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WORLD 8 BIDEN TO MEET JAPAN PM KISHIDA

MONEY 10 RBI LAUNCHES SURVEY OF MANUFACTURING FIRMS

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RR AIMS TO SUSTAIN WINNING STREAK 12 SPORTS

MVA seals Maharashtra seat deal

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After weeks of negotiations that involved exaggerated claims, aggressive posturing, climb-downs and compromises, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Tuesday announced the seat-sharing arrangement reached among its three constituents — Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and NCP (Sharad Pawar — for all the 48 Lok Sabha constituencies in the State. Under the seat-sharing arrangement, the Shiv Sena (UBT) has walked away with the lion's share of 21 Lok Sabha seats, the Congress has been allotted 17 seats and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP has settled down for the remaining 10 seats. Being the pivot of the Opposition front in the State, the Congress has made maximum sacrifices, by giving up the seats of Sangli and Bhiwandi seats to the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP (SP), respectively. At a joint Press conference held at 'Shivalaya', the Shiv Sena (UBT) office in south Mumbai, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray and State Congress president Nana Patole unveiled the seat-sharing arrangement hammered out by them for the Lok Sabha polls to be held in the state in five phases from April 19 to May 20.



Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole and NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar during a Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Press conference, in Mumbai, on Tuesday

After Shiv Sena's chief spokesperson Sanjay Raut read out the list of seats allotted to three constituents of the MVA and said, "We have absolutely no differences among us. The seat-sharing arrangement announced by us is final. There will not be any changes in the arrangement." Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole said in view of the main objective of defeating the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls, his party had

preferred to be "large-hearted" in its approach towards seat-sharing. "For us, victory against the BJP is the larger goal. That's why we have to set aside certain differences with regard to seat-sharing," Uddhav said, when asked why his party refused to give up its claim on the Sangli seat. Alluding to the launch of the BJP's campaign in Maharashtra by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in

Maharashtra on Monday, Uddhav said, "Modi's election rally coincided with the 'surya grahan' (solar eclipse) and 'amavasya' (new moon). You can predict for yourself as to what's going to be the result of this strange coincidence". Slamming Modi for his reference to the Shiv Sena (UBT) as "fake Sena", Uddhav said, "The speech that Modi delivered at Chandrapur did not behave well for a Prime Minister. When we criticise him for his speech, please don't take it as an insult to the Prime Minister. He is more of a leader of a corrupt party

than a Prime Minister. It is not right for a leader of the party of extortionists to call our party a fake Sena." Uddhav charged that the BJP was indeed a "party of extortionists" which had become crystal clear after the expose of the electoral bonds "scam". The announcement about the seat-sharing arrangement among the MVA constituents was made in the presence of all the other MVA allies including smaller parties like PWP, CPI, AAP, CPM, SP and other Dalit parties. Continued on Page 2

Call for trifurcation of Tamil Nadu echoes

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

A demand to trifurcate Tamil Nadu is getting silent momentum across the State. Though leaders of major political leaders are reluctant to come out in the open asking for the same, the intelligentsia, representatives of trade and industries bodies and farmers have expressed their anguish over the continued indifference of the DMK and the AIADMK to the needs of southern and south west Tamil Nadu. S Ramadoss, the founder of the Pattali Makkal Katchi, an outfit of the Vanniyar community, is already on record demanding the bifurcation of Tamil Nadu into northern and southern States. "It is always better to have smaller States for administrative convenience. Events in the past have proved that division of larger States into smaller ones hasten up economic and social development," said DR Ramadoss. Northern districts of Tamil Nadu have a considerable Vanniyar population which the doctor hopes would vote for his entity so that he could anoint his son Anbumani as the Chief Minister. Tamil Nadu has an area of 50,216 sq miles with a population of 7.2 crore



(according to 2011 census). The State has 38 districts and development of the regions is not in synchronisation with the population or regions, according to Arjun Sampath, founder, Hindu People's Front, an apolitical organisation. "The south west Tamil Nadu consisting of seven districts contributes more than 50 per cent of the State's revenue through industries and farming. But there is no development worth its name in the region, popularly known as Kongunadu," said Arjun Sampath. According to Arjun Sampath, the Avinashi-Athikadavu drinking water supply-cum-irrigation scheme envisaged more than six decades ago is the best proof of Chennai's indifference to the region of seven districts. "The project is yet to materialise as residents and farmers are struggling for drinking water and irrigation water. The DMK is sure that it does not have any major presence in Kongunadu, a stronghold of the Gaundar community," said Sampath. Both Arjun Sampath and Jayakumar, an industrialist and cultural activist of Kongunadu told The Pioneer that it was time Kongunadu was liberated from the shackles of the rulers of Chennai. "We have our own culture and heritage and need not be at the mercy of the Dravidian political parties. All major industries and industrialists are from Kongunadu belt and the Centre should initiate measures to form a separate State with Coimbatore as the capital city. The Dravidians are throttling the region by denying it all rights due to it," said Jayakumar. Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

Sensex breaches 75,000 milestone Mumbai: Benchmark equity indices hit new peaks on Tuesday with Sensex breaching the historic 75,000-mark for the first time during intraday before ending the session marginally lower on profit-booking at higher levels. Putting a break on its record-breaking rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 58.80 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 74,683.70. During the day, it climbed 381.78 points or 0.51 per cent to reach the all-time peak of 75,124.28. Detailed report on P10

One more Indian student dies in US; 11th so far

PTI ■ NEW YORK

A 25-year-old Indian student who had been missing since last month was found dead in the US city of Cleveland, the second death within a week in the country as the community grapples with a string of such tragedies. This is the eleventh Indian to die in the US this year and the string of Indian-origin students dying in the US continues. Mohammad Abdul Arfath, hailing from Nacharam, Hyderabad, arrived in the US last year in May to pursue a Masters in IT from Cleveland University. "Anguished to learn that Arfath, for whom search

operation was underway, was found dead in Cleveland, Ohio," the Consulate General of India in New York said in a post on X. Offering "deepest condolences" to Arfath's family, the Consulate said it is in touch with local agencies to ensure a thorough investigation into his death. "We are extending all possible assistance to the bereaved family to transport his mortal remains to India," the Consulate added. Last month, the Consulate said that it was working with local law enforcement authorities to locate the Indian student. According to a report in WKYC 3News last week, Arfath left his home at Reserve Square on March 5



and had not returned. Cleveland police told the news outlet that "they have concerns for his safety." Police had also issued a "missing person" alert for Arfath that had described him as being 5'8" tall, weighing 150 pounds, with black hair and

brown eyes. He was last seen wearing a white t-shirt, red jacket and blue jeans. The WKYC 3News report cited a statement from Cleveland State University which said that university records showed that Arfath "was no longer a registered

