to ECI. They claim that the election body has neither taken any action on this matter nor issued any notice to the BJP.

"In contrast, senior AAP leader Atishi was served notice by the EC within just 12 hours after the BJP filed a complaint, whereas news of Atishi receiving the notice from the EC had already circulated in the media half an hour before she received it," they remarked.

AAP workers throng Jantar Mantar in support of Kejriwal

SAMAR PANDEY NEW DELHI

 $S_{(AAP)\ workers\ and\ sup-}^{cores\ of\ Aam\ Aadmi\ Party}$ porters gathered at Jantar Mantar to express their anger against the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister and party convener Arvind in the alleged excise policy linked money laundering case by keeping a Samuhik Upwas' or mass fasting in the scorching summer heat.

Many supporters and work-

ers along with senior party leaders kept a fast to show their support to the AAP supremo with photos of revolutionaries including B.R.Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagat Singh displayed on stage. Gandhi's famous hymn "Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram" along with other patriotic songs were also played by singers with people singing in chorus in their display of love and support to Kejriwal.

Despite the baking heat and the fasting by the supporters, the atmosphere remained energetic and enthusiastic, echoing with slogans of "Jail ka jawab, Vote se" (the answer to jail is through votes) and "Jail ke tale tootenge, Hamare neta chutenge" (Jail locks will



freed).

Yellow t-shirts and caps with "Main Bhi Kejriwal" (I am also Kejriwal) printed on them were sported by many in the event along with them carrying posters showing Kejriwal behind the bars and AÁP flags.

While the senior party leaders including Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bhardwaj, Atishi and

Somnath Bharti sat on the erected stage, a carpet was laid out on the site for others to sit. Many AAP workers couldn't find water bottles to quench their thirst while some took

many of them at a time.

Nadda wife stolen SUV found

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has recovered the SUV of BJP President JP Nadda's wife from Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi, more than two weeks after it was stolen from a service centre in Delhi's Govindpuri, according to officials

They said three auto-lifters were arrested in connection with the case. They have been identified as Shivansh Tripathi (23), Saleem (34), and Mohammad Raees (33), all residents of Uttar Pradesh.

The white Toyota Fortuner was stolen from southeast Delhi's Govindpuri on March 19 when its driver, Joginder, had left it at the service centre and returned home briefly. Police said the vehicle is registered in Himachal Pradesh, J P Nadda's home state, in the name of his wife.

"One of the accused is an autolifter, while two others are habitual interstate receiver of stolen luxury cars. With their arrest, another stolen Creta car used in the commission of the theft and one Stolen Fortuner Car were recovered from their possession," Deputy Commissioner of Police (southeast) Rajesh Deo said. He said the probe was taken up after Joginder lodged an e-FIR at the Govindpuri police station. "The case was transferred to the Anti-Auto Theft Squad

of Southeast Delhi and a ded-

icated team was formed.

During investigation, the team analysed footage from several CCTV cameras and following the trail of the CCTV cameras, the team reached Budkal in Harvana's Faridabad," said the

DCP. He said they got a tip-off that Shivansh Tripathi and his gang were allegedly involved in the case, and the first first breakthrough came on March 22 when the team apprehended him from near the Patiala

House Court. Police said Tripathi, a resident of UP's Hardoi, dropped out after class X due to poor financial condition of his family. He fell in contact of bad people and to meet his daily needs started stealing luxury cars from Delhi-NCR with the help of a gang. He was previously involved in multiple cases of auto theft.

According to the officer, Tripathi told the police during interrogation that he committed this theft from Giri Nagar in Govindpuri along with his associate Shahid, a resident of Badkal in Faridabad, his sonin law Farooq, who lives in Delhi's Chandan Hola, and one Shahkul.

The DCP said that after stealing the SUV, they allegedly took it to Farooq's farmhouse in Faridabad from where it was sold to Lakhimpur Kheri-resident Saleem, who purchases stolen luxury cars and sells them further across the country including in the Northeast.

Two juveniles murder 21 years old in Timarpur for denying them matchbox

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Two juveniles allegedly bru-tally stabbed to death a 21year-old man in north Delhi's Timarpur area over refusing to give them a matchbox. According to the police on Sunday, both of the juveniles have been apprehended from their hideouts nearby.

A PCR call was received at the Timarpur police station on Saturday regarding stabbing of a man identified as Anshu Bhati. On the receipt of the call, police reached the spot and found that there was a pool of blood inside the auto and its surroundings where the altercation between the victim and juveniles happened over a matchbox.

"It came into notice that the injured was shifted to Hindu Rao Hospital. Thereafter, ASI RadheyKishan reached at Hindu Rao Hospital and collected Medicolegal cases (MLC) report. The deceased was declared brought dead by the Doctors.

Thereafter, the crime scene was inspected by the Crime team and Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) team and photographs were taken with different angles," DCP North

Delhi Manoj Meena said. An FIR under section 302 (Punishment for murder), 506 (Punishment for criminal intimidation) and 34 (Acts done by several persons in



furtherance of common intention) of the IPC was registered upon the statement of an eyewitness Varun.

Post mortem of the deceased was conducted and the dead body was handed over to his

"On Saturday, Children in Conflict with Law (CCL) asked the victim to give him a matchbox, he refused to do so and hot arguments were exchanged between them. Meanwhile one CCL has assaulted the victim with a sharp edged knife," he said, adding that both the CCL, who were about 16 years old,

absconded. On the basis of local intelligence and CCTV footage both were apprehended within 12 hours of the incident. Further, one of the apprehended CCL was also previously involved in heinous crime, according to the

One knife, which was used in commission of offence has been recovered from one CCL and both CCLs have been sent to OHB-2 in protective custody," added the DCP.

EC Suvidha portal receives 73,379 requests in 20 days

In a span of just 20 days, since the announcement of elections and the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) becoming operational, the Suvidha platform received an impressive 73,379 permission requests from political parties and candidates, of which 44,626 requests (60 per cent) had been approved.

Maximum requests were received from Tamil Nadu (23,239), followed by West Bengal (11,976) and Madhya Pradesh (10,636). The least number of requests so far have received Chandigarh (17), Lakshadweep (18) and Manipur (20)..

According to the Election Commission, the applications submitted by by parties and candidates include requests for booking rally grounds, opening temporary party offices and operating video publicity vans. The seven phase elections were announced on March 16 and voting would commence from April 19. The last phase is on



Nearly 11,200 requests had been rejected which is 15% of the total requests received and 10,819 applications cancelled as were invalid or duplicate. Rest of the applications are under process as per the details available till April 7, 2024.

The portal has received requests from Tripura (2844), Assam (2609), Bihar (861), Goa (28), Gujarat (648), Harvana (207), Himachal Pradesh (125), Karnataka (2689), Kerala (1411), Maharashtra (2131), Meghalaya (1046), Odisha (

92), Rajasthan (2052), Punjab (696), Uttar Pradesh (3273), Chhattisgarh (472), Jharkhand

(270), Uttarakhand (1903) and

Telangana (836).

The Suvidha portal is a technological solution developed by ECI to ensure a level playingfield upholding the democratic principles of free, fair and elections. transparent Demonstrating an impressive track record, the Suvidha Portal streamlined the process of obtaining and acting upon requests for permissions and facilities from political parties and candidates during the elec-

"Recognizing the importance of the election campaign peri-od, where parties and candiod, where parties and candidates engage in activities to reach out to voters, the Suvidha Portal caters to a diverse range of permission requests trans-parently on the First in First Out principle. It caters to permissions for organising rallies, opening temporary party offices, door-to-door canvassing, video vans, helicopters, obtaining vehicle permits, distributing pamphlets," the Election Commission said. According to the Election Commission (EC), the Suvidha Platform not only enhances the

efficiency of the election process but also ensures transparency by providing real-time tracking of applications, status updates, times tamped submissions, and communication via SMS. Furthermore, the permission data available on the portal serves as a valuable resource for scrutinising election expenditures, contributing to greater accountability and integrity in the electoral

CDS Chauhan to chair Navy chief awards maiden tri services integration conference PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan will chair the maiden 'Parivartan Chintan, a tri-service conference on integration and jointness here on Monday, defence ministry said here on Sunday. Giving details, officials said 'Parivartan Chintan,' a pioneering Tri-Service day-long Conference is aimed at generating new and fresh ideas, initiatives and reforms to propel Jointness and Integration

With the Indian Armed Forces having embarked on a major transformative change in their quest to be ready for the envisaged future wars, initiatives are being undertaken to promote Jointness and Integration as structures are modified to enable Tri- Service multi domain operations.

The 'Chintan' will be the first ever conference of the Heads of all Tri- Services Institutions, the Department of Military Affairs, Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff and the three Services, with officers from varied service brackets, through their diverse understanding and experience, rec-

ommending measures to achieve the desired "Joint and Integrated" end state with celer-

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh earlier this week urged the armed forces to be prepared to meet the challenge of fast changing nature of warfare and stressed upon the present complex world situation which effects everyone globally.

Making this assertion while addressing the Army Commanders' Conference, he said "Unconventional and asymmetric warfare, including hybrid war will be part of the future conventional wars. Cyber, information, communication, trade and finance have all become an inseparable part of future conflicts.

This necessitates that Armed Forces will have to keep all these facets in consideration while planning and formulat-

INS Sharda for anti piracy operations



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar in Saturday during his visit to Southern Naval Command, Kochi, awarded 'On the Spot Unit Citation' to INS Sharda for successful conduct of anti-piracy operations. The ship was involved in the safe release of all 19 crew members (11 Iranian and 08 Pakistani) of Iranian fishing vessel Omari which was held hostage by pirates off East coast of Somalia, navy said

Giving details, navy officials said the ship was tasked to investigate the Iranian fishing vessel Omari that was likely hijacked by pirates. Based on surveillance inputs of naval RPA, the ship intercepted the vessel and maintained a covert trail throughout the night.

During early morning hours of February two, the ship's integral helicopter and subsequently Prahar team was launched. The aggressive posture of ship coerced the pirates to safely release the crew and boat. The swift and decisive actions of the ship resulted in rescue of hijacked fishing vessel and its crew from Somali pirates.

The relentless effort of the ship, mission deployed for antipiracy operations saved precious lives at sea upholding Indian Navy's resolve to enhancing security and safety of seafarers in the Indian Ocean Region.

Admiral Kumar interacted with Team Sharda and commended them for responding to piracy attack with alacrity leading to safe and successful conduct of operations at sea under challenging conditions.

Modi upset by our guarantees: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

The Congress on Sunday hit L back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he is "rattled" by its guarantees and is making "baseless" statements against it in desperation to 'save his chair".

The opposition party's reaction came as Prime Minister Modi launched a blistering attack on the Congress, charging that its poll manifesto bore the imprint of the Muslim League and utterances of its leaders showed hostility towards national integrity and Sanatan Dharma.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "The people of India are now tired of the Prime Minister's lies. After June 4, he will have to go on long leave. This is the guarantee of the people of India!"

The counting of votes in Lok Sabha elections is on June 4. Ramesh said the Congress' 'Paanch Nyay Pachees hope among the people of India after 10 years of "injus-

The Congress' guarantees are the need of the hour and this is the voice of the suffering people of the country, he said in a post in Hindi on X. "Rattled by this guarantee

card, the Prime Minister is saying baseless things in his desperation to save his chair," Ramesh said

Addressing a rally in Nawada district on Sunday, his second in Bihar in 72 hours, Modi also recounted the 'jungle raj' that prevailed when the state was ruled by the Congress-RJD combine, showering praises on his ally Nitish Kumar and ail-ing BJP colleague Sushil Kumar Modi for turning things around as chief minister and deputy

chief minister respectively.
"The manifesto that the Congress has released bears the imprint of the Muslim League. It has not released a poll manifesto but a declaration of appeasement (tushtikaran

Share feedback on manifesto through social media, Rahul tells people

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■

 $F^{\rm ormer\ Congress\ president}_{\rm Rahul\ Gandhi\ on\ Sunday}$ said his party's manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls has been hailed by many as revolutionary, and urged people to share their feedback on the document through social The former Congress chief

posted a video on Instagram in which he made the appeal. "I made this video last night at 12:30am, but my team thought it was too late to post. So I'm posting it now because the message is still relevant," he said in the post accompanying the video which was released around 10 am.

'The Congress manifesto is the voice of every Indian, share your thoughts on social media," he said. In the video, Rahul Gandhi

says he made the video after coming back from the rally in



told him that it is a "revolutionary" manifesto. He thanked people for their suggestions which he said helped shape the manifesto. Gandhi asked them to share feedback with him on the manifesto and tell him what they liked about it and what

they did not. The Congress on Friday released its Lok Sabha poll manifesto, focusing on five "pillars of justice" and 25 Right to apprenticeship, a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP) for crops, a constitutional amendment to raise the 50 per cent cap on reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBC), a nationwide caste census and scrapping the Agnipath scheme for shortterm military recruitment are among the promises made by

Navy Chief on farewell visit to Southern Naval Command

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar, along with his wife Kala Hari Kumar, was on a farewell visit to Southern Naval Command (SNC), Kochi from April 3-6, navy said here on Sunday.

Giving details, officials said during the visit, the Navy chief interacted with the officers and sailors of SNC on 'Connect with CNS' forum at Sagarika auditorium, Naval Base, Kochi. The interaction was attended by personnel of SNC units including outstation units.

Various contemporary issues of Operations, Training, Human Resource development, digitisation and other transformation initiatives of Indian Navy were discussed and concerns raised were addressed. In another event, Admiral Kumar interacted with the defence civilians of



invaluable role as a formidable workforce supporting Indian Navy's high tempo of operations.

Furthermore, the Admiral visited his alma mater, INS Dronacharva and interacted with the staff and trainees and participated in the 'Drona Gaan'. He visited the Training block where he served as the Training Commander from

Admiral Kumar also visited HQ Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST), where he was the 16th FOST from 2013-14. During his address, he exhorted the HQST team to remain focussed on SHIPS FIRST approach and provided professional guidance. A traditional 'Barakhana' on

the occasion of farewell visit of the Navy chief was organ-

Ministry of Ayush announces oragnisation of World Homeopathy Day Symposium 2024

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Ministry of Ayush, in association with the Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH), National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH), and National Institute of (NIH), Homoeopathy announced the organisation of the World Homoeopathy Day Symposium 2024. The significant event is slat-

ed to commemorate the 269th birth anniversary of Dr Samuel Hahnemann, the revered founder homoeopathy. Scheduled to be held on April

10th and 11th, 2024, at the Yashobhoomi Convention Centre in Dwarka, New Delhi, the symposium promises to be a gathering of eminent minds from across the globe.

The Chief Guest for the occasion will be the President of India Draupadi Murmu.

With a multifaceted aim, the symposium endeavours to honour Dr. Hahnemann's legacy while also highlighting the strides made in homoeopathic research across various domains.

It seeks to foster collaboration among diverse fields including medicine, research, chemistry, physics, microbiology, and pharmacology.
Discussions will revolve

around the seamless integration of homoeopathy into the national healthcare landscape and its potential to address the evolving healthcare needs of the population.

The event's schedule is packed with engaging sessions that promise to offer valuable



the inaugural ceremony include Padma Shri Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary of the Ministry of Ayush, alongside distinguished Padma Awardees in the field of International homoeopathic experts from Spain, Columbia, Canada, Bangladesh, and the Netherlands will also lend their expertise, adding a global dimension to the discourse. The scientific program is designed to be comprehensive, encompassing plenary presentations on ground-breaking research findings in clinical and basic research, drug development, public health initiatives, and veteri-

nary sciences. Panel discussions will also explore the advancements made in the interdisciplinary research, data curation, quality assurance, and regulatory strategies

homoeopathy. Importantly, the symposium will deliberate on the growing lence in homoeopathy," he body of evidence supporting

Subhash Kaushik, Director General of Central Council Research Homoeopathy, said,

The World Homoeopathy Day Symposium 2024 aspires to be a symbol of knowledge and collaboration. Our goal is to empower homoeopathic practitioners with research-based approaches while facilitating the seamintegration homoeopathy into the national healthcare system. The target audience for this transformative event is quite broad and encompasses homoeopathic physicians and researchers, practitioners from allied fields, students, policymakers, and anyone

practice." Registration details for the event will be available soon. We are eager to welcome participants and embark together on this journey of excel-

interested in the advance-

ment of this holistic healing

Alarming levels of plastic garbage accumulating on ocean floor: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ranging from discarded nets and cups to plastic bags and other debris, indeed, the ocean floor has tragically become a garbage bin for a vast array of plastic pollution. The accumulation of such waste has reached alarming levels, with estimates sug-gesting that between 3 to 11 million tonnes of plastic now rest beneath the waves, leaving marine life gasping for

The staggering heap of plastic pollution on the ocean floor has been revealed in a study conducted by scientists from CSIRO, Australia's national science agency, and the University of Toronto in Canada. With plastic use expected to double by 2040, the situation is set to choke marine ecosystems and

Dr. Denise Hardesty, Senior Research Scientist at CSIRO, emphasizes the gravity of the findings, stating that while millions of tonnes of plastic enter the oceans annually, the extent of plastic accumulation on the ocean floor was previously unknown.

She underscored the ocean floor's role as a resting place or reservoir for plastic pollution, highlighting the urgent need for action to mitigate its Alice Zhu, a PhD Candidate

at the University of Toronto and lead researcher, indicated that the amount of plastic on the ocean floor could be up to 100 times greater than that observed floating on the ocean's surface. She emphasized that even if

plastic input into oceans were



halted, plastic would continue to accumulate in the deep ocean, presenting a long-term environmental challenge.