Cleveland State student as of January 2024, nor did he live on campus while attending Cleveland State." Cleveland State University Police Department was providing information as needed to assist the Cleveland Division of Police with their active investigation of Arfath's disappearance. "The University's thoughts are with his loved ones, and CSU PD will continue to serve as a resource to Cleveland police as needed," the statement said. Arfath's father Mohammed Saleem had said Arfath last spoke to him on March 7, and since then he has not been in touch with his family. His mobile phone is switched off as well. Continued on Page 2



Setback for Kejriwal

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a massive blow to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his party AAP which is going to the Lok Sabha polls beginning next week, the Delhi High Court on Tuesday dismissed a plea filed by him, challenging his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case stemming from the alleged liquorgate scam case saying there is no contravention of legal provisions. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma upheld his arrest and subsequent remand orders of the trial court, including the order through which Kejriwal was sent to judicial custody, holding that ED was able to place enough material, statements of approvers and the AAP's own candidate stating that Kejriwal was given money for Goa elections. The High Court order also chastised the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener for questioning the timing of his arrest and underlined that an

investigation against the "classes and masses" cannot be different. The court rebuked Kejriwal for "casting aspersions" on the judicial process with his claim about an approver in the case against him making donations to the BJP through electoral bonds, saying the law relating to approvers was over 100 years old and not enacted to falsely implicate the politician. In its 106 pages judgement, Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma said, "... the arrest of petitioner Arvind Kejriwal was not in contravention with the law laid down by the apex court. Similarly, for the reasons recorded in para nos. 115 to 127, the impugned remand order dated 22.03.2024 passed by the learned Special Court does not suffer from any infirmity or illegality." "Consequently, since the arrest of the petitioner and the impugned remand order dated 22.03.2024 are held valid, the prayer seeking release of petitioner is also liable to be rejected. Continued on Page 2

CEC Rajiv Kumar gets Z category security cover

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

After former Chief Election Commissioner ATN Seshan, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has provided Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar with a Z-category VIP security cover of armed commandos. This decision, based on a threat perception report, involves deploying approximately 40-45 armed commandos from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to ensure the safety of Kumar. The armed commandos will accompany the CEC during his travels across the country. This is one of the rarest instances of a CEC being provided a Central security cover. Former CEC, late T N Seshan, had a Central security cover at one point of time. The CEC, as well as two Election Commissioners, are currently guarded by a small armed security team drawn from the Delhi Police. According to sources, the decision to upgrade the security cover of Kumar comes after Central security agencies prepared a threat perception report, which recommended robust security measures for him. They did not share the specifics of IB's threat perception report. Under Z category security protocols, a comprehensive security detail has been deployed. A total of 33 security personnel, including CRPF commandos, have been assigned to safeguard Kumar during his official engagements and travels across the country. Continued on Page 2



EC orders verification of Minister's poll affidavit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Acting on a complaint by the Congress, the Election Commission on Tuesday asked the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to verify Thiruvananthapuram BJP candidate Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar's affidavit in which he declared ₹680 as his taxable income for 2021-2022. Chandrasekhar is in the fray against former UN diplomat and sitting Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram. The poll watchdog also issued Congress leader Randeep



Surjewala a show-cause notice for his alleged undignified remarks against actor-turned-politician and BJP MP Hema Malini. The poll panel's direction to the CBDT came after the Congress — which leads the Opposition United Democratic Front in the southern State — filed a complaint that claimed the Union Minister misrepresented information about assets and income streams. Kerala's ruling Left Democratic Front — led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's Communist Party of India (Marxist) also filed a complaint. According to the sources, the commission has asked the CBDT

to verify the declarations made by Chandrasekhar in his affidavit. As per the rules, candidates are required to submit details of their taxable income, assets, both movable and immovable, and liabilities. They are also required to share the same financial details of their spouse. The law says candidates concealing information in nomination papers or affidavits - a violation of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 - could face a six-month prison sentence and/or get a fine or both. Tharoor has declared assets of ₹55 crore. Continued on Page 2

Celebrating divine feminine at Shaktipeeths

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the Navaratri festival fervour sweeps across the nation and devotees immerse themselves in worship, and celebration, the Sangeet Natak Academy (SNA) has added an enriching dimension to the festivities: It has kicked-off a nine-day cultural extravaganza 'Shakti: A Festival of Music and Dance' beginning Tuesday to be held every day till April 17 at as many different Shaktipeeths or significant temples associated with Goddess Durga located in

various parts of the country. The festival has begun from the Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati on the first day of Navratra on Tuesday and will be continued at various significant Shaktipeeths such as Mahalakshmi Temple in Kolhapur, Jwala Ji Temple in Kangada, Tripura Sundari in Udaipur, Ambaji Temple in Banaskantha, Jai Durga Shaktipeeth in Deoghar, to conclude at Shaktipeeth Maa Harsidhi Temple in Jaishingpur on April 17 with much fervour and devotion. These sacred sites are significant



shrines and pilgrimage destinations in Shaktism, the goddess-centric denomination in Hinduism. Each day of the festival 'Shakti: A Festival of Music and Dance', is dedicated to a different Shaktipeeth, highlighting the beauty and power of the goddesses and promoting cultural unity and harmony across the country, explained an official from the SNA. The national academy of performing arts is an autonomous body of the Union Ministry of Culture. "Navaratri holds immense

spiritual and cultural importance, symbolising the victory of good over evil and the power of divine feminine energy. "By organising such festivals dedicated to honouring the nine goddesses and promoting the rich heritage of temple traditions, also provides a platform for artists to showcase their talents in a culturally significant context," said Acharya Pandit Rahul Tiwari, pujari at Neelam Mata Mandir, Mayur Vihar Phase 2 in the national Capital. Continued on Page 2

Transfer Central agency chiefs: TMC to EC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has asked the Election Commission of India to transfer the top brass of all the central agencies in order to ensure a level-playing field as promised by the Chief Election Commissioner. The delegation of TMC MPs and leaders who were holding a dharna at Mandir Marg once again demanded on Tuesday a "level playing field for all the parties in the elections," sources said.

Moments after lifting the symbolic dharna TMC MP Dola Sen said that his party had requested the ECI to ensure a level playing field that had been promised by the EC. "Just before the elections the central agencies like NIA, Enforcement Directorate, Central Bureau of Investigation and Income Tax become active against the opposition parties as they are now in Bengal ... My ques-



tion is if the ECI can transfer the State directors general of police then why will not they transfer the DGs of the NIA, CBI, ED or Income Tax to ensure neutrality of office ... if we look at the recent action of the central agencies in Bengal then we will see that they are being used for political interest ... we will request the Commission to act constitutionally and allow all the parties a level playing field in the elections," she said at the

end of the dharna. Meanwhile, the anti-terror National Investigation Agency investigating the Bhupatinagar blasts that last week led to the arrest to some Trinamool Congress leaders has moved the Calcutta High Court to get the FIRs registered by the Bengal Police against its officials quashed. The NIA move came soon after the police summoned the NIA officials regarding the Bhupatinagar incident.

In a statement, the Bengal Police said, "Two NIA officers have been summoned in connection with the attack on NIA in Bhupatinagar. Mentioned in the notice both officers who complainant and an officer injured during the attack will come as witnesses for the purpose of investigation. The injured officer has also been asked to carry his medical papers and the car attacked, for forensics."

Earlier the Bhupatinagar police station in East Midnapore district had registered an FIR bringing a number of charges against the NIA officials who had raided the village and arrested three TMC leaders in connection with a two-year-old blast case.

The NIA officials on Tuesday claimed that interrogations and call records of the arrested persons had led to a suspicion of a larger conspiracy. NIA officials were allegedly attacked by villagers and their vehicle was damaged when they went to arrest the

accused. Subsequently Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee too lambasted the Centre for trying to implicate the TMC workers ahead of elections "so as to terrorise them and force them not to work for the TMC." In a related development TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh once again demanded the suspension of an NIA SP claiming once again that he had a nexus with some BJP leaders of the State. Amid reports that the senior officer had been transferred by the NIA authorities, Ghosh said that nothing short of a suspension of the official would satisfy his party because "this man was met the BJP leaders just before his team conducted raids at Bhupatinagar." Ghosh also said that "more such raids are coming as the BJP has given the list of a number of TMC leaders to the NIA ... and soon they may conduct raids in a number of districts ... to disrupt the elections and stop the TMC from campaigning."

Party manifesto voice of people, reflects their hope: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday claimed that unlike the BJP's hollow promises in the last decade, Congress 'Nyay Patra' (Manifesto) for the Lok Sabha elections 2024 was the voice of the people, reflecting their hopes, aspirations, concerns, worries, difficulties and neglects that they have faced during the saffron party's regime.

Former Delhi Minister Haroon Yusuf said that the manifesto has the points that Rahul Gandhi had experienced first hand during his Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, respectively, across the country. "Congress manifesto reflects the voice of the people, their hopes, aspirations, concerns, worries, difficulties and neglects as it was drafted after careful deliberations among Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and



Rahul Gandhi and senior leaders," he said. He said that the manifesto was drafted to provide relief to all sections of people, with Congress offering five guarantees, with each guarantee having five assurances for a total of 25. Targeting the BJP led NDA rule, he said, "Under the BJP rule, inequality between the rich on the one hand and the poor and the middle class on the other hand have increased sharply, dealing a body blow to the goals of equality, equity and social and economic justice." "The BJP was targeting the

Congress Nyay Patra because the communal party's guarantees have no warranty. The Congress manifesto was drafted after careful deliberations unlike the BJP, which only made hollow promises in the past 10 years to deceive and neglect the people," he added. Congress leader Chatter Singh said, "Congress will come out with a Delhi-specific manifesto for addressing the issues of Delhi, including the toxic air pollution, which aggregated in the Capital due to the inaction of the BJP Government at the Centre."

Calcutta HC directs CBI probe into another job scam

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In yet another embarrassment for the Bengal Government ahead of the general elections, the Calcutta High Court on Tuesday directed the Central Bureau of Investigation to investigate and report within 15 days into alleged irregularities in recruitment of teachers in Darjeeling hills.

The Court's orders came following petitions based on a mysterious letter which referred to the names of a sitting minister and a former minister along with some other government employees, sources said adding the Court found substance in the allegations. The Court's order came in tandem with Justice Joymalya

Bagchi strongly rebuking Bengal Chief Secretary BP Gopalika for ignoring the Court's order to take a stand on the CBI's permission to prosecute some government officials in teachers' recruitment case.

The school level recruitment scam has seen a number of senior TMC functionaries including former Education Minister Partha Chatterjee and number of MLAs and senior officials going to jail.

The Judge threatened to summon Gopalika if he failed to respond to the Court's directives by the next date of hearing. "The Court said that the Chief Secretary was ignoring its order because it did not want to antagonise some people in

some political parties (read Trinamool Congress)," advocate Firdaus Shamim said adding the Court also reminded the senior most bureaucrat of "the enormous constitutional duty he has to discharge." In a related development the Bench of Justice R Mantha on Tuesday threatened to cancel the entire panel of candidates that appeared in the 2014 Teachers' Eligibility Tests.

With the TET authorities having failed to produce before the Court electronic copies of the OMR sheets the Judge told the State counsel that the failure of the authorities to present before it the evidences that were being asked for could lead it to even cancel the entire 2014 panel, the lawyers said.

MVA seeks action against BJP Minister for remarks at PM rally

T N RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Tuesday urged the Election Commission of India (ECI) to initiate stern action against senior State BJP Minister and party's Lok Sabha candidate from Chandrapur Sudhir Mungantiwar for his questionable utterances at a public rally addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Chandrapur on Monday. Miffed with Mungantiwar's utterances the MVA leaders like Congress' General Secretary Sachin Sawant, NCP (SP)'s national spokesperson Clyde Crasto, Shiv Sena (UBT)'s national spokesperson Kishore Tiwari called upon the ECI to 'cancel' the BJP nominee's LS candidature for "shockingly low-level language" uttered in public and that too in the presence of Prime Minister Modi on the dias.