The study utilized scientific data to develop predictive models estimating the distribution and quantity of plastic on the ocean floor.

These models, based on data from remote operated vehicles (ROVs) and bottom trawls, revealed that plastic mass tends to cluster around continents, with a significant portion residing at depths exceeding 200 meters.

The article, 'Plastics in the deep sea – A global estimate of the ocean floor reservoir, was published in Deep Sea Research Part I: Oceanographic Research Papers.

Remarkably, inland and coastal seas, though covering less surface area than oceans, are predicted to harbor a comparable amount of plastic The study concurs with the observation of the International Union for observation

Conservation of Nature

(IUCN), an international

all marine debris found from surface waters to deep-sea sediments. 'Marine species ingest or are entangled by plastic debris, which causes severe injuries and death. Plastic pollution threatens

food safety and quality, human health, coastal tourism, and contributes to climate change," says the

field of nature conservation

and sustainable use. "At least

14 million tons of plastic end

up in the ocean every year,

and plastic makes up 80% of

Under the influence of solar UV radiation, wind, currents and other natural factors, plastic breaks down into small particles called microplastics (particles smaller than 5 mm) or nanoplastics (particles than 100 nm).

The small size makes them easy for marine life to ingest accidentally, the IUCN notes, calling for new and existing legally binding agreements to address marine plastic pol-

EC uses social media to nudge electors to vote in LS polls



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of the Election Commissi The Election Commission campaigns across social media platforms to nudge young and urban voters to cast their ballot in the Lok Sabha elections. The poll watchdog has also initiated a campaign urging people to first verify then amplify what they get on social media related to elections.

Polling for seven phase Lok Sabha elections will commence from April 19 with June 1 being the last phase.

According to the EC, it is nudging young and first-time voters through 'Turning 18' campaign, urging them to come to the polling station to 'You are the One' campaign

seeks to recognise importance of different stakeholders in the election process, including polling machinery, in ensuring that no voter is left behind. From voters and political parties to booth level officers

(BLOs), ground staff, polling

parties, administrative per-

sonnel, media professionals,

central forces, and security

personnel, each stakeholder plays a vital role in ensuring the integrity and efficiency of the electoral process.

Through engaging storytelling and captivating visuals like 'Whatever it takes -- we walk the extra mile, so you don't have to, the campaign highlights the dedication and commitment of individuals in ensuring free, fair and participative elections.

In response to the proliferation of fake news and misinformation online, the poll body said it has introduced the 'VerifyBeforeYouAmplify' initiative as highlighted by Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar recently.

The campaign seeks to bust fake news and urge people to exercise caution and diligence before sharing information on social media platforms.

This proactive measure aims to empower citizens to verify the accuracy and authenticity of content before amplifying it, thereby mitigating the spread of false information and safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process," the poll body

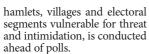
Lok Sabha polls in Manipur

Over 24,000 displaced persons to vote from relief camps

Eleven months of conflict, over 50,000 displaced people and an anti-poll sentiment among few---the Election Commission in violence-hit Manipur is gearing up for the challenging task of holding Lok Sabha elections in the state where the poll scene is muted. Chief Electoral

Pradeep Kumar Jha said over 24,500 displaced people have been identified as eligible to vote in the upcoming elections and special arrangements have been made for them to cast their franchise from relief camps.

"A total of 2,955 polling stations will be set up in the state for the Lok Sabha elections, out of which around 50 per cent have been sensitive, vulnerable or critical. We are also setting up 94 special polling stations to facilitate voting by internally displaced persons (IDPs)," Jha told PTI. As per Election Commission of India (ECI) norms, a vulnerability mapping of



"Special teams have been formed to deal with these voters with empathy and we have also started voter awareness activities. The activities are being designed keeping in mind the sentiments of the displaced people who have lost the

comfort of being in their home and there is some level of frustration and negativity," he added.

At least 219 people have been killed in the ethnic strife in the state that started on May 3 last year after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

A majority of over 50,000 internally displaced people are currently staying at relief centres across five valley districts and three hill districts. Scheduled in two phases on April 19 and 26, the Lok Sabha elections in Manipur have garnered attention for the

displaced population's voting arrangements. Several civil society groups and the affected people have been

questioning the relevance of elections in the strife-torn conflict in the state, however, state. There have been calls these concerns are being from several quarters about boycotting the polls too.

Sharing the statistics, Jha said mega rallies and visible there are over 20 lakh voters in the state and women voters outnumber the men voters.

'The state has traditionally been seeing a very high voting percentage in the previous elections, which is reflective of people's faith in the electoral process. Even if some people are feeling negative about it, we are trying to create awareness about making each vote count and taking some confidence building measures," he said.

Asked about the security arrangements for the polls, Jha said over 200 companies of paramilitary forces have been allocated to the state. The idea is not only to ensure

that the displaced voters do not campaign is low-key in the miss out on the chance but also that they feel safe. Adequate security arrangements are being made across the state. Video surveillance has already begun and the entry and exit points are being monitored...It is obvious to have concerns

these concerns are being addressed," he said.

Posters of political parties, movement of leaders -- the traditional elements of

campaigning -- are conspicuously missing in violence-hit Manipur where polling for Lok Sabĥa elections is due in less than two weeks. The only visible hint of the impending election is the hoardings put up by local election authorities, urging citizens to exercise their franchise.

Amid the muted election scene, major party figures have refrained from visiting the conflict-ridden state to canvass for votes or make electoral pledges.

Jha admitted that the state but maintained there are no restrictions from the EC.

There are no restrictions from the Election Commission's side on campaigning. Anything which is within the boundaries of the model code of conduct is

prominent leaders committed to women's empowerment.

to participate in politics. "Without wo women's

"Awareness training and mentorship opportunities, improve the Maling said.



Arunachal struggles with low representation of women in polls

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

Even after the passage of the Constitution (128th Amendment) Bill aimed at bolstering women's participation in electoral politics, the ground reality speaks of a different narrative in Arunachal Pradesh. Only a few women are taking part in the simultaneous polls to two Lok Sabha seats and 50 assembly constituencies to be held in this northeastern state on April 19.

Toko Sheetal, a greenhorn representing the Suraksha Party, is the only woman among the total 14 contestants for the two Lok Sabha seats - Arunachal East and Arunachal West.

Only eight women filed nominations for 50 assembly seats. The ruling BJP has fielded four, the opposition Congress nominated three, there is independent candidate. Only one woman represented the state in the Rajya Sabha to date, while 15 women were elected to the assembly since Arunachal Pradesh graduated to a full-fledged state in 1987 from North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). Of the eight, BJP nominee from Hayuliang constituency, Dasanglu Pul, won uncontested.

According to women activists and political analysts, several factors such as cultural barriers, socio-economic constraints and lack of awareness could contribute to the low participation of female participants in

electoral politics. Chairperson of the Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for Women (APSCW) Kenjum Pakam said, "Women for Women should be given a chance to have the right to vote and be voted for. This will allow them to occupy political offices and contribute to the development of the nation."

Expressing dismay at the low participation of women in electoral politics she said addressing these issues requires concerted efforts from both the government and civil society organisations to create an enabling environment that promotes women's involvement in the political process.

'Investing in leadership is investing in a stronger, more vibrant nation," the APSCW chief asserted. President of a women's organisation in the state, the Arunachal Pradesh Women Welfare Society, Kani Nada Maling, urged voters to elect

Maling is of the view that in Arunachal Pradesh, women are not allowed to make decisions and as a result, many competent leaders are not able

in representation the how their assembly, could grievances redressed? How could they be empowered? Bold and vocal women leaders should be elected to the assembly, not those who usually act as a rubber stamp (of men)," she said. Certain steps are required to make more women come forward and join politics.

programmes for aspiring female politicians, equitable access to resources and implementing policies that support work-life balance for women in politics could help situation, professor of political science at Raiiv Gandhi University here, Dr Nani Bath, advocated quick implementation of the law on reservations for women in politics.

Congress treats one family as supreme, BJP people: Rajnath

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Union minister Rajnath Singh on Sundav asserted that the track record of the government at the Centre has been "fabulous" as it considers people supreme whereas the Congress treats

a family supreme. The BJP, he said, is also committed to fulfilling all the promises made to the

people. "The track record of Modi ji's politics has been fabulous. And it was fabulous because we treat people as supreme whereas the Congress treats a family supreme," the senior BJP leader said addressing a public meeting in support of BJP candidate Arjun Ram Meghwal in Kolayat in

The defence minister said he is pained when the Congress questions the power and valour of the country's defence forces.

LS seats in Goa:

Janata Party (BJP) will win both the North Goa and South

Goa Lok Sabha seats in the

The BJP has fielded sitting MP

Shripad Naik from North Goa

seat and Pallavi Dempo as its

The opposition Congress has announced the names of

Ramakant Khalap and Viriato

Fernandes as its candidates for the North and South Goa

The South Goa seat is currently held by Francisco

"The BJP candidates have

overwhelming response from

the people due to which the

party will win the North Goa

seat by a margin of one lakh

votes and South Goa by 60,000 votes," CM Sawant told

reporters at Mapusa near Panaji on Saturday. The people have faith in the

work done by Prime Minister

Narendra Modi at the Centre, he said adding the BJP has

completed two rounds of

campaigning in both the parliamentary constituencies

Goa BJP chief Sadanand Shet Tanavade said, "Voters have

seen what work the Modi-led

government has done at the

Centre. We are sure of winning both the seats with huge

The BJP will release its

manifesto for the upcoming

Lok Sabha elections in Goa in

next eight to ten days, he

votes will be held

in the state

margins."

added.

receiving

Sardinha of the Congress

seats, respectively.

Union minister

candidate from South Goa.

CM Sawant

PTI PANAJI

coastal state.

Bikaner.

"The Congress questions our Army personnel. They ask for proof that they have carried out surgical strike. The whole world has got the proof, only the Congress is not getting it," he said referring to the 2016

surgical strike. India had conducted the surgical strike on September 29, 2016 across the Line of Control in response to a terrorist attack on an Army base in Jammu and Kashmir's Uri sector.

Backing the 'One nation. one election' initiative, he said it will save money, time and resources of the country. "One nation, one election'

will get support of people, but Congress habitually but opposes it," he said.

Singh also asserted that by early 2027, India will be the third largest economy in the world after the US China Lok Sabha elections are due in the state in two phases on April 19 and 26

PM wants to end corruption, INDIA alliance wants to save corrupt people: Nadda

PTI ■ ARIYALUR (TAMIL NADU)

Alliance leaders, who are either on bail or in jail, were keen on protecting the corrupt people whereas Prime Minister Narendra Modi was striving hard to end corruption in the country. Those leaders such as Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, were in prison while Congress leaders including Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul were on bail, Nadda said and claimed the opposition leaders presented contrasting picture compared to the Prime Minister who is an epitome development and determined to end corruption. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi says I will finish corruption, but the INDI

alliance leaders say save the corrupt people. That is their working style. In Tamil Nadu, the DMK, which stands for Dynasty Money Swindling and Katta Panchayat and its ally the Congress are corrupt. All of them are trying to save their families and dynasties and themselves from corruption," Nadd Nadda said addressing a rally here.

The Opposition leaders across the country were mere family parties and were trying to save their dynasty and family parties. "So, development is at stake even in Tamil Nadu under the corrupt DMK regime and people should throw out the DMK and its allies for a corrupt-free India," he said. From the enthusiasm, vigour and vitality that he could see at the meeting here, he was confident that people will send the BJP candidates to Parliament, he said.



Also, Nadda accused the DMK and Congress of going against the Tamil culture, tradition and customs, and this could be gauged by their opposition to the installation of the Sengol in the Parliament by Modi. "In this fight against them, we are here to revive the Tamil culture but on the other hand they are trying to destroy the Tamil culture. You should understand this," the BJP president said. He claimed that the country under Prime and grant in aid from the Minister's dynamic leadership,

took "a long leap for development." India which was 11th economic power in the world in 2019 became 5th largest economy under Modi's leadership. When he becomes the Prime Minister for third time, the country would rise further to become the third largest economy in the world, he said. He listed the numerous achievements of the BJP led

government at the Centre in diverse sectors, and said Modi made India strong by focussing marginalised sections and in empowering women and farmers, and in meeting the aspirations of the youth. He took care of the Dalits, tribals and those left behind in making India strong, he added. Tamil Nadu was very special for Modi who increased the tax devolution to the state by three times Centre by four times.

Bihar CM Nitish bumbles at Modi rally, Sonowal among oldest contestant oldest contestants in first phase of polls in Assam

PTI GUWAHATI

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, who is USonowal, who is contesting from Dibrugarh Lok Sabha seat, is among eight senior citizens in the fray for constituencies in Assam going to polls in the first phase on April 19.

The 62-year-old Rajya Sabha MP is among the elderly contestants, with his party colleague and MLA Ranjit Dutta, who is contesting from Sonitpur, being the oldest at 67, followed by Lakhimpur's 65-year-old Congress candidate Uday Shankar

Hazarika. The youngest candidate in the fray is 27-year-old Gobin

Biswakarma, who is contesting as an Independent from Lakhimpur, while Republican Party of India's Kaziranga candidate Saleh Ahmed Majumdar is the secondyoungest at 29. A total of 15 candidates are in

their forties, including 41-year-old Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, who is contesting from Jorhat, BJP's Rajya Sabha MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa (49), who is contesting from Kaziranga, and Dibrugarh contestants Lurinjyoti Gogoi of Assam Jatiya Parishad (45) and AAP's Manoj Dhanowar

PUBLIC NOTICE

2 days of its publication.

BJP will win both | INDIA Bloc if voted to power after LS polls will provide statehood to Puducherry: Stalin

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has expressed confidence that the Bharatiya **PTI** PUDUCHERRY

DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Sunday said that the INDIA bloc, if voted to power after Lok Sabha polls, will provide statehood to Puducherry.

Addressing an election rally here seeking support for Congress candidate and present MP V Vaithilingam, he said the DMK and Congress are firm that Puducherry should be made a full-fledged state.

Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangasamy is a "puppet in the hands of the Centre," Stalin said and added, "We are keen that the rights of not only bigger states like Tamil Nadu, but also the rights of union territories like Puducherry should be protected." Stating that Puducherry had

not gained during the ten-year rule by the BJP at the Centre, the Tamil Nadu chief minister said that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi was campaigning only in the name of religion and caste. "Modi has not highlighted

lot of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and weaker sections, but has been campaigning in the name of religion and caste," he said.
"Fishermen of Karaikal faced hardship and arrests by the Sri Lanka navy and what measures had the prime minister taken to prevent the sufferings of fishermen," he

any measure to ameliorate the

asked. The prime minister had not done anything to realise the promise he had held out in the past to make the union territory "best Puducherry",

Sunday cast doubts over his "mental health" after the septuagenarian's erratic behaviour at a rally came

under spotlight. Kumar, who heads the JD(U), was in Nawada district to attend a rally addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It was only the second public appearance of Kumar, who is on the wrong side of 70, since the Lok Sabha polls were announced three weeks

The last time he was seen at a gathering was on Thursday, at yet another rally of the PM in Jamui.

A couple of video footage of the Nawada rally went viral and the name Kumar was "trending" on X.

Detractors question his mental health

In one of these, Kumar appeared to bend towards the PM's feet with arms outstretched, before greeting him with folded hands. In Sunday cast doubts over his.

Bitar Chief Minister Nitish PM's feet with arms outstretched, before greeting him with folded hands. In Sunday cast doubts over his.

Rathore said. "The outstretched, before greeting him with folded hands. In another clip, of his brief speech, Kumar can be heard wishing "4,000 plus (char hazar se zyada)" seats for the NDA, to which he returned a

few months ago.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, who served as Kumar's deputy whenever his party shared power with JD(U), said he felt "anguish" over the conduct of his former boss.

"I was aghast to see a photo in which Nitish Kumar can be seen touching the feet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He is such an elderly person. Has been a chief minister for so long. Few of his counterparts have had such a long tenure," said

accused of deviating from the conciliatory path of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani? Had he not cancelled a dinner to which the then Gujarat CM was invited and returned the financial aid offered by the western state?"

Yadav, who lost his job as Bihar Deputy CM as a result of the JD(U) chief's latest volte-face, was referring to the once famous rivalry between Kumar and Modi which had led the Bihar CM to snap ties with BJP, for the first time, after his then Gujarat counterpart's ascent on the national stage seemed inevitable.

A statement also came from Rajesh Rathore, who heads

Rathore said, "The JD(U) should make sure that

Kumar reads out from a written script on public platforms, instead speaking ex tempore and causing embarrassment to the whole of Bihar with utterances like 4,000 plus Lok Sabha seats. He appeared to be touching the feet of Modi, despite being the latter's senior in politics. Even if the gesture was inadvertent, it clearly shows the Bihar CM does not enjoy optimal mental health". Incidentally, Kumar has faced

flak from different parties, on earlier occasions, for slips of tongue and questionable body language at public functions.

Chennai Customs summons Telangana minister son in watch smuggling case

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The Chennai Customs has issued a summons to Ponguleti Harsha Reddy, the son of a Telangana minister, for his alleged involvement in the smuggling of high-end watches worth several crores of rupees, according to official documents.

Reddy was asked to appear on April 4, but in a letter dated April 3, he expressed his inability to show up, stating that he is recovering from dengue fever, Customs sources quoting the letter

The Lok Sabha polls in Goa However, he has agreed to will be held in a single phase appear before the department after April 27, as per medical on May 7, and the counting of advice, official sources said.