The MVA leaders demanded stern action against Mungantiwar based on the video clips of his speech at the rally that have gone viral. Among other things, the video clips that showed the BJP leader making references to the 1984 riots in Delhi, where

he alleged spouses were separated from each other, children were separated from their parents. He alleged that 'a brother and sister were stripped naked and made to lie on a cot'. Urging the ECI to take cognisance of the Mungantiwar's speech, Sawant demanded immediate action against the BJP leader. "Such foul language should not be tolerated. He has made terrible and outrageous allegations referring to 'brother and sister' which are highly objectionable," Sawant said.

"Mungantiwar's utterances are shameful and a disgusting hate speech... He is either mentally unstable or is trying to create disturbances and a divide. The ECI must debar him from contesting the LS elections," Crasto said. Tiwari lamented that it was unfortunate that Mungantiwar could get away after making such vulgar and crass statements right in front of the PM, the Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis and other dignitaries suggest their 'blessings' for such profanity "It's the ECI's duty to take exemplary action and cancel Mungantiwar's candidature from, Chandrapur," Tiwari

said. Undeterred by the MVA leaders' criticism, Mungantiwar tweeted early today that when the Congress was reminded of its 1984 atrocities, 'so many chillies fly'. "The Congress cannot hide the injustice done to the people by making a partial clip viral. Congress leaders should beat their chests and tell me that such atrocities did not take place in the 1984 riots. I will always speak against the dictatorial regime of the Congress and will not be intimidated by your mischief," Mungantiwar tweeted. Referring to the ECI notices issued to AAP Delhi Minister Atishi Marlena, Congress Spokesperson Supriya Shrinete, Andhra Pradesh CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, Sawant demanded the same must be made applicable even to Mungantiwar now for his false accusations and objectionable language. "violations of the model code of conduct will not be tolerated," he said. "A humble question to the Hon PM and all those who shared the stage with Mungantiwar when he made such disgusting utterances: Do you endorse his speech?" Crasto asked.

One more Indian...

From Page 1

"We are working with local law enforcement agencies to find him at the earliest," the Consulate had said. Arfath's roommates in the US had informed his father that they lodged a missing person complaint with Cleveland Police. However, on March 19, Arfath's family received a call from an unidentified person, who claimed that Arfath had been kidnapped allegedly by a gang selling drugs and demanded USD 1,200 to "release" him. The caller also threatened to sell Arfath's kidneys if the ransom wasn't paid, his father said.

"I got a call from an unknown number, and the caller informed me that my son had been kidnapped and demanded money. The caller did not mention the mode of payment but just asked to pay the amount. When I asked the caller to allow us to talk to my son, he refused," Saleem told PTI in Hyderabad last month. Arfath's parents have requested the Central Government to take necessary measures to locate and bring back their son safely. Saleem has also written to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. The incident is the latest in a string of troubling cases on the safety and security of Indian students in the US.

Last week, an Indian student in Ohio, Uma Satya Sai Gadde, died and police are investigating the case.

Last month, a 34-year-old trained classical dancer from India, Amarnath Ghosh, was shot dead in St Louis, Missouri.

Last month, the Consulate posted on X about the death of Abhijeeth Paruchuru, a 20-year-old Indian student in Boston. Paruchuru's parents, based in Connecticut, had been in direct touch with detectives and initial investigations into his death had ruled out foul play. Sameer Kamath, a 23-year-old Indian-American student at Purdue University, was found dead in a nature preserve in Indiana on February 5.

On February 2, Vivek Taneja, a 41-year-old Indian-origin IT executive, suffered life-threatening injuries during an assault outside a restaurant in Washington.

In January, 18-year-old Akul Dhawan, a University of Illinois student was found unresponsive outside a campus building. Investigations revealed that he died due to hypothermia, with authorities ruling that acute alcohol intoxication and prolonged exposure to extremely cold temperatures significantly contributed to his death.

AMU faculty member imparts training to dental PG students

PNS ■ ALIGARH

Dr Pankaj Kharade, faculty member, Department of Prosthodontics, Dr Z A Dental College, Aligarh Muslim University mentored a training workshop about Prosthetic Rehabilitation of tongue and mandibular defects with implants after resection of tumor during the 26th Indian Prosthodontic Society National postgraduate convention held at Saveetha Dental College and Hospital, Chennai. Postgraduate students from various

institutes of India took part in this scientific session.

Dr. Pankaj Kharade deliberated about prosthetic rehabilitation of tongue as well as mandibular defects after resection of oral tumors. He said surgical resection of tongue and mandible leads to compromised speech and chewing, disfigurement of face, affected esthetics. Prosthetic rehabilitation at appropriate time assists to improve the treatment outcome, psychological status as well as quality of life of these patients.

Call for trifurcation...

From Page 1 Equally interesting is the stance of educationist Dr YR Johnson, former principal of Navodaya Vidyalaya, which has been banned by the DMK in Tamil Nadu. Dr Johnson, who is waging a battle against the State administration's Opposition to the launching of Navodaya Vidyalaya in the State says the students of Tamil Nadu are denied their right to quality education.

"Ours is the only State in the country which has not allowed the functioning of Navodaya Vidyalaya, an education system which would have made quality public school education free to all sections of the society. If they do not want

such schools in Tamil Nadu, let them trifurcate or bifurcate the State so that Navodaya Vidyalaya would become a reality in southern Tamil Nadu," said Dr Johnson who is disappointed with the poor quality of education dished out in government and private management-run schools in Tamil Nadu. Arjun Sampath pointed out the experiences of States like Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand which were carved out from bigger States like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. "All these three States have made giant strides in a short time because of the ease with which they are administered," said Arjun.

Setback for...

From Page 1

"The petitioner or the respondent may find the court to be excessively harsh or lenient in their cases, however, the court has to dispassionately only keep its concern with application of law and decide the case before it accordingly. The courts have to only perform their duty of application of law irrespective of the political or financial standing of any person before it. At the same time, keeping in mind a fair trial and hearing to an accused," the order said. "Material collected by the ED reveals that Arvind Kejriwal conspired and was involved in formulation of excise policy and used proceeds of crime. He is also allegedly involved in personal capacity in formulation of policy and demanding kickbacks and secondly in the capacity of national convener of AAP," the judge said while pronouncing the order in open court. She read out the judgement for 25 minutes and also explained certain portions of her decision in Hindi.

"This court wonders as to how the Directorate of Enforcement could have recorded the statement under Section 50 of PMLA of Kejriwal when he did not present himself before the investigating agency for the said purpose on nine occasions. After not presenting himself before the investigating agency on nine occasions, he cannot now turn back and argue that his statement has not been recorded under Section 50 of PMLA when it was he himself who refused to present himself before the Directorate of Enforcement that was calling him for exactly the same purpose for the last

six months", the order said.

However, the repeated non-compliance of summons for over a period of six months by the petitioner was indeed a contributing factor in his arrest. It further said the Directorate of Enforcement was in possession of material on the basis of which it had reasons to believe that the petitioner was guilty of offence of money laundering, it would have had no recourse available but to arrest the petitioner and to seek his remand so as to confront him with the statements of witnesses and approvers and other incriminating material collected during the course of investigation.

"...this court holds that judges are bound by law and not by politics. This court also holds that judgments are driven by legal principles and not political affiliations. It is important to clarify that the matter before this court is not a conflict between the Central Government and the petitioner Kejriwal. Instead, it is a case between the petitioner, Kejriwal and the Directorate of Enforcement. In such legal proceedings, it is crucial for the court to maintain its focus solely on the legal merits of the case. Political factors or dynamics should not and have never influenced the court's deliberations or decision-making process," the order said.

The court observed that political considerations and equations are not relevant to legal proceedings, clarifying that the present case was not a conflict between the Centre and Kejriwal but between him and the ED.

"Political considerations and equations cannot be brought before a court of law as they are not relevant for legal proceedings. In the case at hand, it is important to clarify that the matter before this court is not a conflict between the Central Government and petitioner Kejriwal. Instead it is a case between Kejriwal and Directorate of Enforcement," Justice Sharma said.

The court said the statements of approvers against the AAP national convener would be judged during trial as it cannot hold a mini trial at this stage. It added that Kejriwal would be free to cross-examine the approvers at the stage of trial. After dismissal of the plea, the AAP will now move to the Supreme Court against the High Court order. Reacting to the judgement, AAP said, "We are in disagreement with the Delhi High Court order; it will be studied and we will move the Supreme Court against it." The BJP seized the Delhi High Court's rejection of Kejriwal's plea claiming the movement which began with the Indian Against Corruption stir has now turned into "Kejri Corruption Kranti".

On the timing of Kejriwal's arrest before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Justice Sharma said, "This court is of the opinion that the accused has been arrested and his arrest and remand has to be examined as per law and not as per timing of elections...Kejriwal must have been aware of the Lok Sabha dates, he would have known when the elections were to be held..." On the matter of the statements of persons who gave statements against

Kejriwal and later turned approvers and were granted pardon, the court however made it clear that approvers' statements are recorded by the court and not by the probe agency.

The court said, "Granting of pardon is not domain of investigating agency, it is a judicial process. In a nutshell, approver ka bayan ED nahi likhti, bayan judicial magistrate likhta hai. Agar aap kehthe hai Ki ye galat tha toh aap judge ke upar aspersions cast karte hain (The ED does not write the statement of the approver, the judicial magistrate does. If you say that this was wrong, you are casting aspersions over the judge)." "To cast aspersions on the manner of recording statements of approver would amount to casting aspersions on the judicial process. The law of approver is more than 100 years old. It is not a one year old law to suggest as if it was enacted to falsely implicate the petitioner. Who gives tickets for contesting elections or who purchases electoral bonds is not the concern of the court," it said.

The court also said Kejriwal will be permitted to cross-examine the witnesses (including approvers) at the appropriate stage. "On the question of non supply of documents and earlier statements (of approvers), I've said that you're entitled to inspect documents at the appropriate stage of trial. However, this is not the stage," it said. Rejecting the contention that the Chief Minister could have been questioned by the ED via video conference, Justice Sharma said,

CEC Kumar gets Z...

From Page 1

This entails 10 armed static guards stationed at Kumar's residence, six personal security officers (PSOs) providing round-the-clock protection, and 12 armed commandos working in three shifts to escort him. Additionally, two watchers per shift and three trained drivers are on standby to ensure Kumar's safety at all times. On an average about Rs 50 lakh is being spent to protect him, which means about Rs 1.5 lakh daily.

MVA seals Maharashtra...

From Page 1 Though it has lost two seats — Sangli and Bhiwandi, it has got two LS seats from Mumbai — Mumbai North Central, Mumbai North - which it was insisting on.

The seat-sharing break-up for 48 seats is as follows: Shiv Sena (UBT) - 21: Jalgaon, Parbhani, Nashik, Palghar, Kalyan, Thane, Raigad, Maval, Osmanabad, Ratnagiri, Buldhana, Hatkanangle, Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar, Shirdi, Sangli, Hingoli, Yavatmal-Washim, Mumbai South Central, Mumbai North West, Mumbai South and Mumbai North East.

Congress - 17: Nandurbar, Dhule, Akola, Amravati, Nagpur, Bhandara-Gondiya,

Gadchiroli - Chhimer, Chandrapur, Nanded, Jalna, Mumbai North, Mumbai North Central, Pune, Latur, Solapur, Kolhapur and Ramtek.NCP (SP) - 10: Baramati, Shirur, Satara, Bhiwandi, Dindori, Madha, Raver, Wardha, Ahmednagar South and Beed. The seat tie-up finalised by the Opposition alliance has cleared the decks for a direct fight between the ruling BJP MahaYuti (NDA) and the Opposition MVA (INDIA Bloc) in all the 48 constituencies in the state. This is notwithstanding the presence of the Prakash Amdedkar-led Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) candidates in several of the constituencies.

EC orders...