Speaking to PTI, Reddy said that he had nothing to do with the case. "It is completely baseless. I am unwell right now," said the son of Telangana's Revenue and Housing Minister Ponguleti The smuggling case was

Srinivasa Reddy. The summons dated March 28 was sent to the office of a family-owned firm Hyderabad in which Harsha Reddy is a director.

February 5 when two luxury watches-Patek Philipe 5740 and Breguet 2759-were seized from a Hongkong-based Muhammed Indian Faherdeen Mubeen, who came to Chennai from Singapore. The original value of the

booked by Customs on

watches was estimated by Customs to be Rs 1.73 crore; the Patek Philipe has no dealer in India, while the Breguet is out of stock in the Indian market, an official press release by Customs said. According to investigations by Customs, Harsha Reddy has been allegedly identified as the buyer of the watches from Mubeen through an intermediary Alokam Naveen Kumar, who was interrogated by Customs on March 12, sources said. During interrogation, Naveen

Kumar has revealed that he acted as an intermediary between Harsha and Mubeen, a luxury watch dealer, and facilitated payments for the transaction through USDT-a form of cryptocurrency- and cash, using the hawala route, Customs sources claimed, quoting Kumar's statements during questioning.
When contacted by PTI,

Harsha Reddy categorically denied these allegations, terming them "baseless". In his response to the Customs summons, Harsha Reddy said that he was denied

surprised and

sources said. However, he has agreed to appear before the department after April 27, as per medical

knowledge about the case,

advice, official sources said. Dismissing an anticipatory bail petition moved by Naveen Kumar, the Madras High Court in its order on March 18 said that the amount involved in the overall smuggling of luxury watches over a period might be more than Rs 100 crore, based on a perusal of records. During a review of the case by the Alandur court here, the Judicial Magistrate on April 1 directed Customs investigate Harsha Reddy and arrest Alokam Naveen Kumar, Customs sources said.

The Hon'ble High Court of Delhi, in its ecent judgment dated April 1, 2024, has ordered the ADHOC Committee of the Delhi Swimming Association (DSA) appointed by the Swimming Federation of India, to conduct elections for the DSA.In this regard, it is hereby notified hat any District Swimming Association egistered in Delhi contact Chairman ADHOC Committee, Shri Balraj Sharma (Mob. 9873102437), 7th Floor, Antriksh Bhawan, 22 KG Marg, New Delhi within

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

In a quandary

The BJP's rivals hunt in packs but are still unable to throw up a strong challenge in terms of candidates

the political landscape of Uttar Pradesh, which sends the highest number of MPs to the Lok Sabha, is undergoing an intense upheaval in the run-up to the general elections, which has taken the centre stage as usual. What is depressing, though comical at the same time, is the frenetic activity in the Samajwadi Party and the inertia in the Congress regarding the naming of their poll nominees — but both to the same end. While the SP substitutes its candidates by the hour, the Congress is fighting shy of naming its fighters even in traditional strongholds such as Amethi and Rae Bareli. The Akhilesh Yadav-led SP is making headlines with its unconventional strategy of repeatedly changing candidates on the seats allotted to it by the Opposition INDIA bloc, reflecting perhaps a calculated move to optimise electoral prospects. On the one hand, this swift candidate shuffle underscores the party's agility and adaptability in responding to local dynamics; on the other, it is being seen as a sign of indecision. Prime Minister



Modi was quick to take a jibe at the SP over its lastminute distribution of tickets. Akhilesh must be knowing the importance of Uttar Pradesh in deciding the fate of the nation as well as his own party. In 2019, the NDA had emerged as the leading coalition with a notable vote share of 51.19 per cent. The BJP garnered 49.98 per cent of the votes on its own and won 62 seats. With NDA ally Apna Dal (Sonelal)'s two seats, the tally was an impressive 64 seats. Mayawati's BSP won 10 seats and the SP, with 17.96 per cent vote share, won five, with one seat going to the Congress. This time round, the pressure is on the BJP to maintain its last performance. The SP now has a tie-up

with Congress, but the BSP — going it alone — is likely to dent their vote share. The SP's candidate selection process reflects a nuanced understanding of caste equations, regional sentiments and grassroots dynamics, factors that often play a decisive role in UP's electoral outcome. However, amidst the SP's dynamic manoeuvres, the Congress finds itself struggling to even find suitable candidates. Modi's recent remarks on the Congress' electoral predicament highlight the party's organisational deficiencies and its failure to mount a formidable challenge in the key State. The absence of a coherent strategy, coupled with internal dissent and leadership crises, has exacerbated the grand old party's electoral woes. The contrasting trajectories of the SP and the Congress underscore the complexity of Uttar Pradesh's electoral dynamics and the divergent strategies adopted by the Opposition parties to counter the BJP's dominance. While the SP emphasises agility, coalition-building and grassroots mobilisation, the Congress grapples with internal strife, organisational weaknesses and a lack of viable candidates. The battle for UP's 80 seats is not a contest merely between these political groups but a reflection of the larger socio-political fault lines, caste dynamics and economic aspirations that define the State's complex fabric.



Participants during a half marathon themed on 'Run for cleaner tomorrow', in Guwahati

High on rhetoric, low on originality



The Indian National Congress unveils a manifesto that appears grandiose yet lacks innovative solutions, drawing criticism for its reactive stance towards current policies

ndian National Congress has come out with a manifesto that looks pompous and well-intentioned but less original and more reactive to the present policies. The party is cautious even as it says it may replace NEP but is subdued on proposed novel path to deal with the sliding economy, eloquently silent on PSUs and unnecessary 4-year-BA degree modelled on the highly expensive US model.

It notes overall dissatisfaction over NEP but limits it to "will revisit and amend the New Education Policy (NEP) after consulting with the state governments". Does it mean the 4-year degree course to continue? Its scrapping could have highlighted deep concerns to instil confidence in the youth, each of who would spend at least Rs 3 lakh a year extra and be delayed for job market. Overall, from unheard of four-year nursery — to new fouryear-degree — a child loses four years during education. Congress could have highlighted the unnecessary fourth year at the degree level to cost two crore aspirants' additional expenditure of Rs 6 lakh crore a year?

It avoids a word on PSUs. The Nav Sankalp Economic Policy resets the button with "3-W"s – work, wealth and welfare for reviewing GST — hope of most small traders, promote manufacturing and make jobs the cornerstone, rejecting jobless growth. A new welfare orientation since 1991. Its definition of work is the same as in the present — selfemployment and starting busi-

It highlights that RBI finds 60 percent of central projects stalled causing a cost escalation of Rs 5 lakh crore. It could have said these would be scrapped. On labour laws too the party is evasive on undoing the amendments denying them the rights.

On corruption, it says, "will probe demonetisation, Rafale deal, Pegasus spyware, the Electoral Bonds scheme and bring to law those who made illeains through these measures . Rahul Gandhi at launch said electoral bonds showed that political funding to the BJP was through "extortion and putting improvement in employment

Indian National Congress



pressure" on the corporates. Welcome move. It has also promised reversal of Agnipath army recruitment. In most such opposition promises, it was observed that once in government, the issues are shelved and some may even say these were "jumlas" as manifestos have turned out. The 1971 Congress manifesto is remembered to the day for its classic "Garibi Hatao" slogan. The slogan five "Nyaya", may be a good idea but are not inspiring. It calls for five pillars of justice — Justice for Youth, Justice for Women, Justice for Farmers, Justice for Workers, and Justice for Shareholders. What is so great about it, if it has to counter mumkin hai! convenor Chidambaram has been criticising government performances in his newspaper columns and even challenged the new statistics. It does not reflect in his document. It even does not question the figures of 3-trillion economy which has a high repayment of Rs 10 lakh crore and reduces Rs 47 lakh crore 2024-25 bud-

being questioned by World Bank. The communication could have been sharper. It could have highlighted the weaker consumer sentiments than five years back as RBI's Consumer Confidence Survey denotes. In 2024, fewer people report

get to Rs 37 lakh crore. The 7

percent growth figures are

THE 1971

CONGRESS

MANIFESTO IS REMEMBERED TO THE DAY FOR ITS **CLASSIC** 'GARIBI HATAO' SLOGAN. THE SLOGAN 'FIVE NYAYA' MAY BE A GOOD IDEA BUT IS NOT INSPIRING

of income situation. The middle class is promised stable income-tax. It does not promise that it would be at the level of 22 percent corporate

To combat unemployment, Congress has guaranteed a one-year apprenticeship with a private or a public sector company to every diploma holder or college graduate below the age of 25 years. The wages of workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act will also be increased to Rs 400 per day — the minimum national wages it announces. It seems to have forgotten that apprenticeship scheme was introduced by Indira Gandhi in 1970s. It was a cropper as the private sector never liked it and PSUs were lukewarm. All metros in the country except Kolkata are running in losses.

Manifesto could have harped on it and suggested pocket and eco-friendly solutions. Castebased census could help it politically to an extent but that cannot be road map for creating jobs. It has got into the trap of caste politics.

It has spoken of high petrol prices, questioned "cess" raj but is silent on atrociously high petrol road cess toll of Rs 32.9 per litre introduced promising to abolish toll gates. The country needs freedom from extor-tionist toll collections of over Rs 10 lakh crore through cess and toll gates causing high

car/tractor junking and high education fees. These cause enormous wealth loss to farmers and average families. With a bit of empathy it could have touched millions of hearts. It has done well to promise that job applications would not have any fee. The call for opening more Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalayas are reassuring. The move to introduce free education up to class ten is appropri-

inflation. Similarly, it is silent

on scrapping illicit law for

ate. Would it be so also in private public schools? It has a model in UP. In 1960s, the Congress government introduced the system of paying teachers' salaries even for private schools ushering in required changes in the education scenario. That brings the fundamental difference. It has decided to review the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and remove the provisions that restrict freedom of speech and expression that violate the right to privacy. It ignores the more draconian Bharat Samhita or other amendments to the Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code. The powers to misuse ED, CBI and other bodies emanate from it. Still the promise to have a fearless society may raise hopes. The nation aspires

(The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)

that with these new moves the

political discourse would turn

Harnessing the power of IT for nation building



India's journey towards becoming an IT-empowered nation is a testament to the transformative potential of IT in inclusive growth

n the contemporary land-scape of the Indian econ-Lomy, the infusion of disruptive technologies has ignited a digital revolution, propelling the nation into a global IT powerhouse. India is currently witnessing an unprecedented ubiquity of technology, with entrepreneurs leveraging cutting-edge technologies like AI, blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT), machine learning, and data analytics to tackle multifaceted challenges. Today, India possesses all the necessary ingredients to become a modern IT-empowered nation: a wealth of educated workforce, technological expertise, supportive government policies, and a collaborative digital ecosystem are driving the nation forward. The recent G20 Summit showcased India's prowess in emerging technologies and digital transformation. India successfully demonstrated that its IT sector is a force multiplier and a bulwark of innovation, continuing to empower cutting-edge digital solutions. According to the RBI survey, the revenue from

Indian IT service exports

rose to USD 185 billion dur-



ing FY2022-23. This monumental contribution by India's IT industry on the world stage underscores the sector's pivotal role in weaving the

nation's economic fabric. With the proliferation of lowcost data and increased system transparency, India's revolutionary digital initiatives like BHIM-UPI and e-RUPI have gained international recognition as pioneering steps towards digital transformation. The rise of digital payment systems and the push towards a cashless economy have improved accessibility to financial services, enhanced commercial inclusion in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. Together with conducive government initiatives like the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile), India has catalyzed the rise of a dynamic startup ecosystem, propelling the nation to the

forefront of global technolog-

approach aligns with the government's vision of creating a holistic environment conducive to growth, exemplified by initiatives such as Make in Índia, Digital India, and Skill India to support schemes for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

Currently, India boasts the world's third-largest IT startup ecosystem, a testament to the nation's prowess in leveraging technology for innovation and economic advancement. As India looks ahead to 2024 and beyond, several trends and milestones indicate a bright future for the country's digital economy. India's digital economy is set to account for over 20 per cent of its GDP by 2026, showcasing the sector's robust growth. From 4.5 per cent in 2014 to 11% today, the digital economy's contribution is on a

steep upward trajectory. The focus is shifting from established players to opensource systems and disruptive startups, broadening the scope of digitization. Digital public infrastructure, security, and digital skilling are becoming pivotal areas of focus. The demographic divical innovation. This strategic idend of a young, educated

workforce, combined with a deep pool of tech-savvy talent, has created a fertile ground for innovation and collabora-

The ecosystem's vibrancy is further accentuated by the government's supportive policies, encouraging indigenous entrepreneurship and estab-lishing a level playing field for startups. Today, India's tech startups are not merely addressing age-old systemic challenges; they are also sowing the seeds for a brighter and more sustainable India. With the world looking to leverage the power of AI, India has emerged as a trailblazer in harnessing the latent potential of AI.

With a robust foundation laid by government initiatives, a dynamic private sector, and an adaptive population, India is poised to emerge as a global digital powerhouse. The year 2024 promises to be a turning point, with a focus on inclusivity and innovation reaffirming India's status as a leader in the global digital

(The writer is Director General, Software Technology Parks of India; views are personal)

CORRUPTION IN HIGH PLACES

Madam — Apropos the news article "Modi knocks hard on Mamata's door in Bengal" published on April 5, this is my response. If India has indeed seen the horror of Sandeshkhali revolving around atrocities upon women folk; surely it must be asked whether the country had acted "blind" revolving around spine-chilling gangrapes/murder/naked parade of women folks in Uttar Pradesh Gujarat Kathua or Manipur to cite a few! Persons pointing accusing fingers towards one and only TMC dispensation of West Bengal must also deliver their verdict upon "exemplary" pro-women environment in saffron states around the country also! After all among the 25 Opposition leaders, who have chosen to cross over to the BJP at various points in time, as many as 23 have managed to earn a reprieve with cases against them either closed or put in the "cold storage"! It proves that BJP is nothing but a "saffron-coloured washing machine" which can turn even the "blackest" leader to absolutely "pristine white"! So naturally, the BJP acts as the "social detergent" helping public life get rid of all stains of corruption! So let the sleeping dogs lie as far as the Vyapam scam (Madhya Pradesh), Ventilator scam (Gujarat), Electoral bond or public Fund opened during the onset of the pandem-

ic are concerned! Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

CONGRESS PRESENTS ITS MANIFESTO Madam — Apropos the editorial "At Crossroads" published on April 6, this is my response. Switching sides during elections is a common feature in Indian politics and it is not surprising to see so many deserting Congress ships in the last few days. But what is worrying is when one of vour former CM, sitting MP leaves you, then it sends a signal that Congress leadership and Gandhis are not able to manage and hold their leaders into their fold. We have seen how tall leaders like Himanta Biswa Sarma, and Jyotiraditya Scindia left

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cinema rediscovers Savarkar

propos the news article "Cinema Rediscovers Savarkar" published on April 5, this is my response. Veer Savarkar, a revered figure in India's struggle for independence, epitomised unwavering dedication and commitment to the nation's cause. His visionary leadership and courageous activism were instrumental in shaping the course of India's fight for freedom. A prolific writer, poet, and revolutionary thinker, Savarkar's literary works, notably "The First War of Indian Independence,"

Gandhis are unable to digest the fact that they are no longer the glue around which party revolved once upon a time, they have lost that Midas touch.

As far as the election manifesto is concerned, leaders and grassroots workers need to be there to share the promise with voters right at the booth level, but with a flurry of desertions in the grand old party, it will not be a surprise if most of the voters would not even have a clue of what Congress has promised in its manifesto. With these desertions, the gulf between the grassroots level and the top leadership of Gandhis has further increased.

Bal Govind | Noida

REALITIES IN NCERT TEXTBOOKS

Madam — The recent update exercise undertaken by the NCERT to revise references in textbooks has sparked discussions about the portrayal of historical events and political narratives in educational materials. NCERT clarified that these Congress and are now well-settled in BJP. updates are not a syllabus revision but

stirred a sense of nationalism among countless Indians. Despite enduring years of incarceration and facing formidable challenges, Savarkar remained resolute in his quest for liberty for his beloved motherland. Savarkar's contributions to the freedom movement were profound and far-reaching.

for the better.

Randeep Hooda's recent directorial debut, Swatantra Veer Savarkar, delves into the life of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a pivotal figure in India's fight for independence. Hooda's portrayal of Savarkar is lauded for its historical accuracy and his remarkable physical transformation. The film sheds light on Savarkar's ideology and incarceration in the Kaala Paani jail, sparking meaningful discussions about his legacy — a must-watch for those intrigued by this significant period in Indian history.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

rather an effort to reflect contemporary realities and correct factual errors in textbooks. One notable change involves the references to the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya. NCERT adjusted the language to align with the latest developments in politics, highlighting the importance of presenting accurate and updated information to students.

NCERT emphasized the need to acknowledge the complexity of such events, ensuring that all communities affected are represented accurately. Overall, efforts to update educational textbooks reflect a commitment to providing students with accurate, relevant, and inclusive learning materials. As education continues to evolve, it is essential to adapt educational materials to reflect the changing socio-political landscape and promote a deeper understanding of history, politics, and society. Shruti Saggar | Ludhiana

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FIRST COLUMN

UNDERSTANDING THE STRESS BUCKET MODEL

It offers valuable insights into how stress accumulates and impacts wellbeing



re you one of them who promised to be less stressed in 2024 A stress has become an unavoidable consequence of the but is already finding the stress level building? Well today. lifestyle. Everyone's bucket is a different size depending on genes, personality traits, history of trauma and lack of social support. According to research, the level of vulnerability a person carries is represented by a bucket into which every day stresses flow. People with higher level of vulnerability are more likely to develop mental health issues when stress levels rise. Conversely, those with lower vulnerability levels can withstand a higher level of stress.

It's important to know that the size of stress varies from individual to individual. The stress bucket model is a metaphorical representation often used in psychology and mental health to explain how stress accumulates and affects an individual's well-being. It shows how an individual's everyday stresses be it work, money, relationships, body image, etc fill up the bucket whilst doing the things one enjoys, taking time for self-care, time management and sharing worries let some of the water out.

It's a simple yet effective way to visualize the relationship between stressors and coping mechanisms. If an individual doesn't maintain that balance between water in and water out, the buckets can overflow and can become harmful to the physical as well as mental wellbeing of the individual. It can be used in educational settings, workplaces, therapy sessions and self-help resources to facilitate discussions about stress management and mental health. Chronic stress does not make an individual feel anxious or fatigued. It suppresses immune and digestive function, hinders detoxification pathways and even causes hormonal imbalance.



There is no denying the fact that the Stress Bucket Model is a valuable tool for raising awareness, promoting self-reflection and guiding individuals toward effective stress management strategies. It helps people take control of their stress levels and prioritise their well-being in today's fast-paced and demanding world. By visualizing stress as a "bucket" that fills up with various stressors, one can better comprehend the cumulative nature of stress and its effects on mental and physical health.

By understanding the stress bucket model, individuals can become more aware of their stressors, recognize the importance of coping mechanisms and take proactive steps to prevent overwhelm and promote resilience. It's a useful tool for both self-care and therapeutic interventions in addressing stress-related concerns. Knowing the threshold for stress, as well as the signs that the bucket is about to overflow can help the individual manage their stress levels before they turn into overwhelm.

Individuals can gain insight into their own stressors and coping mechanisms, take proactive steps to manage stress more effectively and build resilience to navigate life's challenges more successfully. It provides a simple yet powerful framework for promoting mental and emotional well-being.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Address the root cause to stabilise food prices



The Bharat brand scheme aims to stabilise prices for consumers and ensure fair compensation to farmers. However, its impact will be limited due to State laws



ast year in July, the Union Government launched a Scheme of selling chana dal at a subsidised rate under the Bharat brand call it Bharat Chana. This was followed by launch of Bharat Atta in November 2023 and Bharat Rice in

Under the Scheme, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) - a central agency whose prime responsibility is to procure, store and distribute food grains to meet the needs of beneficiaries covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) - buys the cereals from the farmers and sells to the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed), National Co-operative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF). The Nafed/NCCF make these available to the consumers at a price that is lower than the

The agencies sell Bharat brand products directly to the general public through 24,000 retail stores and mobile vans owned by them. In addition, they use ecommerce platforms such as Amazon, BigBasket, okart, Blinkit, ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce) - and modern retail stores viz. Reliance Fresh, More etc Recently, Nafed and NCCF have been asked to procure wheat 'directly' from the farmers albeit at MSP sans any cap on the quantity of purchase mainly from poorer states such as Bihar, Rajasthan and eastern Uttar Pradesh to complement supplies from

What was the need for Bharat brand? Even as the Union Government is taking care of a vast section of the poor and vulnerable population by giving free foodgrain under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), others not so poor particularly those in the middle income class are bearing the brunt of inflation in food prices. Indeed, they are the ones who buy their requirement from the market place where the prices are high. The current price of rice ranges from Rs 40 per kg to Rs 110 per kg. For wheat flour and chana dal, the prices are Rs 40 per kg and Rs 100 per kg respectively.

The Centre wants to provide relief to this

THE CONSUMERS **PAYING MORE**

AND FARMERS

RECEIVING plus handling cost etc? LESS HAS TO DO WITH STRUCTURAL FLAWS IN THE MARKETING OF AGRI-PRODUCE

class by making Bharat brand products available at cheaper rate Bharat Rice: Rs 29 per kg; Bharat Atta: Rs 27.5 per kg and Bharat Chana Dal: Rs 60 per kg. This is fine. But, moot question is: why should the market price be high in the very first place? The question is all the more relevant when we consider that the price received by the farmer is substantially lower than the price paid by the consumers. For instance, MSP of wheat notified by the Centre is Rs 22.7 per kg (the price received by farmers in many places especially where the agencies don't undertake purchase operations is much less) against Rs 40 per kg for wheat flour paid by consumers; in some markets it is even higher at Rs 50 per kg. The mark up can't be justified by cost of processing wheat

The consumers paying more and farmers receiving less has to do with structural flaws in the marketing of agri-produce. Agriculture marketng is carried out under the respec tive state laws viz. APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) Act which have varying provisions. This hampers free movement of products across states. Within a state also, there are several market areas called APMC Mandis, each having its own market regulations. Farmers in a given area can sell their crop only at the designated mandi. This leads to fragmented markets thus hindering free flow of goods even within the

At the mandi, a cartel of licensed traders and commission agents (known as artiyas in local parlance, their job is to facilitate transactions between farmer and the buyer) rules the roost. The duo ensures that the farmer gets a low price besides facing other adversities viz. rejections, weighing less, delayed payment, etc. Levies such as market fees, artiyas commission, rural development cess (RDC) etc further add to their woes. The capacity of APMC mandis is extremely limited. Barely 6 percent of farmers mostly rich with larger land holdings — are able to sell their crop at the mandis which is picked up mostly by the FCI and other State agencies apart from a few licenced traders. These mandis have literally noth-

ing to offer to the majority of small and marginal farmers (they constitute nearly 86 percent of all farmers) who are forced to come to private local markets, where sales are legally barred. At these local (albeit unauthorised) markets, they end up selling their produce to the very traders who dominate the APMĆ mandis, at throwaway prices. The latter has the blessings of corrupt bureaucrats and politicians (in many cases, they or their kin also masquerade as traders) and hence, won't face any action for violating the law. It is this institutionalised strangulation of the napless farmers — by mandating sales only at designated mandis, denying them entry at those mandis and giving them no other option to sell — that lies at the root of their not getting a fair price. By cornering an overwhelming share of the total supplies, a few traders form a cartel and charge exorbitant prices from the consumers; these prices bear no relation whatsoever to what they pay to the farmers, nor these can be justified by the cost incurred on handling, storing and transporta-

What has been done to address this flaw?

In April 2016, the government launched e-NAM (electronic National Agriculture Market). e-NAM seeks to create a unified market via online trading platform both at the state and at the national level. However, to enable a farmer sell her crop on the platform, the approval

of designated APMC mandi to which she is tied as — per the extant State regulations — is necessary. At the other end, a trader intending to make purchase on the e-NAM platform needs to have a single trading licence that is valid for the entire state/pan-India license. The states also need to amend their laws to provide for e-trading in agri produce.

Thus, e-NAM will work if only the States want it. The results say it all. Since launch, less than one-fifth of 6,946 regulated wholesale APMC mandis are integrated to the e-NAM platform. Only 12.5 percent of the total 140 million farmers are registered on e-NAM portal. Moreover, just 12.3 percent of the total value of annual trade in agri - commodities (excluding dairy and meat products) of Rs 600,000 crore is transacted on the portal.

In 2017, Modi-government passed a Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitation) Law. Besides g ing more options to farmers for selling, it provided for giving traders a 'single pan-State licence' for buying from anywhere in the State. But, the majority of the states showed no interest. In September 2020, the Centre enacted three central farm laws which allowed it to regulate inter-State trade and intra-State trade and enable purchase of specified farm commodities directly from farmers anywhere in the country. The laws legitimised sales to private traders, processors, aggregators, exporters and so on. But, these had to be withdrawn following farmers' protests. Now, it has come up with Bharat brand scheme to help rein price to consumers and ensure fair price to farmers. This too can only make a marginal impact as long as agri-trade remains shackled by the State laws.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Global health: Embracing 'My Health, My Right'

Over half of the world's population lacks access to essential health services despite health being recognised as a human right

he theme for World Health Day 2024, "My L health, my right, underscores a fundamental human entitlement: access to quality healthcare. This year, the focus lies on ensuring that everyone, regardless of location, has the opportuni ty to lead a healthy life.

It's staggering to acknowledge that despite health being recognised as a human right in the constitution of at least 140 countries, more than 4.5 billion people—more than half of the world's population—were not fully covered by essential health services in 2021 (WHO). This sobering reality, alongside the images we consume through televisions and social media,

demands reflection. "My health, My right" encap-



sulates hope for millions around the world whose health is increasingly at risk. These words also spur stakeholders responsible for health to intensify their efforts and investments in safeguarding these rights. In addition to the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter, "Good Health" must also be recog-

Indeed, health is a corner-

remain incomplete. But what does 'health' truly entail? Is it merely the absence of disease, or is it a holistic state of physical, mental, and social well-being conducive to a fulfilling life? If the latter holds true, it beckons us to pursue transformative changes in our

quest for health.

What threatens our health? Is it the specter of both old and emerging diseases, the horrors of natural and manmade disasters, or the environmental degradation wrought by our dependence on fossil fuels? These perils inflict not only physical suffering and mortality but also take a toll on mental wellbeing and financial stability. stone without which all aspi- Whose responsibility is

rations and successes in life health? While it's commonly assumed that governments are responsible for providing treatment to those affected by diseases, achieving Health for All requires more than just reactive measures. It necessitates proactive efforts and individual responsibility. Each of us holds a stake in safeguarding our health, a duty as significant as asserting our rights.

Diseases can be broadly classified into infectious diseases, lifestyle diseases, nutritional diseases, maternal and child health-related diseases, and others. Today, we spotlight non-communicable diseases, which account for approximately 63% of mortality in our country, where prevention holds the most

As individuals, how can we ies and minds. Five golden tackle this daunting challenge? Diseases like hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and cancers pervade our conversations, infiltrating households worldwide. However, these diseases share common risk factors: unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, and tobacco and alcohol consumption. Addressing these modifiable risk factors offers health promotion and disease prevention for both the nondiseased and those already afflicted. As a doctor who has dedicat-

ed a significant portion of my life to training and caring for patients, I emphasise that embracing a healthy lifestyle isn't merely about taking medication — it's a commitment to nurturing our bod-

rules underscore this jour-

Eat wisely: Opt for whole, unprocessed foods, limit sugar, salt, and fats, and prioritise fresh fruits and vegetables. Limit snacking between meals and reduce consumption of tea, coffee, and packaged foods. Two meals a day and an early dinner can be invaluable for

Exercise: Incorporate regular physical activity into your routine, benefiting both body and mind. Aim for 30-

60 minutes of exercise or yoga daily. Say NO to tobacco and **alcohol**: Reject these harmful habits that take a heavy

toll on health and well-being.

4. Reduce stress: Embrace

stress-relief strategies like yoga, and meditation, or seek professional help to foster

mental resilience. **5. Prioritise sleep:** Cultivate healthy sleep habits for restful nights and energised days. The biggest impediment to adopting these habits often lies in our smartphones, perpetuating sedentary lifestyles. It's time to prioritise our health over screen time and reclaim control over our well-

Understanding the impact of these interventions is crucial. For instance, the DASH diet can significantly reduce blood pressure, while weight loss can substantially lower the risk of developing dia-betes. Excuses like 'we knew this already' or 'they're too difficult to follow' are insufrequires commitment, not convenience.

'My health, My Right" was chosen to champion the right of everyone, everywhere to access quality health services, education, and information, alongside safe drinking water, clean air, good nutrition, quality housing, decent working conditions, and freedom from discrimination. Let us pledge that governments and communities will collaborate to make a difference, ensuring wellness is as vital an agenda as illness, because 'My Health is also My Responsibility'. (The writer is Assistant

Professor, Department of Community Medicine, MLB Medical College Jhansi UP, views are personal)

UK PM Sunak reiterates call for 'humanitarian pause'

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK on Sunday marked six months since the Israel-Hamas conflict with a new package of military and civilian support to set up a maritime aid corridor to Gaza, as Prime Minister Rishi Sunak reiterated his call for a "humanitarian pause" for the sake of the innocent children of the region.

Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) announced the deployment of a Royal Navy ship to the Eastern Mediterranean and committed up to 9.7 million pounds for aid deliveries; logistical expertise and equipment support to the corridor, such as forklift trucks and storage units; and expertise, to maximise the levels of aid reaching those people who desperately need it. "Today marks six months

since the terrorist outrage of 7th October – the most appalling attack in Israel's history, the worst loss of Jewish life since the Second World War. Six months later, Israeli wounds are still unhealed. Families still mourn and hostages are still held by Hamas," said Sunak in a statement from Downing Street.

"And after six months of war in Gaza, the toll on civilians continues to grow - hunger, desperation, loss of life on an awful scale...The children of Gaza need a humanitarian pause immediately, leading to a long-term sustainable ceasefire. That is the fastest way to get hostages out and aid in, and to stop the fighting and loss of life,"

The FCDO said the establishment of an international humanitarian maritime corridor from Cyprus to Gaza, sup ported by partner governments and the United Nations, is expected to be operational in early May. Writing in 'The Sunday Times', Foreign Secretary David Cameron said Britain's support for Israel is "not unconditional'

It follows three British aid workers among seven killed while delivering crucial supplies on behalf of the World Central Kitchen organisation, described by Israel as a "grave accident' before it sacked two senior military officials.



People take part in a protest against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government and call for the release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas militant

Iranian official warns Israel

A top Iranian military adviser on Sunday warned Israel that none of its embassies were safe following last week's strike in Damascus blamed on Israel that killed two elite Iranian generals. Regional tensions threaten to draw the Middle East into a wider conflict as Israel's war against Hamas marks six months. The remarks by Gen. Rahim

Safavi, a military adviser to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, signalled that the attack on a diplomatic mission could be met with a similar response. Israel has not directly acknowledged its involvement. None of the embassies of the

(Israeli) regime are safe anymore," Safavi was quoted as saying by the semi-official Tasnim agency. He spoke at a ceremony in Tehran for the generals killed in the strike that flattened an Iranian consular building. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel was prepared for any response. "Whoever harms us or plans to harm us, we will harm them," he told a Cabinet meeting. The regional tensions came at

the six-month mark of the

war, which was sparked when Hamas-led militants crossed from Gaza into Israel, killing 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking about 250 captive. Israel retaliated with a fierce bombardment and ground offensive that has killed more than 33,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to local health authorities. Also Sunday, Israel's military announced it was drawing back forces from the 98th paratroopers division who had been operating in the area of Khan Younis in southern Gaza bringing Israeli troop levels in Gaza to some of the lowest levels since the war began. The Hamas stronghold has been the main focus of Israel's offensive in recent months.

The forces withdrew to recuperate and prepare for future operations, while a significant number remain elsewhere in Gaza, said Israeli military officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorised to speak to the

Israel maintains troops in devastated northern Gaza and can send them south when needed Israel has vowed a ground offensive on the southernmost Gaza city of Rafah, considered Hamas' last stronghold. But the area shelters some 1.4 million people — more than half of Gaza's population.

Top UN court to hear case accusing Germany of facilitating Gaza conflict

The Hague: Preliminary hearings open on Monday at the United Nations' top court in a case that seeks an end of German military and other aid to Israel, based on claims that Berlin is "facilitating" acts of genocide and breaches of international law in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

Israel strongly denies its military campaign amounts to breaches of the Genocide Convention.

While the case brought by Nicaragua centers on Germany, it indirectly takes aim at Israel's military campaign in Gaza following the deadly October 7 attacks when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people. More than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry. Its toll doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants, but it has said women and children make up the majority of the

dead. "We are calm and we will set out our legal position in court," German Foreign Ministry spokesperson Sebastian Fischer said ahead of

the hearings.

"We reject Nicaragua's accusations," Fischer told reporters in Berlin on Friday. "Germany has breached neither the genocide convention nor international humanitarian law, and we will set this out in detail before the International Court of Justice. Nicaragua has asked the court to hand down preliminary orders known as provisional measures, including that Germany "immediately suspend its aid to Israel, in particular its military assistance including military equipment in so far as this aid may be used in the violation of the Genocide Convention" and internation-

The court will likely take weeks to deliver its preliminary decision and Nicaragua's case will likely drag on for years. AP

World leaders condemn Ecuador after police break into Mexican Embassy

International leaders have condemned Ecuador after police in the country's capital broke into the Mexican Embassy to arrest a former vice president who had been granted political asylum.

The raid late Friday prompted Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to break off diplomatic relations with Ecuador, while his government's foreign relations secre-tary said the move will be challenged at the World Court in The Hague.

Police broke through the external doors of the embassy in Quito to arrest Jorge Glas, who had been residing there since December. He had sought asylum after being indicted on corruption charges and it had been granted hours earlier. The break-in was widely condemned.

The Organisation of American States in a statement reminded its members, which include

obligation not to "invoke norms of domestic law to justify non-compliance with their international obligations".

The Spanish foreign ministry, in a statement on Sunday, said that "The entry by force into the Embassy of Mexico in Quito constitutes a violation of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. We call for respect for international law and harmony between Mexico and Ecuador, brotherly countries to Spain and members of the Ibero-American community."

US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that "the United States condemns any violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and takes very seriously the obligation of host countries under international law to respect the invi-olability of diplomatic mis-

He called on both countries to resolve their difference.

Ecuador and Mexico, of their Honduran President Xiomara Castro, writing on X, characterised the raid as "an intolerable act for the international community" and a "violation of the sovereignty of the Mexican State and international law because "it ignores the historical and fundamental right to asylum".