From Page 1

Controversy over Chandrasekhar's poll affidavit broke after it showed his income for FY 2021/22 was just Rs 680. For FY20 and FY23, however, he declared incomes of Rs 17.5 lakh and Rs 5.50 lakh. Chandrasekhar also declared total assets worth Rs 28 crore; these included cash, bank deposits, holdings in non-banking financial companies and cooperative societies, as well as investments bonds, debentures, shares, units in companies/mutual funds, and other financial instruments.

Celebrating divine feminine at...

From Page 1 He said, "Through music, dance, and festivities, these initiatives not only revitalise temple traditions but also fosters a deeper appreciation for the cultural diversity and spiritual heritage of the nation. It serves as a reminder of the enduring legacy of Navaratri and its relevance in contemporary times."

Most of these Shaktipeeths or historic places of goddess worship are in India, but there are seven in Bangladesh, four in Nepal, three in Pakistan, and one each in Tibet, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.

The official from the Academy said the festival aimed to rejuvenate the temple traditions in the country under the series of Kala Pravah, features a diverse range of activities, including traditional music and dance performances, devotional songs, cultural programmes, lectures, and exhibitions. Artists from different regions will showcase their talent, presenting the rich cultural heritage associated with the festival and temple traditions.

The SNA has been working towards the preservation, research, promotion and rejuvenation of performing art forms of the country expressed in the form of music, dance, drama, folk and tribal art forms and other allied art forms of the country.

BJP seeks Kejriwal resignation after court rejects CM plea against arrest

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday seized the Delhi High Court's rejection of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's plea against his arrest by the ED and its critical observations to attack the AAP convener, claiming the movement which began with the Indian Against Corruption stir has now turned into "Kejri Corruption Kranti". The BJP also pushed for the chief minister's resignation, with its Delhi unit president Virendra Sachdeva asking if he is now left with any moral right to continue while he remains under arrest. BJP candidate from South Delhi Lok Sabha constituency and Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that after

the High Court order, Kejriwal has no other option but to resign from the post of Delhi chief minister. Addressing a press conference, BJP's national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi cited several observations of the high court to slam the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and its chief, accusing them of trying to politicise investigation and judicial processes. Trivedi also cited the court's stand that the law applied equally to all and courts were concerned with constitutional morality and not political morality, apparently referring to the claim by Kejriwal and AAP that he was arrested to jeopardise his party's Lok Sabha poll campaign. The court's decision has smashed the arrogance of the Aam Aadmi Party, the BJP

spokesperson said, noting that the judge also observed that the material brought by the Enforcement Directorate has shown that Kejriwal "conspired" in the framing of the excise policy and was "involved" in the proceeds of the crime. The ED can't be directed to carry out the investigation as per the convenience of the person, and there can't be one law for the common man and another for a chief minister, he said, referring to the court's decision. It has further "exposed" Kejriwal's garb of a common man as he has already gone back on many assertions he had made when he entered politics, the BJP leader said. The agitation which began with the India Against Corruption movement, he



said in a reference to the anti-graft campaign spearheaded by social activist Anna Hazare in which Kejriwal played a critical role, has now turned into "Kejri Corruption Kranti". Then an activist, Kejriwal rode the popular

crucial evidence" against him. Bidhuri, who had raised the issue of alleged irregularities in the now scrapped excise policy (2021-22) of the Delhi government in the Assembly, said that Kejriwal should now give up his "insistence" on running the government from jail and immediately resign from the chief minister's post. "If Kejriwal and his party still remain adamant, then the President will be left with no other option but to dismiss the government," he said in a statement. Bidhuri said Kejriwal is betraying his colleagues for delaying their trials in the case. BJP MP Manoj Tiwari said, "Everyone in the country has to follow the laws of India. Today Hon'ble Court order has shown the mirror to AAP's gang leader, evidence

collected by ED shows that the kingpin is Arvind Kejriwal. Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday said that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal should resign taking moral responsibility in view of the High Court order dismissing the plea against his arrest and remand in the excise policy case. Kejriwal was issued nine summons by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) between November 2023 and March 2024. He kept "evading" these notices over the past six months under some "pretext" or the other, the minister claimed. "It is high time Arvind Kejriwal taking moral responsibility, resigns as the Delhi chief minister," Puri said in a statement.

Kejriwal rebuked for casting aspersions on judicial process

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday rebuked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for "casting aspersions" on the judicial process with his claim about an approver in the money laundering case against him making donations to the BJP through electoral bonds, saying the law relating to approvers was over 100 years old and not enacted to falsely implicate the AAP leader. The high court, which rejected Kejriwal's petition challenging his arrest in the money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, said it was not concerned with who purchased electoral bonds for whom and that it was only responsible for applying provisions of law to the case before it. Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma, while dismissing the AAP national convener's petition against his arrest and subsequent remand in the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) custody, said casting aspersions on the manner of granting pardon or recording statements of approvers amounted to casting aspersions on the judicial process.



In his petition, Kejriwal sought his release on several grounds, including that the belated statements of approvers Raghav Magunta and Sarath Reddy cannot be relied upon as the latter even donated to the ruling party through electoral bonds. Aurobindo Pharma purchased electoral bonds worth Rs 5 crore on November 15, 2022, five days after one of its directors, Reddy, was arrested in the excise case by the ED. According to data released by the Election Commission, the company had bought electoral bonds for a total of Rs 52 crore with more than half of it going to the Bharatiya Janata Party. "In this court's opinion, who gives tickets for contesting elections to whom or who purchases electoral bonds and for what purpose is not the

concern of this court as this court is required to apply the law and the evidence recorded as it is," the court observed in its judgement. Asserting that the law of approver was "more than 100 years old" and was not enacted to "falsely implicate the present petitioner", the court said the statements of approvers against the AAP leader would be judged during trial and it cannot hold a mini trial at this stage. It said the present case was neither the first nor the last in which approvers' statements were recorded and relied upon by the prosecution, and Kejriwal would be free to cross-examine the approvers at the stage of trial. "To doubt and cast aspersions regarding the manner of granting pardon or recording statements of approvers amounts to casting aspersions on the judicial process since granting of pardon or recording of statement of the approver is not the domain of the investigating agency. It is a judicial process wherein a judicial officer follows the provisions of CrPC for recording the statement of approver and also granting or not granting pardon," the court said.