Diplomatic premises are considered foreign soil and "inviolable" under the Vienna treaties and host country law enforcement agencies are not allowed to enter without the permission of the ambassador. People seeking asylum have lived anywhere from days to years at embassies around the world, including at Ecuador's in London, which housed WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange for seven years as British police could not enter to arrest him.

Alicia Barcena, Mexico's secretary of foreign relations, on Friday posted on the social media platform X that a number of diplomats suffered injuries during the break-in. Barcena said Mexico would take the case to the International Court of Justice "to denounce Ecuador's responsibility for violations of international law". She also recalled Mexican diplomats. GLAS IS TAKEN TO PRISON

On Saturday, Glas was taken from the attorney general's office in Quito to the port city of Guayaquil, where he will remain in custody at a maximum-security prison. People who had gathered out-

side the prosecutor's office yelled "strength" as he left with a convoy of police and military vehicles. Glas' attorney, Sonia Vera, told

The Associated Press that offimore stable footing." cers broke into his room and he resisted when they attempted to put his hands behind his back. She said the officers then "knocked him to the floor, kicked him in the head, in the spine, in the legs, the hands," and when he "couldn't walk, they dragged him out". municate with one another."

'US-China ties stable but more can be done to improve ties'

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen met Sunday with Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Beijing and sent a message of mutual cooperation despite the nations' differences. Yellen came to China top of mind with trade practices that put American companies and workers at an unfair competitive disadvantage

In the ornate Fujian room of Great Hall of People building just west of Tiananmen Square, she told Li: "While we have more to do, I believe that, over the past year, we have put our bilateral relationship on

This has not meant ignorng our differences or avoiding tough conversations," she said. 'It has meant understanding that we can only make progress if we directly and openly com-

Li said media interest in Yellen's visit "shows the high expectation they have ... and also the expectation and hope to grow" the US-China relation-

ship.

The meeting comes after the US and China on Saturday agreed to hold "intensive exchanges" on more balanced economic growth, according to a US statement issued after Yellen and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng held extendsouthern

immediately clear when and where the talks would take place. "As the world's two largest economies, we have a duty to our own countries and to the cooperate and show leadership on addressing pressing global challenges," Yellen said. Yellen also met Sunday with Beijing Mayor Yin Yong and told him that "local governments play a critical (economic) role, from boosting consumption to addressing overinvestment," adding that Beijing is particularly important in China."I believe that to understand China's economy and its economic future, engagement with local government is essential," Yellen said.

Donald Trump's campaign raises \$50.5 million at Florida fundraiser

Donald Trump's campaign on Saturday, a staggering reported haul as his campaign works to catch up to the fundraising juggernaut of President Joe Biden and the Democratic Party. The reported haul from the event with major donors at the Palm Beach, Florida, home of billionaire investor John Paulson sets a new single-event fundraising record and is almost double the \$26 million that Biden's campaign said it raised recently at a gathering with former Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama at Radio City Music Hall in New York. "It's clearer than ever that we have the message, the operation, and the money to propel President Trump to victory on November 5," his campaign senior advisers Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles said in a statement.

The event, billed as the "Inaugural Leadership Dinner," sends a signal of a resurgence of



Party's fundraising, which has lagged behind Biden and the Democrats

Trump boasted about his evening with wealthy donors in a post on his social media net-

arrived at the event with his wife Melania Trump: "Biggest night in Fund Raising of ALL TIME!!!Will double up the Biden number of last week at Radio City. People are desperate for change. They want to MAKE AMERICA GREAT announced earlier in the week

that they raised more than \$65.6 million in March and closed out the month with \$93.1 million. Biden and the Democrats announced Saturday that they took in more than \$90 million last month and had \$192 million-plus on hand. "While Donald Trump has been busy awarding himself golf trophies at Mar-a-Lago and palling around with billionaires, Joe Biden has been crisscrossing the nation connecting with voters and outlining his vision to grow our economy from the bottom National

up and the middle out," Democratic Committee Chair Jaime Harrison said in a statement, referring to Trump's Florida residence. Campaign fundraising reports filed with the Federal Election Commission detailing donations from Saturday's event are not expected until a mid-July filing date.

Biden, Democrats report raising USD 90 million-plus in March

AP WILMINGTON

President Joe Biden's reelection campaign and the Committee said Saturday that they raised more than \$90 million in March and ended the year's first quarter with \$192 million-plus in cash on hand, further stretching their money advantage over Donald Trump and the Republicans.

The Biden campaign and its affiliated entities reported collecting \$187 million from January through March and said that 96% per cent of all donations were less than \$200. That total was bolstered by the \$26 million-plus that Biden reported raising from a March 28 event at Radio City Music Hall in Manhattan that featured former Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton. Trump's campaign, meanwhile, said it raised \$50.5 million from an event Saturday with major donors at the Florida home of billionaire investor John Paulson, setting a singleevent fundraising record.



Biden's campaign says the pace of donations has allowed it to undertake major digital and television advertising campaigns in key states and to work with the DNC and state parties to better mobilise would-be supporters before the November election.

The campaign said the \$192 million-plus as of March 31 was

Close ally of populist PM to become Slovakia's president

the highest total ever by any Democratic candidate. Ábout 1.6 million people have donated to the campaign since Biden announced in April 2023 that he was seeking a second term. The campaign raised more than \$10 million in the 24 hours after the president's State of the Union speech in early

Guangzhou. They also agreed to start exchanges on combating money laundering. It was not world to responsibly manage our complex relationship and to

We patrolled SCS in an apparent response to US naval drills, says China

Beijing (AP): China's military said Sunday that it had conducted air and sea patrols and that all activities that "disrupt the South China Sea" are under control, an apparent response to naval exercises by the US and its allies. The defence chiefs of the United States, Japan, Australia and the Philippines announced Saturday that they would hold joint exercises in the sea to safeguard the rule of law and uphold the right to sail through and fly over the

China has long-simmering territorial disputes with a number of Southeast Asian nations in the South China Sea, a major shipping route. Skirmishes with the Philippines in particular have flared up since last year. The US has conducted joint patrols with the Philippines in a show of support. China says the US is inflaming tensions by meddling in the

A brief statement non-Chinese military's Southern Theatre Command said it had organised patrols and that "all military activities that disrupt the South China Sea and create hotspots are under control." The statement did not mention

the United States or the joint exercises. Likewise, the US and its allies did not mention China in their statement, but the four countries reaffirmed their stance that a 2016 international arbitration ruling — which invalidated China's expansive claims in the South China Sea — was final and legally binding. The growing tensions in the disputed waters are expected to be high on the agenda when US President Joe Biden

hosts his Japanese and Philippine

counterparts in a summit.

close ally of populist Prime Aclose ally of populist Finne Minister Robert Fico beat a pro-Western career diplomat to become Slovakia's new president, and succeed Zuzana Caputová, the country's first female head of state.

AP ■ BARTISLAVA

Parliamentary speaker Peter Pellegrini received 53.85 per cent of the vote with the ballots from over 98 per cent polling stations counted by the Statistics Office in Saturday's runoff election, topping former Foreign Minister Ivan Korcok who had 46.14 per

Korcok conceded the defeat and congratulated the winner. "I'm disappointed," he

Pellegrini becomes Slovakia's sixth president since the country gained independence after the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993. Caputová, a staunch backer of neighboring Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion, didn't seek a second term in the largely ceremoni-

Pellegrini's victory cemented Fico's grip on power by giving him and his allies control of major strategic posts.
The president of the nation of

5.4 million people picks the prime minister after parliamentary elections, swears in the new government and appoints Constitutional Court judges. The president can also veto laws, though Parliament can override the veto with a simple majority, and challenge them at the Constitutional Court. The head of state also has the right to pardon convicts. The government, led by the prime minister, possesses most executive powers.

Fico's leftist Smer (Direction) party won Sept. 30 parliamentary elections on a pro-Russian and anti-American platform. Pellegrini, 48, who favours a



Slovakia, on April 7.

strong role for the state, heads Western course and follow the the left-wing Hlas (Voice) party that finished third in the direction of Hungary under opulist Prime Minister Viktor vote and joined a governing coalition with Fico and the ultranationalist Slovak National Party.

Fico will abandon its pro-

The new government immediately halted any arms deliveries to Ukraine. Thousands Critics worry Slovakia under have repeatedly taken to the

ly to rally against Fico's pro-Russian and other policies, including plans to amend the penal code and take control of the public media. Korcok was critical of the government's moves that the protesters fear could undermine the rule of streets across Slovakia recentlaw while Pellegrini backed the

straight presidential election losses. Fico was defeated at the presidential vote by Andrej Kiska 10 years ago while Caputová claimed victory over a candidate he supported in the 2019 ballot.

the country's envoy to NATO and the European Union. He firmly supports Slovakia's EU and NATO memberships. Pellegrini, who was Fico's former deputy in Smer, became prime minister in 2018, after Fico was forced to resign following major anti-government street protests over the killing of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancee. Pellegrini had temporarily parted ways with Fico after the scandal-tainted Smer lost the previous election in 2020. With Pellegrini's win, Fico rebounded from two

new government and didn't

Korcok is the former ambas-

sador to the United States and

Germany, who also served as

question its policies.

Imran says some of PTI leaders in touch with establishment

Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has said that some of his party leaders are in contact with the powerful establishment, as he expressed willingness to hold a dialogue with anyone amidst the crackdown on his party.

Khan's remarks came as he spoke to reporters after the hearing of the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case on Saturday, the Dawn newspaper said. Khan, 71, said that he was ready to hold a dialogue with anyone for the sake of the

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder said if he could hold talks with former army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa, who he later accused of being instrumental in the fall of his government in April 2022, then he could meet anyone since the country was passing through a difficult phase. Khan said that a few leaders in

the PTI "are still in contact

with the establishment", appar-

elaborate. He also claimed that the mandate of the PTI had been stolen and "efforts were being made to take over the

Since falling out with the powerful military, Khan's party has been facing a crackdown. The party faced pressure in the form of arrests and dese-rtions in the wake of the May 9 viol-ence that broke out after Khan's arrest last year.

Since his removal from power in a no-confidence motion in April 2022, the cricketerturned-politician has been convicted in at least four cases. Khan said his spouse Bushra Bibi was being allegedly targeted to exert pre-ssure on him and added that those pointing fingers at her were doing so in a bid to 'dismantle' the party. Khan said he had never entered into a confrontation with the military. He claimed that the ex-army chief 'backstabbed' him, adding he could have de-notified him but he exercised restraint.

Khan had turned on former Gen Bajwa around the time of his ouster and claimed that the latter was involved in a USbacked conspiracy to remove him from office. Khan during the media talk on Saturday claimed that he had also conveyed a message to Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir through former president Arif Alvi that he knew about the so-

called 'London Plan' to keep

him behind bars.

Khan alleged that police entered his bedroom on Aug 5 last year to detain him, and confiscated his passport and the chequebook, adding that Bushra Bibi had moved her valuables to a secure location. The ex-premier alleged that intelligence agencies had asked his staffers to turn 'approver' against him.

According to Khan, the country was facing a 1970s-like situation. About the incumbent government, Khan claimed that the "king is sitting behind and [interior minister] Mohsin Naqvi is at the forefront as his viceroy". Khan claimed that

Meanwhile, the accountability court continued recording of testimony of the witnesses, as five prosecution witnesses had been cross-examined by the defence counsel on Saturday The case will resume after the Eid holidavs

The Ali-Qadir Trust case is about the settlement of 190 million pounds, about Rs 50 billion, which the UK's National Crime Agency sent to Pakistan after recovering the amount from a Pakistani property tycoon.

Khan, being the prime minister then, instead of depositing in the national treasury allowed the businessman to use the amount to partly settle a fine of about Rs 450 billion imposed by the Supreme Court some years ago.

Reportedly, the tycoon, in return, gifted about 57 acres of land to a trust set up by Khan and his wife to establish the Al-Qadir University in the Sohawa area of the Jhelum district of

'Vehicle carrying Chinese nationals in NW Pak was not bullet, bomb-proof'

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

The vehicle carrying Chinese l engineers, who were killed in a suicide attack last month in northwest Pakistan, was neither bullet nor bomb-proof, according to a police report. A vehicle-borne suicide bomber targeted the convoy of Chinese engineers in the remote Besham area of the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province when they were being driven to a construction site of the Dasu Hydroelectric power station in Kohistan district of the same province on March 26. Five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver were killed in the attack.

The police report, which has been sent to the federal government, said that the bus target ed in the attack was travelling at a distance of 15 feet from the other bus and fell into a 300feet-deep ditch after the suicide bomber crashed his explosives-laden vehicle into the vehicle carrying the victims on the Karakoram Highway, Geo News reported on Sunday. The

Pak set to repay \$1 bn against Eurobond

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan is and Sukuks (bond-like instruset to repay a foreign debt ments used in Islamic finance) worth USD 1 billion against a 10-year Eurobond maturing in the middle of this month which will reduce the stock of the debt acquired through the selling of bonds in international markets to below USD billion. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) told The Express Tribune that it was ready to repay the bond anytime and was waiting to receive instructions to do so from the finance ministry. The move will reduce the stock of the debt acquired to over the USD 8 billion through selling Eurobonds mark.

report said that the vehicle carrying Chinese nationals was neither bullet nor bomb-proof. The report, the second of its kind, added that the buses part of the convoy carrying

in international markets to below USD 7 billion. This has enhanced the country's capacity to repay all the upcoming maturing foreign debt on time Following the repayment of USD 1 billion in April, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves will experience a decline. However, the anticipated International Monetary Fund (IMF) tranche of USD 1.1 billion, likely to be received by the end of April, is expected to restore the reserves back

Chinese nationals was equipped with close circuit television cameras (CCTV). The development comes a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ordered disciplinary action against senior police officers for "negligence" in light of an inquiry report over the incident.

"The prime minister has directed to take action against the regional police officer (RPO) Hazara Division; district police officer of Upper Kohistan and Lower Kohistan; director security, Dasu Hydropower Project and commandant special security unit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 15 days," Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said. On Friday, Sharif directed all Pakistani security agencies to ensure foolproof security arrangements for the Chinese nationals working on various projects in the country. Meanwhile, China has also

expressed concern about last Tuesday's attack and demand ed the safety of their nationals working on various projects in Pakistan.

Thousands of Chinese personnel are working in Pakistan on several projects under the aegis of the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic

6 security personnel, 12 militants killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan

Quetta (PTI): Six security personnel, including a senior police officer, died while 12 militants were killed in separate terror incidents and security operations in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces in the past two days, officials said on Sunday. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistan armed forces, said in the Balochistan province, four militants were killed in two separate incidents.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) eight militants were killed in the Kot Sultan area of Kulachi tehsil in Dera Ismail Khan district when security forces carried out an operation against them, the ISPR said. The security forces recovered weapons ammunition and explosives from the slain militants, it Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Lakki Marwat, a DSP and two cops were killed and a constable was

injured by armed miscreants in two separate incidents on Friday night, officials said.
The officials said DSP Gul
Muhammad, along with other policemen, had set up a temporary checkpoint on the busy Peshawar-Karachi highway as part of police's security preparations before the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr. As they were returning from the checkpoint, armed men opened fire on the police van near Manjiwala

Chowk, leaving the DSP and

Constable Naseem Gul dead,

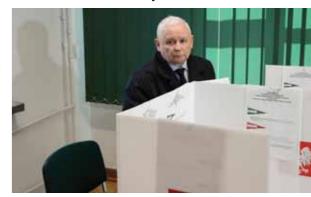
the report said. In another attack the same night, Constable Sanamat Khan was killed when unknown assailants opened fire on him near his house in the Sra Darga area. The cop was stationed in Miramshah town of North Waziristan district, and he had returned to the village on leave the Dawn reported. Moreover, a police official was killed and another injured when a remotecontrolled improvised explosive device went off in Mamund tehsil of Bajaur district on Saturday, according to the report. A head constable of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) was killed by unknown people near the Mian Lal police post in the Tank district on Saturday night. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the attack on policemen in Lakki Marwat. Taking to social media platform X, Sharif said, "Cowardly acts of terrorists cannot shake our resolve."

Poland polls test Tusk govt after 4 months in power

Voters across Poland cast ballots in local elections on Sunday in the first electoral test for the coalition government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk nearly four months since it took power.

Voters were electing mayors as well as members of municipal councils and provincial assemblies, an important exercise in self-governance that is one of the great achievements of the democratic transformation that Poland made when it threw off communism 35 years ago. Zofia Slezakiewicz, a 78-yearold who voted early, said the election are "for us and about

"I can't imagine people not voting and then complaining that things aren't good for them," she said. In all there are nearlv 190.000 registered candidates running for local government positions in the central European nation of 38 million people. Runoff votes will take place April 21 in cases where mayoral candidates do not win at least 50 per cent of the vote in Sunday's first round. Opinion polls released in the days ahead of the vote showed the two largest political formations running neck-and-neck: Tusk's Civic Coalition, an electoral coalition led by his cen-



Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the leader of the opposition conservative Law and Justice

trist and pro-European Union Civic Platform party, and Law and Justice, a national conservative party that governed the country from 2015 until last

Several other groups trail the two main groups, including the Third Way coalition, the Left and the radical right-wing Confederation party.