Investigation against classes, masses cannot be different: HC

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Political considerations are not relevant to the legal process, the Delhi High Court said on Tuesday, as it dismissed Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's petition challenging his arrest in a money laundering case and questioning its timing, holding that an investigation against "classes and masses" cannot be different. Kejriwal, who was arrested by the ED on March 21 after he skipped nine summonses for his appearance, had argued that the federal anti-money laundering agency could have questioned him through video conference or by sending a questionnaire or quizzed him at his residence. "In this court's opinion, this contention has to be rejected since the investigating agency under the Indian criminal jurisprudence cannot be directed to conduct the investigation in accordance with convenience or dictates of a person. Investigation qua classes and masses cannot be different," Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma said in her verdict. The investigation, she said, has to take its own course, and if the investigating agency was direct-



ed to visit the house of every such person for probe, the very purpose of investigation would be lost and end in chaos. "This court would not lay down two different categories of laws — one for the common citizens and the other granting special privilege to be extended by investigating agencies either to a chief minister or any person in power only on the basis of being in public office...The accountability of public figures has to be held through the public," it said. The court observed that it cannot accept Kejriwal's contention that he was arrested on account of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, adding that the issue has to be examined only in the context of law, and not the timing. "In the absence of any malafide intention on part of ED which

could be apparent on record, accepting this argument would mean that in case the petitioner would have been arrested in October 2023 itself, his arrest would not have been challenged on the ground of malafide since elections were not declared at the time," the court observed. "Kejriwal also must be aware of the impending Lok Sabha election dates which were likely to be declared in the month of March 2024. He would have known when LS elections will be declared and he would be very busy at that time," it added. The court opined said upholding Kejriwal's stand would mean allowing a person, who delays in presenting himself before the investigating agency, to take advantage of the situation and later plead malafide. "ED was in possession of enough material which had led them to arrest the present accused. Non-joining probe by Kejriwal was only a contributory factor and not the only factor," it said. The court clarified the present case was not of a "conflict" between the Centre and the Delhi CM, and it was crucial to focus solely on the legal merits of the case.

Kejriwal to move SC against arrest: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Failing to get any reprieve from the Delhi High Court, the Aam Aadmi Party Tuesday said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will move the Supreme Court against his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate, and maintained the excise policy case was the "biggest political conspiracy of the country" to finish the party. The AAP has claimed that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) have failed to recover even one rupee of illegal money in the case. Senior AAP leader and Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj told a press conference soon after the HC order that they are hopeful the Supreme Court will provide relief to Kejriwal in the same way it granted bail to AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh in the case. AAP leader Jasmine Shah, who also addressed the presser, said, "The investigation has been going on for two years but not even a single penny has been recovered. But what happens? You arrest top leaders of a national party and put them in jail as part of a conspiracy." In Chandigarh, AAP MP Sanjay Singh lashed out at the BJP, terming the money laundering case against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as the "biggest conspiracy." Addressing the media here, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Singh expressed hope that the party supremo would get relief from the Supreme Court in the matter.

party and Kejriwal," he alleged. "The entire matter is not related to money laundering, rather it's the biggest political conspiracy of the country. It's a conspiracy to crush and finish off Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and AAP governments in Delhi and Punjab," he said. Bharadwaj said they are hopeful that the Supreme Court will provide relief to Kejriwal in the same way it granted bail to AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh in the case. AAP leader Jasmine Shah, who also addressed the presser, said, "The investigation has been going on for two years but not even a single penny has been recovered. But what happens? You arrest top leaders of a national party and put them in jail as part of a conspiracy." In Chandigarh, AAP MP Sanjay Singh lashed out at the BJP, terming the money laundering case against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as the "biggest conspiracy." Addressing the media here, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Singh expressed hope that the party supremo would get relief from the Supreme Court in the matter.

MCD removes illegal hoardings, posters after MCC gets enforced

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has removed 2,64,798 hoardings, 2,67,867 posters, banners/wall paintings, 45,971 signages and 34,093 flags till Tuesday from across its 12 zones in view of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) in force for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. According to an official data, the civic body has removed in total 6,12,729 political advertisements from across its 12 zones till date. Abiding by the Election Commission's order, MCD on Tuesday removed a total of 9,649 posters, banners, hoardings and small boards from across its 12 zones in view of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) in force for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.



The highest number of political advertisements have been taken down from the Civil Line zone with a total of 1,424, followed by 1,200 from the West zone and 1,109 from South zone. According to the zone wise consolidated report, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) removed a total of 7,774 posters, 762 hoardings, 766 signage and 347 flags from across its 12 zones on Tuesday. In terms of the total numbers of posters, banners and wall paintings removed by the civic body, Civil Line zone

saw the biggest chunk of removal with a total of 1,424 followed by 1,029 from Shahadara North zone and 991 from West zone. Apart from this, 749 from South zone and 589 from Najafgarh were removed. In the different forms of political advertisement, the number of posters, banners and wall paintings were the highest with a total of 7,774 followed by 766 signage, 762 hoardings and 347 flags in the 12 zones that come under that MCD. The MCC came into force immediately after the election results were declared on March 16 and will be in place till the results of the elections are announced. Delhi will vote on May 25 in the sixth phase of the seven-phase polls.

Kuldip assumes additional charge as MD, NCRTC

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Kuldip Narayan, Joint Secretary in Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), has assumed the additional charge as Managing Director of the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC). Narayan is a 2005 batch IAS officer from the Bihar cadre and holds a degree in Mechanical Engineering from IIT Kanpur. He is associated with NCRTC as Government Nominee Director from December 2022. At the MoHUA, he is looking after its flagship programme, Housing for All / Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban). He is also serving as a Nominee Official Director in the National Housing Bank (NHB) and Housing & Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO). He has held various different important positions in Bihar. The officer has

served as the District Magistrate of Gopalganj, Chhapra, Munger, and Madhubani districts in Bihar. He has held various important positions such as the charge of Chairman of Bihar State Bridge Corporation, Managing Director of Bihar State Milk Co-Operative Federation Ltd and Bihar State

Water Board and Municipal Commissioner of Bihar's capital city Patna. IIT Kanpur conferred the Satyendra Dubey Memorial Award in 2015 for his efforts to promote probity and transparency in public service and exemplary dedication to maintaining the highest professional integrity in uphold-

ing human values. A 34 km section between Sahibabad and Modi Nagar North having eight stations of India's first RRTS corridor between Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut, is operational as of now. The entire 82 km long corridor is scheduled to be operational by the month of June in 2025.