Tusk's coalition government, which includes the Third Way and the Left, together won the national election in October. The result amid record turnout spelled the end of eight bumpy vears of rule by Law and Justice. which was accused by the European Union of violating democratic standards with its changes to the judicial system

and public media. Tusk won on promises to reverse many of those changes and is trying to implement that program, but it isn't easy. For example, a promise to liberalize the strict abortion law is being hampered by conservatives in Tusk's own coalition. Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, a Tusk ally who is seeking a second term, said after voting that it was the "next step" in restoring rule of law. 'But local elections are also really incredibly important because most of the important decisions are actually taken on the local level in Poland That's why the importance of this election is absolutely crucial," he told reporters after

Russia declares federal emergency in the flood-hit Orenburg region

Orsk, less than 20 kilometers

AP MOSCOW

Russia's government has declared on Sunday floodhit areas in the Orenburg region a federal emergency, state media reported. The floods, caused by rising water levels in the Ural River, forced over 4,000 people, including 885 children, to evacuate, the regional government said. State news agency Tass said that a further 2,000 homes were flooded, bringing the total to nearly 6,300 in the region. Russia's Emergency Situations Minister Alexander Kurenkov arrived in Orsk - one of the most hard-hit cities - on Sunday to supervise rescue operations. 'I propose classifying the situ-

ation in the Orenburg region as a federal emergency and establishing a federal level of response," the minister said, according to RIA Novosti.

(12.4 miles) north of the border with Kazakhstan, suffered the brunt of the floods which caused a dam to break on Friday, according to Orsk mayor Vasily Kozupitsa. By Sunday morning, 4,500 residential buildings in the city of 200,000 were flooded and evacuation efforts were still ongoing, Tass

A criminal probe has been launched to investigate suspected construction violations that may have caused the dam to break. Local authorities said the dam could withstand water levels up to 5.5 metres (nearly 18 feet).

On Saturday morning, the water level reached about 9.3 metres (30.51 feet) and rising, Kozupitsa said. On Sunday, the level in Orsk reached 9.7 metres (31.82 feet), according to Russia's water level information

Officials in Orsk reported Sunday that four people had died, but said their deaths were

unrelated to the flooding. Officials in the regional capital (also called Orenburg) some 250 kilometers (155 miles) away from Orsk, wrote on Telegram Sunday that the situation in the city was "getting worse", as water levels increased by 28 centimeters (11.02 inches) centimeters compared to the previous day. Over 1,300 homes flooded and 428 people evacu-

Footage from Orsk and Orenburg showed water covering the streets dotted with onestory houses. The Ural River, about 2,428 kilometers- (1,509 miles) long, flows from the southern section of the Urals into the north end of the Caspian Sea, through Russia and Kazakhstan.

ated, they said.



2024. The volcano in southwestern Iceland that erupted three times in December, January and February, sending lava towards a nearby community, keeps erupting.

Security forces kill 2 Papuan rahal laadare in chantaut

AP ■ JAYAPURA (INDONESIA)

wo Papuan separatist lead-

lers were killed in a shootout between security forces and their rebel group near one of the world's largest gold mines in Indonesia's restive Papua region, police said on Sunday. Clashes on Thursday between independence rebels of the Free Papua Movement and a joint police and military force near the mining town of Tembagapura in Central Papua province left two of the group's regional commanders dead; Abubakar Kogoya, known as Abubakar Tabuni and Damianus Magay, commonly known as Natan Wanimbo. Both were part of the West Papua Liberation Army, the group's military wing. Rebels in Papua have been fighting a lowlevel insurgency since the early 1960s when Indonesia annexed the region. A UN-sponsored

ballot, widely seen as a sham, incorporated the former Dutch colony into Indonesia leading to simmering insurgency ever since. Security forces recognised the two commanders after finding their identity cards on them, said Faizal Ramadani, who headed the joint security force. He also said authorities showed the bodies of both men to other imprisoned members of the liberation army Friday for further confirmation.

Several other rebels were wounded in the shootout but managed to escape into the jungle, according to Ramadani. He said they were armed with military-grade weapons, axes and arrows. Security forces seized a gun in the area.

The group's spokesperson couldn't be reached for immediate comment. The area harbours the Grasberg gold mine, nearly half-owned by US-based Freeport-McMoRan and run by PT Freeport Indonesia. Separatists view the mine as a symbol of Indonesian rule and have frequently targeted it.

The shootout ensued after

authorities received reports that attackers believed to be members of the liberation army stormed a traditional gold panning facility in Kali Kuluk, causing many, including locals in surrounding villages, to flee. Kali Kuluk is located in the operational area of PT Freeport Indonesia. Ramadani described Tabuni as a central figure in the liberation army, adding that police records showed he took part in the March 2020 attack that killed a New Zealander and wounded six others in the same area, a road ambush in October 2017 that left one police officer dead and another November the same year that wounded a company truck

Drones attack Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant

Officials at the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant said that the site was attacked Sunday by Ukrainian military drones, including a strike on the dome of the plant's sixth power unit. According to the plant authorities, there was no critical damage or casualties and radiation levels at the plant were normal after the strikes.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said Sunday that its experts had been informed of the drone strike and that "such detonation is consistent with IAEA observations." Without apportioning blame, the head of the U.N.'s atomic watchdog agency, Rafael Mariano Grossi, warned of the safety risks of such attacks.

"I urge refraining from actions that contradict the 5 IAEA principles and jeopardize nuclear safety," he said on the social media site X. The power plant has been caught in the

crossfire since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in 2022 and seized the facility shortly after. The IAEA has repeatedly expressed alarm about the nuclear power plant, Europe's largest, amid fears of a potential nuclear catastrophe. Both Ukraine and Russia have regularly accused the other of attacking the plant, which is still

The plant's six reactors have been shut down for months, but it still needs power and qualified staff to operate crucial cooling systems and other safety features.

close to the front lines.

Also on Sunday, three people were wounded in Russian shelling in Ukraine's northeast Kharkiv region, according to regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov. In Russia, a girl died and four other people were wounded when the debris of a downed Ukrainian drone fell on a car carrying a family of six people in Russia's Belgorod region bordering Ukraine, regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

Nepal Army to collect 10 tonnes of garbage from Mt Everest

Kathmandu (PTI): Nepal Army on Sunday said that it will collect around 10 tonnes of garbage and five bodies lying at Mt. Everest as it launches Mountain Cleaning Campaign 2024 in the Everest region. A 12-member team led by Maj. Aditya Karki will embark on the Everest base camp on April 14 to bring the garbage from Mt Everest, Mt. Lhotse and Mt Nuptse, according to a source from the Nepal Army. The source said an 18-member Sherpa team

ing expedition. The expedition, to be flagged off by Nepal Army chief Gen. Prabhuram Sharma here on April 11, will bring at least 10 tonnes of garbage and five dead bodies of climbers lying unattended in the mountain, Nepal

will assist the army in its clean-

Army spokesperson Brig. Gen. Krishna Prasad Bhandari said. Biodegradable waste will be brought to Namche Bazaar below the base camp and handed to the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC) for proper treatment. The nonbiodegradable waste and dead bodies will be brought to Kathmandu, the spokesperson said. The cleaning campaign will control human-made pollution in the Himalayas and address the problems related to climate change, Bhandari said. The Nepal Army will collaborate with the Ministry of Forest and Environment, the Tourism Department and the Nepal Mountaineers Association for the Everest region's cleaning

Rwandans commemorate 30 years since genocide the killings, and some Western

AP ■ KIGALI

 R^{wandans} are commemorating 30 years since the genocide in which an estimated 800,000 people were killed by government-backed extremists, shattering the small East African country that continues to grapple with the horrific legacy of the massacres. Rwanda has shown strong economic growth in the years since, but scars remain and there are questions about whether genuine reconciliation has been achieved under the long rule of President Paul Kagame, whose rebel movement stopped the genocide and seized power. Kagame, who is praised by many for bringing relative stability but vilified by others for his intolerance of dissent, will lead sombre commemoration events Sunday in the capital,

Kigali. Foreign visitors include a delegation led by Bill Clinton, the US president during the genocide, and Israeli President Isaac Herzog. Kagame will light a flame of

remembrance and lay a wreath at a memorial site holding the remains of 250,000 genocide victims in Kigali. The killings were ignited when

plane carrying then-resident Juvénal President Habyarimana, a Hutu, was shot down over Kigali. The Tutsis were blamed for downing the plane and killing the president. and became targets in massacres led by Hutu extremists that lasted over 100 days in 1994. Some moderate Hutus who tried to protect members of the Tutsi minority were also killed. Rwandan authorities have long blamed the international community

for ignoring warnings about

leaders have expressed regret. Clinton, after leaving office, cited the Rwandan genocide as a failure of his administration. French President Emmanuel Macron, in a prerecorded video ahead of the Sunday's ceremonies, said on Thursday that France and its allies could have stopped the genocide but lacked the will to do so. Macron's declaration came three years after he acknowledged the "overwhelming responsibility" of France — Rwanda's closest European ally in 1994 — for failing to stop Rwanda's slide into the slaughter. Rwanda's ethnic composi-

remains

unchanged since 1994, with a

Hutu majority. The Tutsis

account for 14 per cent and the

Twa just 1 per cent of Rwanda's

14 million people. Kagame's Tutsi-dominated government

largely

tion

has outlawed any form of organisation along ethnic lines, as part of efforts to build a uniform Rwandan identity. National ID cards no longer

identify citizens by ethnic group, and authorities imposed a tough penal code to prosecute those suspected of denying the genocide or the "ideology" behind it. Some observers say the law has been used to silence critics who question the government's policies. Rights groups have accused Kagame's soldiers of carrying out some killings during and after the genocide in apparent revenge, but Rwandan authorities see the allegations as an attempt to rewrite history. Kagame has previously said that his forces showed restraint in the face of genocide. Kagame is expected to give a

speech and a night vigil will be

held later on Sunday as part of

ities. Naphtal Ahishakiye, the head of Ibuka, a prominent group of survivors, told The Associated Press that keeping the memory of the genocide alive helps fight the mentality that allowed neighbors to turn on each other, killing even children. Mass graves are still being discovered across Rwanda 30 years later, a reminder of the scale of the "It's a time to learn what hap-

pened, why it happened, what are the consequences of genocide to us as genocide survivors, to our country, and to the international communi-' said Ahishakiye. He said his country has come

a long way since the 1990s, when only survivors and government officials participated in commemoration events. "But today even those who are

a week of remembrance activ- family members of perpetrators come to participate. Kagame, who grew up a refugee in neighboring Uganda, has been Rwanda's de facto ruler, first as vice president from 1994 to 2000, then as acting president. He was voted into office in 2003 and has since been reelected multiple times. A candidate for elections set for July, he won the last election with nearly 99% of the vote. Rights activists and others sav

the authoritarian Kagame has created a climate of fear that discourages open and free discussion of national issues. Critics have accused the government of forcing opponents to flee, jailing or making them disappear while some are killed under mysterious circumstances. Kagame's most serious political rivals are his Tutsi ex-comrades now living in exile.

PMO asks Ministry to examine model text of investment treaty

↑he Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has asked the commerce ministry to examine the model text of the bilateral investment treaty and modifications to further improve the ease of doing business, according

sources. The exercise assumes significance as only seven countries have accepted the existing model text treaty, and most of the developed nations expressed reservations on the text with regard to provisions like the resolution of disputes.

These investment treaties help in protecting and promoting investments in each other's countries.

These pacts are important as India has earlier lost two international arbitration cases against British telecom giant



Vodafone and Cairn Energy in the meeting. We are having plc of the UK over the an internal discussion on the issue. The PMO is looking retrospective levy of taxes. Sources said an internal into it and has asked the discussion will be held on the commerce ministry to provide a third-party model text of the treaty on perspective on the model Monday in the commerce ministry with experts and text," they said. lawvers.

Although BIT is the subject trade agreement being matter of the finance negotiated by the commerce

ministry, the commerce ministry will try to elicit the views of the third party and ways suggest consideration to higher authorities.

Investment facilitation is one of the chapters in the free

Tata Steel India sales rises six per cent in FY24

The treaty is a key sticking point between India and the address UK, as both countries are negotiating a free trade agreement and BIT. skills.

According to experts, the four-European nation bloc EFTA (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland) would also demand BIT.

India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) on March 10 signed a free trade agreement under which New Delhi received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products, such as Swiss watches, chocolates and cut and polished diamonds at lower or zero duties.

Economic think tank GTRI (Global Trade Research Initiative) has stated that as India aims to become the third-largest economy, it needs to align its treaties with countries.

global investment practices, the perception caused by the mass treaty cancellations and reflect on its negotiation

It has said India has cancelled 77 of its over 80 BITs by 2016, as they didn't align with its interests

"Now, it is renegotiating with 37 countries using the restrictive 2016 Model BIT, which may lead to protracted negotiations due to its narrow 'investment' definition, vague terms, omission of principles like 'fair and equitable treatment', and Most Favoured Nation status, GTRI co-founder Ajay Srivastava has said.

According to Srivastava, the model BIT demands investors seek local solutions for at least five years before arbitration, making new BITs challenging

Plamping down for illegal fundraising activities, the corporate affairs ministry has slapped fines totalling nearly Rs 10 crore on two companies and nine individuals as they violated private placement norms.

Two companies, nine

individuals fined for

violating companies law

The fines have been imposed on Planify Capital and four individuals as well as on Mayasheel Retail India Pvt Ltd (Bazar India) and five individuals, according to two orders passed by the Registrar of Companies, NCT of Delhi & Haryana on April 3.

The action has been taken against the entities for violating Section 42 of the Companies Act, 2013, which pertains to the issuance of securities through the private

placement route. Fines totalling Rs 7 crore have been imposed on Planify Capital and four individuals. A total penalty of nearly Rs 2.89 crore has been imposed on MayaSheel Retail India and five individuals.

It was found that the entities used a crowdsourcing platform 'Planify' to reach out to investors for issuing securities through the private placement route. Planify platform is owned

Capital Ltd, a fintech company that focuses on building an marketplace for private equity as well as deals in sell-purchase of unlisted equity

shares, as per the RoC.
An official in the know said the modus operandi of both companies were the same. First, they allotted shares to Planify Capital or its group company and later using the online platform, the securities were sold in the open market, the official added.

Under the Companies Act, a company making a private placement offer is not permitted to issue securities to more than 200 persons in aggregate in a financial year. Also, a company issuing securities through the private placement route should not come out with any public advertisements or utilise any media, marketing or distribution channels or agents to inform the public

about the issue. These provisions come under Section 42 of the Companies Act, 2013.

The ministry has been acting against entities violating the company law and indulging illegal fundraising

Sebi proposes direct reporting of AIFs **PPM** changes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To facilitate ease of doing business, Sebi has proposed that certain changes in the private placement memorandum of alternative investment funds can be submitted directly to the regulator rather than through a merchant banker. Also, the proposed move

would rationalise the cost of compliance for alternative investment funds (AIFs). In its draft circular, Sebi said that certain changes carried out in private placement memorandum (PPM) are not required to be filed through merchant bankers and can be filed directly to the regulator.

These included changes in the size of the fund, information related to affiliates, commitment period, key investment team of the manager and key management personnel of AIF, and reduction in expense or fee or cost charged to fund/investors. manager trustee or custodian, risk factors and track records of investment manager, among others, are not required to be filed through

a merchant banker. and Securities Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought public comments on the proposal



"There will be a presentation

by April 26. At present, any change in the terms of PPM is required to be submitted to Sebi through a merchant banker, along with a due diligence certificate from the merchant banker in a specified format.

Such changes in the terms of PPM and in the of documents fund/scheme are required to be intimated to investors and Sebi on a consolidated basis within one month of the end of each financial

In its circular, the regulator also recommended that Additionally, changes in large-value funds for contact details of AIF, accredited investors (LVFs) should exempted requirement intimating any changes in the terms of PPM through a merchant banker.

Moreover, it suggested that LVFs should directly file any changes in the terms of PPM with Sebi, along with a duly signed and stamped undertaking by the CEO.



million tonnes in FY24, supported by higher demand from retail, automotive and railway segments. In India, the company produced 18.85 million tonnes (MT) of steel during the preceding 2022-23 the preceding 2022-23 financial year, Tata Steel said

in a statement on Saturday. Automotive and special products segment deliveries increased by 8 per cent in FY24 to 2.9 MT, surpassing the previous record in FY23. Branded products and retail segment deliveries increased

The world's largest asset

manager BlackRock, as well as the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, along with domestic mutual funds like ICICI Mutual Fund and Nippon India Mutual Fund

have increased their holdings

in Vedanta by almost 2 per

cent during the last four

institutional investors (FIIs)

increased their stake in the

conglomerate by 1.2 per cent

during the corresponding

The recent rally in Vedanta

share price on the back of

demerger plans, deleveraging

and soaring metal prices has

led to a bullish call by

period, they added.

said market

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

months,

participants.



sub-segments,

ever annual sales led by preengineered buildings and best-ever 3Q and 4Q sales," it railways, among others, the added.

domestic and international

"Vedanta has witnessed

significant buying interest. Many foreign and domestic

investors have increased their stake on the back of strong

fundamentals," according to a

dealer in a foreign brokerage

This comes at a time when the

Vedanta stock has surged almost 30 per cent, adding about USD 3 billion to its

Shares of Vedanta Limited hit

a 52-week high of Rs 322 on

session, and more than 15%

sessions (April 1 to April 5).

strength in global metal prices

market capitalization

funds.

house.

December.

company said.

"Revenues from Tata Steel & projects segment deliveries Aashiyana, an e-commerce rose 6 per cent to 7.7 MT. platform for Individual Home Builders, stood at Rs engineering registered best- 2,240 crore in FY24 and were up 30 per cent, driven by

crude steel in 2023-24, 4 per cent higher than 19.88 MT in the previous fiscal. In 4Q FY24, crude steel production stood at around 5.38 MT against 5.15 MT in Q4 FY23.

The company in India produced a record 20.8 MT

Tata Steel Netherlands liquid steel production in FY24 was 4.80 MT, and deliveries were 5.30 MT.

In FY23, the output was 6.33 MT, and sales stood at 5.62 Tata Steel UK's liquid steel

production in FY24 stood at 3.02 MT, and deliveries were at 2.80 MT. In FY23, the output was 3.02 MT and sales at 2.95 MT.



that are soaring due to ore, steel, copper and industrial data from China The rally is a reflection of the indicated an expansion in manufacturing activity for the EBITDA projections of the first time in six months.

April 5, closing up more than As China is the largest 3 per cent during the trading consumer of multiple metals, in the last five trading the strong economic data has led to a rally in metal stocks This is in line with the including Vedanta, a leading producer and supplier of iron

overall business potential and company.

Vedanta is expected to clock nearly USD 5 billion of EBITDA in FY24 (April 2023 to March 2024). Similarly, the Vedanta Group is eyeing an EBITDA of USD 6 billion in

on the back of operational efficiencies across businesses. The company is also on track for the demerger of its key including businesses, aluminium, into separate listed companies and allocation of debt across the

demerged entities that would be done in proportion to their assets, sources had said.

the next financial year (FY 25) and scaling it to USD 7-7.5 billion in the following year

it plans to deleverage debt by USD 3 billion over 3 years and that its promoter entity — Vedanta Resources — does not foresee a rollover of its debt. "Deleveraging is our priority. We would be deleveraging the debt of Vedanta Resources by USD 3 billion over the next three

pre-growth capex is estimated to be USD 3.5-4 billion for financial year 2025, sufficient for secured debt maturities of USD 1.5 billion," said Navin Agarwal, Vice Chairman, Vedanta Ltd and member of promoter group, at a recently concluded analysts' meet, according to analysts who attended the meeting. In September last year,

vears. Vedanta Ltd's cash flow

Vedanta announced the aluminium, and oil and gas businesses to unlock potential value. After the exercise, six independent verticals Vedanta Aluminium, Vedanta Oil & Gas, Vedanta Power, Vedanta Steel and Ferrous Materials, Vedanta Base Metals and Vedanta Limited will be created.

IRDAI raises concern over Hinduja led IIHL bid for Reliance Capital

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

nsurance regulator IRDAI expressed some reservations over Hinduja Group firm IndusInd Holdings' International (IIHL) resolution plan for debt-ridden Reliance Capital, which is also in the insurance business, including non-life, sources said.

Development Authority of India (IRDAI) in a recent communication Nageshwara Rao administrator of Reliance Capital has said that the resolution plan submitted by IIHL is not in line with

Insurance Regulatory and

The regulator has sought clarification regarding equity Besides, it has sought the capital that IIHL, the proposed structure for the

insurance regulations.

proposed buyer of insolvent Reliance Capital is willing to

It has expressed reservations about debt that IIHL plans to raise to fund the Reliance Capital takeover, sources said. The sector regulator is of the opinion that promoters should invest their own capital insurance companies deal with the money of policyholders and as a regulator protection of policyholders is the top priority. also

sought has clarifications on the structure of the company's borrowing plans, including the rate of interest, the instruments to be issued and the proposed subscribers etc.



acquisition Capital's insurance subsidiaries, IIHL's ability to meet future capital requirements of insurance ventures.

The regulator also expressed apprehensive over the exceeding FDI following the transfer of the stake of Reliance Capital to IIHL. "In other words, RCL (Reliance Capital Ltd) will

Reliance have 100% FDI. Please confirm if the same is permissible as per extant FDI law. Please provide reference to the said law that permits same, communication said.

> The National Company Law Tribunal on February 27, 2024, approved Hinduja IndusInd Group firm International Holdings Ltd's Rs 9,650-crore resolution plan

for Reliance Capital. In November 2021, the RBI superseded the board of Reliance Capital governance issues payment defaults by the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group company. The central bank had

appointed Nageswara Rao Y as the administrator, who invited bids in February 2022 take the company. Reliance Capital had a debt of

over Rs 40,000 crore, and four applicants had initially bid resolution plans. However, the committee of creditors rejected all four plans for lower bid values and a challenge mechanism was initiated in which IIHL and Torrent participated.

Improving macro indicators to drive FMCG products demand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leading industry players expect improving macroindicators and expectations of good monsoon and rabi crops to drive consumer demand for FMCG in the current fiscal.

demand for Consumer FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) remained sluggish amid a subdued operating condition in the March quarter.

The industry expects a midto-high-single-digit growth in value/volume in the January-March period, along with a continuation of the gross margins expansion trend, Investments | helped by deflation in input

The rural demand, which was sluggish in the last few quarters, has picked up pace from the January-March period, and some FMCG makers have reported a narrowing down of the gap with the urban market. Rural India contributes nearly

35 to 38 per cent of the FMCG sales in the country. Besides, further expansion of margins will help the companies to amplify their (advertising promotional) spending behind their brands, leading listed FMCG firms like Dabur Marico and a like Dabur, Marico and Godrei Consumer Products said in their quarter updates.

"We expect strong gross margin expansion on a yearon-year basis," said Marico, adding that "we expect low double-digit operating profit growth on the back of a healthy expansion in

operating margin". In the March quarter, Marico -- which owns popular brands like Saffola, Parachute, and Livon -- posted a slight uptick in volume growth on a sequential basis in its domestic business owing to steadying trends in the majority portfolios

"During the quarter, FMCG demand sentiment stayed consistent vis-a-vis the preceding quarters with trends in urban and rural

consumption lar converging," Marico said.

SRM ALUMNI SHINE IN POWERTRAIN COMPONENT MANUFACTURING New Delhi: Eight years after

graduating from the portals of SRM IST — India's pre-eminent destination for higher learning in technology, management, science, arts, and medicine, and four years after launching their independent venture, a team of SRM alumni work on an innovative powertrain component is all set to revolutionise emobility sphere. Torus Robotics - started by M Vignesh,

Vibhakar Senthil Kumar, and

K.Abhi Vignesh - who graduated



from SRM IST after specialising in Mechatronics, has designed and developed powertrain motors and components that are more powerful, and efficient, Their tireless work in design. development, and testing over the years with a single-minded

devotion and focus has resulted in the company securing a seed investment of \$4,70,000 during a round led by Tamil Nadu Infrastructure Fund Management Corporation (TNIFMC) under Tamil Nadu Emerging Sector Seed Fund (TNESEF).

Voltas AC crosses two million unit sales mark in FY24 2023-24, the highest ever sale of ACs

eading residential air conditioner Leading residential and Imaker Voltas on Sunday said it has recorded a 35 per cent sales growth to over two million units in FY24, becoming the first company in the domestic market to cross this mark. The performance was attributed to a consistent demand for cooling

products during the year, coupled with a strong offline and online distribution network, and new innovative launches, the Tata Group firm said in a statement.

"The company achieved over 2 million AC units during this fiscal temperatures: "Voltas registered a

by any brand in a financial year in India, with a volume growth of 35 per cent," it added. With these landmark sales, Voltas is

"the first ever brand to achieve this extraordinary milestone in the Air Conditioning industry in India", it The Indian residential AC market is

estimated to be around 10 million units in FY24 and is expected to grow to 11.5 million units this year. Even during the March quarter, when

sales of compressor-based cooling

products are low due to convenient

significant volume growth of 72 per cent in AC sales during Q4 FY24". The company claimed that with these "Voltas is the sales numbers, undisputed market leader and has maintained its number one position

the Room Air Conditioner Its MD and CEO Pradeep Bakshi said: 'We believe that our wide presence,

focus on the emerging retail channels, excellent distribution network, strong brand equity and attractive consumer offers have helped us to achieve this significant milestone". Voltas is now further expanding its retail and distribution network to

cater to its growing product portfolio. The company registered a significant growth in volume in other cooling products, including air cooler and commercial refrigeration products," said Voltas.

JOURNEY WITHIN

MINDFULNESS MASTERY

Techniques for Serenity Seeking guidance from mindfulness experts. ARCHANA JYOTI delves into various techniques and practices aimed at calming the mind. In the pursuit of inner peace and mental well-being, individuals can explore a plethora of mindfulness-based approaches

NEW DELHI | MONDAY | APRIL 8, 2024

From ensuring hydration and dressing appropriately to recognizing and responding to symptoms of heat-related illnesses, understanding preventive measures is vital **ARCHANA JYOTI** speaks to doctors on how to stay safe and healthy in the face of unprecedented heatwaves as predicted by the Met Department.





SIRAPANASETTY Obstetrics and Gynaecologist Surgeon Senior Counsellor in Army Wives Welfare Association

PREGNANT WOMEN BE EXTRA CAREFUL

Pregnancy is complex phase of reproductive life. It is an everyday challenge for a mother to maintain physiological &hormonal equilibrium as pregnant women have an increased amount of blood in their body, causing them to feel hotter during pregnancy.

To handle the extra blood, the blood vessels dilate slightly, bringing blood closer to the surface of the skin. This makes you to feel warmer. being pregnant in the summer can be downright toasty and create heat intolerance.

If your body temperature reaches over 102°F for longer than 10 min, you may get dehydrated and that may cause risk to the baby, especially while in the first trimester.

Maternal exposure to heat is associated with an increased risk of preterm and early term birth, low and decreased birth weight, stillbirth, and harmful newborn stress.

Few Tips for Summer Mumma's:

• We all get sweatier in the summer, but it can feel excessive for pregnant From women. armpits, belly, face, neck and thighs - sweat is an unavoidable part of being pregnant when it's hot

for two, so the body sweats more as a way to cool off. Drink plenty of dehydration and to keep you feeling comfortable, especially if the temperature is high. Avoid dressing in clothes that trap heat and use an underarm antiperspirant.

Wear breathable fabrics so you won't sweat; this will keep you cooler and help prevent heat rash that can develop under breasts vour and abdomen, a common problem for pregnant women

Incorporate cooling food into your diet-eating cucumbers and limes is cooling, too. Other foods that have

cooling effects are leafy greens, broccoli, melons, and • Time your outings so you

avoid being out in the hottest part of the day (11am to 4pm).

Use spray bottles filled with water to cool your face and body. Place a wet washer or cooling wrap around your head and

Soak in a cool bath.

TIPS FOR HAPPY GUT

Summer can significantly affect your digestive system due to various factors, including the heat, changes in diet, and increased risk of foodborne illnesses. The scorching heat can put stress on your body, including your digestive system and can also lead to exhaustion and dehydration, which can affect the functioning of your stomach and intestines. Warmer temperatures create favorable conditions for bacterial growth on food. Improper storage and handling of food can lead to foodborne illnesses such as diarrhea, and vomiting, Dehydration can exacerbate



preference, summer is the season for Pitta, the heat is on and for us to flourish we need to bear in mind the choices we make to stay in balance and enjoy the summer heat. Ritucharya (seasonal

routines) is one of the fundamental principles of Ayurveda, where our dietary choices, habits and routines should ebb and flow with the seasons. A simple yet powerful form of medicine to maintain good health.

Understanding Pitta and Summer: Pitta is the energy of transformation, made of the elements Fire and Water. It is responsible for transforming our food, thoughts, and emotions into energy. It is our discrimination, judgements, organisation, analysing and sharp precision.

The striking qualities of summer, the dryness from the heat, the longer days of and its transformative nature of

DR GOVIND K MAKHARIA

Dept of Gastroenterology and Human

Nutrition, AIIMS, Delhi

digestive issues. Drink

plenty of water throughout

the day, especially in hot

Summer season sees a rise in

cases. Thus, it is advisable

for citizens to carry their

maintain

own water bottle while activities into your routine,

weather,

hydration levels.



DR RP PARASHAR CMO (Ayurveda) Municipal Corporation of Delhi

summer are the same qualities reflected in Pitta. Therefore, Summer is Pitta season, where Pitta and its qualities of hot, sharp, dry, and intense, increases in nature and within us. One of the main rules of

Ayurveda is like increases like, so we look at the qualities of Pitta and use the exact opposite qualities to create balance. Signs of Heat (Pitta)

Aggravation : The primary focus for summer is to keep Pitta balanced by staying mellowing bright sun, the sharp intensity with relaxation, and staying grounded. Recognizing early signs of

bacterial infection.

weather. Heavy or rich foods can burden the digestive system, leading to

High temperatures and

changes in routine during

the summer months can

contribute to stress, which

may worsen gastrointestinal

Incorporate stress-reducing

such as meditation or yoga.

bowel syndrome

growth on food.

discomfort.

Warmer

aggravation important so you can address them quickly by reviewing your dietary and lifestyle choices.

Some common early signs of Pitta imbalance over summer are:

Skin can be red, inflamed rash, acne, and cold sores. Increased inflammation in body or joints. Digestive issues such as acid reflux, gastric or peptic ulcers, heartburn with nausea or discomfort if missing meals, loose stools, or frequent bowel movements. An uncomfortable feeling of heat in the body, with high emotions such as increased frustration, anger, irritability, impatience, criticism, intolerance. Eyes can become red, inflamed, or light-sensitive especially those suffering from Hay Fever. Salads are great for summer as they are cooling, best eaten for lunch as they can be hard to digest due to their raw nature, add some olive oil dressing to reduce its drying quality.



While cranking up the air conditioner may seem like the obvious solution for staying cool, it's not always the most energy-efficient or budget-friendly option. Fortunately, there are plenty of alternative ways to beat the heat and stay cool during the scorching summer months. simplest and most effective mind and reduce stress. hydrated. As the body sweats care of your

in an effort to cool down, it

dehydration. Drinking plenty



helps replenish lost fluids and keeps the body hydrated, making it easier to tolerate the

Wear light clothes: Choosing the right clothing can also make a big difference in staying cool Lightweight, cool. breathable fabrics like cotton help absorb sweat and allow air to circulate, keeping the body cool and comfortable. Eat plenty of water based fruits:incorporating water-rich fruits and vegetables into your diet can help keep you cool from the inside out. Watermelon, cucumber, and other hydrating foods provide essential nutrients and help regulate body temperature. Use a spritzer: For instant relief from the heat, consider using a spritzer bottle filled with cold water to mist your face and body. The sensation of cool water on the skin can provide instant relief and help lower body temperature, especially on hot and humid

sunscreen: When Apply spending time outdoors, it's important to protect your skin from harmful UV rays. Applying sunscreen with a high SPF, wearing a wide-brimmed hat, and using an umbrella can help reduce the risk of sunburn and heat-related illnesses. Incorporate breathing meditation practices: This Stay hydrated: One of the daily routine can help calm

moisturizing regularly with a loses water, leading to lightweight,



PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

help reduce stress and

Practice deep breathing exercises such as

diaphragmatic breathing or belly breathing. This can help activate the body's relaxation

Engage in mindfulness meditation, where

quiet the mind.

you focus your attention on the present

moment without judgment. This can

response and calm the mind.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Starting from your toes and working your way up to your head, tense and then relax each muscle group in your body. This can help release physical tension and promote relaxation.

Visualize yourself in a peaceful and calming environment, such as a beach or a forest.

Imagine all the sensory details and immerse yourself in the experience.

SPENDING TIME IN NATURE

Spend time outdoors in natural surroundings, such as parks or gardens. Nature can boost calmness in you and help reduce stress.

Pen down your feelings in a journal. This can help you process your emotions and gain clarity, leading to a calmer mind.

Practice gentle yoga poses combined with mindful breathing to calm both the body and

LIMITING STIMULANTS

Reduce your intake of caffeine, alcohol, and other stimulants. These can increase anxiety

ISTENING TO CALMING MUSIC This will help relax the mind and

promote a sense of calm.

Participate creative activities such as painting, drawing, or crafting. This can help distract the mind from

negative thoughts and promote relaxation.

Be grateful for what you have. This will help shift your focus away from negative thoughts and promote a positive mindset.

Remember that calming the mind is a skill that takes practice. So be patient with yourself as you explore different techniques and find what works best for you.

Homeopathy gaining ground despite challenges

In a conversation with ARCHANA JYOTI, DR SUBASH KAUSHIK, Director General of Central Council for Research in Homeopathy (CCRH), sheds light on the importance of World Homeopathy Day, advancements in drug standardization, collaborative endeavors, and ongoing initiatives geared towards enhancing healthcare outcomes through homeopathy.

important? rorld Homoeopathy Day (WHD) holds significance as it commemorates the birth anniversary of Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homoeopathy, on April 10th each year. CCRH organizes scientific conventions on WHD focusing on different themes each year, such as integrating homoeopathy in healthcare, enhancing quality research, and advancing scientific collaborations. Through these homoeopathic community explores innovative approaches, fosters scientific advancements, and strengthens collaborations for the benefit of patients and the advancement of homoeopathic healthcare.

Drug standardisation is one of the mandates of the council. What are the significant achievements of the council in this area?

The Council has made significant strides in drug standardization, a pivotal aspect of its mandate. This entails comprehensive analyses of homoeopathic medications. encompassing pharmacognostical, physico-chemical, pharmacological profiles. These studies are conducted meticulously to ascertain the qualitative and quantitative properties of drugs, aiding in the establishment of benchmarks for quality assurance. One of the Council's key initiatives involves pharmacognostical studies, which delve into the morphological and microscopic characteristics of

Why is World Homoeopathy Day raw drug plant materials. Physicochemical evaluations encompass

parameters moisture content, ash value, and extractive value, providing crucial reference points for quality assessment. Additionally, pharmacological studies on lab animals under controlled conditions enable the

safety, and mode of action. So far pharmacognostical studies have been conducted on 366 drugs, physico-chemical studies on 426 drugs, and pharmacological studies on 180 drugs.

determination of a drug's efficacy,

are these communicated stakeholders?

The standardisation of these drugs enables the upgradation of Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia of (HPI) subsequently. India Furthermore, the Council has undertaken the revision and upgradation of the HPI to align with international standards and essential drug lists. This revision work, conducted at various research institutes across India, has been completed for 225 out of 344 drugs, encompassing pharmacognostic, physicochemical, and finished product standards (FPS) analyses. Research conducted for the update of HPI's XI Volume has been finalized, with monographs created as per the new template of the

Pharmacopoeia Commission for

Indian Medicine & Homoeopathy



Àdditionally, Council has undertaken research for the HPTLC

focusing ATLAS, homoeopathic medicinal herbs to enhance analytical techniques.

What are the types of clinical research trials the council has undertaken?

The Council's clinical research endeavours span a wide range of disease conditions, including infectious diseases, dermatological disorders, respiratory disorders, endocrinological disorders, gastrointestinal disorders, rheumatological disorders, gynaecological and obstetric disorders, urological disorders, ENT disorders, and mental disorders. Noteworthy achievements have been made in areas such as HIV/AIDS, chronic sinusitis, influenza-like illness, diabetes-related complications, and various other conditions of national health importance.

Although the clinical research findings are of utmost importance for the clinicians, lately there has also been a growing interest among basic research scientists validating these effects of



DR SUBASH KAUSHIK Director General of Central Council For Research In Homoeopathy (CCRH)

homoeopathy. What is your take on this? Collaborations with experts and

organizations have significantly advanced the science homeopathy facilitating fundamental and collaborative research (FCR) initiatives. These endeavors aim to validate the concepts of homeopathy on scientific parameters, explore the plausibility and nature of homeopathic medicines, and optimize the drug manufacturing process. Notable collaborations include institutes such as AIIMS, CSIR, ICGEB, IIT Bombay, universities, and research centers across India. The focus of basic research in these collaborations spans various disease conditions, including cancer, arthritis, dementia, infectious diseases like malaria, dengue, and Japanese encephalitis. Encouraging results

have been obtained, such as selective cytotoxic effects against cancer cells, induction of apoptosis in mammary epithelial carcinoma cells, and modulation of immunomodulatory circuits to induce tumor apoptosis.

Are there any patents filed by the

Yes, we have applied for eight patents in the last five years, showcasing innovative contributions to homeopathic formulations and treatment methods. These patents cover areas novel nosodes, potentization processes, formulations for therapy and prevention of viral encephalitis, and methods for treatment and prevention of inflammation or inflammatory diseases.

India suffers a potential threat of mosquito-borne diseases.What all has been done in this field? Can homeopathy really help in these conditions?

The Council has made significant strides in validating the efficacy of homeopathic medicines conditions such as dengue, chikungunya, malaria, and Japanese encephalitis (JE)/acute encephalitis syndrome (AES). For dengue, the Council initiated research studies to validate the preventive effects of homeopathic medicines and issued public health advisories recommending the homoepathic medicine Eupatorium perf 30C as a preventive measure. Similarly, for chikungunya, which often presents

symptoms akin to dengue, homeopathic medicines Eupatorium perfoliatum 30C have shown significant preventive efficacy. Research studies conducted by the Council have further validated the effectiveness of homeopathic medicines for both prophylaxis and treatment of chikungunya infections.

For malaria, the Council has undertaken research studies to understand the efficacy of homeopathic medicines as both prophylactic and treatment options. Homeopathic remedies such as Cinchona officinalis, Chininumsulph., and Malaria officinalis have shown promising results in combating malaria, particularly in areas facing challenges of multi-drug-resistant

parasites. Regarding JE/AES, where specific antiviral treatments are lacking, the Council has conducted extensive research on preventive measures and treatments using homeopathic medicines. During JE epidemics, homeopathic remedies like Belladonna 200 were distributed for prophylaxis, resulting in zero reported cases among thousands of individuals. Preclinical studies in collaboration with institutions like the School of Tropical Medicine, Kolkata, have further explored the efficacy homeopathic interventions in both in vitro and in vivo models.

These endeavors underscore the potential of homeopathy in addressing mosquito-borne diseases conventional

treatments may fall short. By conducting rigorous research and collaborating with experts and institutions, the Council continues to contribute to the scientific validation of homeopathic approaches, offering hope for effective prevention and treatment strategies against these debilitating diseases.

Please share some key ongoing studies at the CCRH.

Council is Currently, the conducting clinical research studies on a diverse array of conditions, including chronic kidney disease (CKD), attention deficit hyperactive disorders (ADHD), psoriasis, lymphatic filariasis, post-Covid-19 illness, and various types of cancer. These studies are aimed at advancing scientific understanding and treatment options within the framework of Homoeopathy while adhering to rigorous research methodologies and standards.

Most of the studies or trials in Homoeopathy are unknown to many.

We encourage those interested to know about homoeopathy research and related updates to follow reputed medical journals on Homoeopathy or alternative medicine. The Council also publishes its own journal, Indian Iournal of Research Homoeopathy. It is a widely read and internationally acclaimed journal showcasing research and achievements within the fraternity.

CSK bank on home advantage against unbeaten KKR

PTI CHENNAI

efending champions Chennai Super Kings would expect a lot more from their top-order as they aim to get their campaign back on track against a power-packed Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL here on Monday.

Back-to-back defeats would not create panic in the forever calm CSK dressing room but the management will be keen to fix the flaws going ahead. Skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad and the highly rated Rachin Ravindra need to up their game to provide CSK the start they need in the powerplay. Gaikwad is striking at 118.91 while Ravindra will be itching to make an impact after not doing much in the previous two games.

CSK's leading run scorer has been Shivam Dube who has tallied 148 runs at an impressive strike rate of 160.86.

It remains to be seen if the young Sameer Rizwi is brought back into the team. The 20-year-old uncapped batter displayed promising intent in his six-ball 14 versus Gujarat Titans but a duck against Delhi Capitals in the subsequent game led to him being dropped against SRH. Pacers Mustafizur Rahman



and Matheesha Pathirana missed the last game due to different reasons, exposing the chinks in CSK's bowling attack. If they remain unavailable for the KKR game, CSK will need to think out of the box to make up for their absence.

Thus, the onus will be upon Deepak Chahar, Tushar Deshpande and Mukesh Choudhary, alongside spinners Moeen Ali, Ravindra Iadeja and Maheesh Theekshana.

KKR, who alongside Rajathan Royals remain unbeaten in the tournament, have reaped rich dividends for their fearless approach with the bat. Having said that, the Having personnel in the KKR batting order allow them to bat at the same tempo throughout the

Making Sunil Narine open again has proved to be a master stroke. Being the team's highest run-scorer this season, Narine is expected to give a tough time to the CSK bowlers. His opening partner, Phil Salt, has also aided the Trinidadian to a good extent. The middle-order comprising skipper Shreyas Iyer and

Ramandeep Singh need to

display a lot more consistency,

while Andre Russell and Rinku Singh have excelled thus far.

Also, KKR's bowling so far has been impeccable, which has seen even contributions from Harshit Rana, Russell and Vaibhav Arora. Mitchell and Chakaravarthy are slowly finding their feet after an underwhelming show in the opening two games.

Overall, KKR's performance across departments has been flawless and they would not want to fiddle with their playing XI for this encounter. Given the unusual pitch behaviour at Chepauk so far, it could be another run-feast.

CSK: MS Dhoni, Aravelly Avanish, Devon Conway, Ruturaj Gaikwad (c), Ajinkya Rahane, Shaik Rasheed, Moeen Ali, Shivam Dube, RS Hangargekar, Ravindra Jadeja, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Daryl Mitchell, Rachin Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Nishant Sindhu, Deepak Chahar, Tushar Deshpande, Mukesh Choudhary, Mustafizur Rahman, Pathirana, Matheesha Simarjeet Singh, Prashant Solanki, Shardul Thakur, Maheesh Theekshana and Sameer Rizvi

KKR: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Sherfane Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Chetan Vaibhav Arora, Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman



struggling for form and confidence: Flower

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Notwithstanding Virat Kohli's sparkling form, Royal Challenger Bengaluru batters are struggling for "form and confidence", said head coach Andy Flower following his team's fourth loss in five games this IPL season.

Kohli (113) hit a superb hundred at the top but RCB could only manage a belowpar 183 for three, a target which was overhauled by Rajasthan Royals, riding on a 58-ball 100 not out from Jos Buttler.

"We're one from five and that's not a position any side wants to be. Yes, we do have some issues with our batting. We got Virat in superb form but other guys are struggling for form and confidence," Flower said during the postmatch press conference on Saturday.

"We're trying everything we can to make them feel strong and confident. As you've seen in this competition, scores and aggression of teams are only going one way. So the guys need all the form and confidence to put the opposition under pressure. We haven't found that form

Kohli smashed 12 fours and four sixes during his 72-ball unbeaten knock but apart from skipper Faf Du Plessis (44 from 33 balls; 2x4, 2x6), he did not get any support from the other batters.

'We do discuss strike rates and aggression, it's part of the understanding of the T20

game. The level of aggression has to be above a certain threshold and you have to always be putting the opposition under pressure,"

Flower said. taking "Certainly aggressive option, especially on pitches like today. It's just a fact that at the moment that our top five aren't in sparkling form except Virat. It's a tough place to be.

It's not from lack of effort, they're working hard, they're giving everything they've got. Just not firing at the moment. If we've got to turn this around, we need them firing." It was a matter of time: Bond on Buttler's comeback

It was a sensational comeback from England's white-ball skipper Buttler, who had ended IPL 2023 with three successive ducks and scored a highest of 13 in his last three innings.

"Obviously delighted for Jos Buttler. You know we have been winning games without the opening partnerships but he and Yashasvi Jaiswal has been striking the ball very well in the nets.

"So it's about time if one of them starts firing. It's good to see Jos Buttler at his best and the boys came up with the win," said Bond.

Talking about the contrasting hundreds by Kohli and Buttler, Bond said, "You've got two of the best batters in the world. I mean, I always enjoy watching Virat bat, his technique and the way goes about his work...He's such a great technician and fantastic

Jos is best white-ball opener in world cricket: Sangakkara

PTI ■ JAIPUR

 $V_{
m leading}^{
m irat}$ Kohli may be with 316 runs as an opener, but Rajasthan Royals' head coach Kumar Sangakkara feels that Jos Buttler is, by far, the best white ball opener in world cricket.

Buttler was back in form with a 58-ball-100 not out as Rajasthan easily beat Royal

Challengers Bengaluru by six wickets despite Kohli's wickets despite eighth IPL hundred.

is the best white-ball opener in the world, and all he needed to do was sit back and ignore some of the noise

Buttler, on his part, agreed there was anxiety with his

poor run of form in recent times.

"However long you've played Asked about England limited the game, you still have those overs skipper's return to anxieties and stresses. form, Sangakkara said: "Jos Sometimes you just have to Sometimes you just have to tell yourself it'll be okay. "Just keep digging in, working hard, at some point we will be okay. I actually did feel really good in the last

OUS . game, even though I only scored 13 or something.

PTI ■ TORONTO

Riding on Kohli's century, RCB posted 183/3 but Royals took 19.1 overs to chase the target and secure their fourth win on the trot.

RCB skipper Faf du Plessis felt they were 15 runs short but also conceded that batting became better in the second innings.

"I did feel we could have maximised 10 or 15 more towards the end. It was a

good toss to win, you did see that it played much nicer with the dew."

'We tried, but it was quite tricky to hit. With the spinners, a lot of balls were hitting the bottom of the bat. I think the pitch definitely got better. That's what dew does, that's the nature of the wicket. I thought it was a good toss for them to win," he added.

SPORTS

Srikanth best is yet to come, expect a lot from him: Kashyap

PTI CHENNAI

¬oach Parupalli Kashyap Cfeels Kidambi Srikanth's best is yet to come and expects him to produce some good results this season having worked on his fitness and game. A former world number one

Srikanth, who claimed four super series titles in 2017, has been struggling with form for quite sometime However, the 31-year-old,

who had claimed a silver medal at the 2021 World Championships, showed signs of a comeback when he secured a semifinal spot at the Swiss Open Super 300 in

"I think his best will come,



and you can expect good results from him this year and next year," Kashyap, who is now coaching Srikanth, told PTI on the sidelines of the Road to Old Trafford football event organised by English football club Manchester United here on Sunday.

2018 Srikanth, Commonwealth Games gold huge potential in him."

medallist, missed the Paris Olympics qualification after slipping to world number 27th following a series of poor performances.

"He was struggling in terms of fitness. He must have tried hard, but the coach he hired from Indonesia did not work, as he could not play with high intensity during the matches. He lost matches quite easily and even failed to put up a fight in some," Kashyap said.

"I expect a lot from him since he has been brilliant in training and progressing well in his fitness and game. He has always been a spectacular player, and I have always been amazed by him. I see

Candidates Chess: Praggnanandhaa stops Gujrathi applecart

Indian grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa came up with a spectacular game to down compatriot Vidit Gujrathi in the third round of Candidates

tournament here. It turned out to be a satisfying day for the only sibling to make to the Candidates ever as R Vaishali also scored her first victory in the event at the expense of Nurgyul Salimova of Bulgaria in what was also the lone decisive game in the Women's section.

In the men's section, D Gukesh tried to make some headways but could not really dent the solid defences of Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia, while Frenchman Firouza Alireza's extra pawn came to a naught against top seed Fabiano Caruana of United

The other American Hikaru Nakamura, however, had no difficulty in getting an easy draw as black against Nijat Abasov of Azerbaijan.

In the women section, Koneru Humpy played out an easy draw with white against Zhongyi Tan, Tinjie Lei of China signed peace with Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia, while the other Russian Kateryna Lagno split the point with Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine.

With 11 rounds still to come in both eight-players double round-robin tournament, Caruana, Gukesh and Nepomniachtchi share the lead on two points apiece in the men's section. They are now followed by

Gujrathi Praggnanandhaa on 1.5 points each. Nakamura,



Alireza and Abasov complete the line up another half point behind.

In the women's event, Zhongyi Tan with two points remained a half point clear of nearest rival Goryachkina with Humpy, Vaishali, Lagno on their toes with 1.5 points

Lei, Muzychuk and Salimova share the sixth spot with one

point each in their kitty.

Praggnanandhaa chose an accelerated Schielmann defence out of a Ruy Lopez that is seldom seen in top GM games. Pragg, as he is fondly called, is known to spring surprises beyond imagination of his opponent, and Ğujrathi realized this very early in the

opening.
That Gujrathi was obviously

in for a long grinding game as his first white after a brilliant start was visible as he spent a lot of time in the opening but then the complications were clearly above the human

mind. The game fluctuated in the early middle game between an equal position and sometimes favouring Gujrathi but it was not easy to find all the best moves every time he

was posed a question. In the end Gujrathi was left to play 11 moves in about five minutes with the position not favouring him and as is often the case, the ticking away clock took its toll on the

Indian. Praggnandhaa quickly landed himself with a winning rook and pawns endgame and there was no hopes left soon for Gujrathi. The game lasted

Mohammedan Sporting confident of fulfilling club licensing criteria to play in ISL

PTI KOLKATA

Pirst roadblock cleared after winning their maiden I-League title, Mohammedan Sporting are now confident of fulfilling the 'Rs 100-crore bank guarantee requirement' that will pave their way to the top-tier Indian Super League next season.

The 133-year-old club, second oldest in Kolkata Maidan after Mohun Bagan, defeated Shillong Lajong FC 2-1 in an away match on Friday to become I-League champions after many failed attempts.

Indian Club Licensing System Premier 1 criteria.

"We have already met ISL club licensing criteria which is basically about infrastructure, administration, sporting and financial criteria," general secretary
Ahmed told PTI.
By virtue CI

By virtue of being a promoted club to the ISL, Mohammedan Sporting, unlike their Maidan rivals Mohun Bagan and East Bengal, won't have to cough up the Rs 15-crore franchise fee.

They will play in the ISL next season, subject to fulfilling guarantee and some financial matters that need to be sorted with the investors, which will be done in due course," Ahmed

> As per guidelines, the new club will have to show a bank guarantee of Rs 100 crore to play in the top-tier league, something Punjab FC had done last season. Gurgaon-based

management firm BunkerHill

Pvt. Ltd. Has currently 51 per cent stake in the club after inking an eight-year deal amid much fanfare in October 2020.



After the promotion to the to be seen if they get clubbed ISL, their stake will increase with any new investors to 61 per cent and it remains ahead of the next season.

Ahmed was part of West Bengal Chief Minister Banerjee's delegation to Dubai and Spain late last year during which they had a talk with potential investor in Lulu Group which eventually didn't materialise.

"It was due to some political problem. But we have our CM's full support and we already have an investor on board. We are confident to show the bank guarantee within the deadline. We are set for ISL debut from next season," he said.

Till Friday, Mohammedan Sporting had won every other title except the I-League that came into existence in 2007-08, replacing the National Football League.

They played in the NFL thrice only to be relegated twice. Their best finish in the NFL was eighth. In the I-League, the relegation-promotion story continued and after five failed attempts, they managed to crack the code under coach Andrey Chernyshov — former Russia national team assistant manager and U-21 coach -

who revived their fortunes by winning the regional league — CFL Premier Division — title after four decades in 2021.

There was no stopping after that as they went on to win a hat-trick of CFL titles, making it a total of 14 last season. It was during the COVID-19 pandemic, former India defender Dipendu Biswas, a veteran, got an SOS from then club top official Mohammedan Qamaruddin.
They body

They had legendary India defender Subrata Bhattacharya on board as the coach then.

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