Korea Street Fair 2024 at DLF Avenue from April 12

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Whether you're a die-hard admirer of Korea or simply curious to experience something new, ensure that you are at the three-days 2024 Korea Street Fair being organized at Plaza at DLF Avenue, Saket, here from April 12th. The sights, sounds, and flavors of Korea is poised to sweep you off your feet with an electrifying celebration of its culture, commerce, and cuisine which is already a craze among X-Generation here. The annual extravaganza is being organized in collaboration between the Embassy of the Republic of Korea and the Korean Youth Commerce Association (KYCA). In fact, the Korea craze among Indians has been steadily gaining

momentum in recent years, fueled by the growing popularity of Korean entertainment, cuisine, fashion, beauty products, and more, said a statement here from the Embassy of the Republic of Korea. At the venue, from an array of vibrant stalls showcasing merchandise from Korean small and micro enterprises to traditional handicrafts and cutting-edge K-products, there will be everything for everybody--whether you're a connoisseur of Korean culture or simply seeking unique finds. Food enthusiasts can tantalize their taste buds with a mouth-watering selection of authentic Korean dishes and beverages. From savory classics like bibimbap and kimchi to sweet treats like bingsu and hotteok,

every bite offers a tantalizing glimpse into the rich tapestry of Korean gastronomy. But the Korea Street Fair isn't just about shopping and dining—it's a feast for the senses. Throughout the event, visitors will be treated to a mesmerizing showcase of Korean cultural performances. From the graceful movements of traditional dance to the infectious energy of K-pop, these performances capture the essence and spirit of Korea, transporting audiences to a world of beauty and rhythm. For those looking to unleash their playful side, the fair offers a variety of Korean-themed games and activities such as traditional board games and modern arcade favorites, added the statement.

Man accused of killing live in partner arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 27 years old man for allegedly murdering his live-in partner in west Delhi's Rajapuri after a 1400 km chase. According to the police on Tuesday, a murder suspect named Vipul Tailor, a resident of Gujarat's Surat was apprehended after a pursuit spanning 1400 kilometres. Accused is a notorious criminal previously involved in 10 cases, including attempted murder and violations of NDPS Act. On April 3 at 10:38 pm a PCR call was



received at Dabri Police Station alleging the murder of the caller's daughter by a young man. The victim has been identified as Rukhsar, alias Riya whose dead body was found in a wardrobe. She was a mother of a young daughter

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March 2024 warmest ever

12 months average temperature reaches new record

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The world experienced the warmest March ever due to a combined effect of El Nino and human-caused climate change, making it the 10th consecutive month since June last year to set a new temperature record, the European Union's climate agency said on Tuesday. The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said the average temperature of 14.14 degrees Celsius in March was 1.68 degrees Celsius higher than the month's average for 1850-1900, the designated pre-industrial reference period. It is 0.73 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average for March and 0.10 degrees Celsius above the previous high set in March 2016. "The global average temperature for the past 12 months



(April 2023-March 2024) is the highest recorded, at 0.70 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average and 1.58 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average," the climate agency said. C3S said the global average temperature breached the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold for an entire year for the first time in January. A permanent breach of the 1.5

degrees Celsius limit specified in the Paris Agreement, however, refers to long-term warming over many years. According to climate scientists, countries need to limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Earth's global surface temperature has already increased by

around 1.15 degrees Celsius compared to the average in 1850-1900, a level that hasn't been witnessed since 1,25,000 years ago, before the most recent ice age. This warming is considered the reason behind record droughts, wildfires and floods worldwide.

The rise in global average temperature is attributed to the rapidly increasing concentration of greenhouse gases — primarily carbon dioxide and methane — in the atmosphere. "March 2024 continues the sequence of climate records topping in both air temperature and ocean surface temperatures, with the 10th consecutive record-breaking month."

"The global average temperature is the highest recorded, with the past 12 months being 1.58 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Stopping further warming requires rapid reductions in greenhouse gas emissions," said Samantha Burgess, deputy director of C3S. Globally, 2023 was the warmest year in the 174-year observational record, with the global

average near-surface temperature at 1.45 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial baseline (1850-1900). The warming may set a new record in 2024 as scientists say El Nino — periodic warming of the ocean surface in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean — typically has the greatest impact on global climate in the second year of its development. The continuing, albeit weaker, El Nino and predicted above-normal sea-surface temperatures over much of the global oceans are expected to lead to above-normal temperatures over almost all land areas until May and influence regional rainfall patterns, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said in a March update. The India Meteorological Department has also warned of extreme heat during the April-June period when around a billion people are expected to exercise their franchise during the seven-phase general elections, heightening concerns about vulnerability to heat waves.

SC to hear plea on cross verification of votes with VVPAT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court said on Tuesday it will hear on April 16 a batch of pleas seeking cross-verification of the votes cast with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT).

The VVPAT is an independent vote verification system which enables an elector to see whether his vote was cast correctly. It generates a paper slip which can be viewed by the voter. It is kept in a sealed cover and can be opened in case of a dispute.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Khanna and Dipankar Datta, which could not take up the petitions related to Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), said it will consider all pleas in the matter for hearing on next Tuesday.

The seven-phase Lok Sabha polls will begin on April 19. The top court had said on April 3 it would hear next week the plea filed by NGO Association for Democratic



Reforms (ADR) along with other matters, after advocate Prashant Bhushan sought an urgent hearing. On April 1, the top court had sought responses from the Election Commission and the Centre on a plea by activist Arun Kumar Agrawal seeking a complete count of VVPAT slips in polls as opposed to the current practice of tallying slips from only five randomly selected EVMs from each assembly segment comprising a parliamentary constituency. Both the pleas will now be

taken up for hearing on April 16. The ADR has sought the court's direction to the poll panel and the Centre to ensure the voters are able to verify through VVPATs that their vote has been "counted as recorded."

The petition has sought matching the count in EVMs with votes that have been verifiably "recorded as cast" and to ensure that the voter is able to verify through VVPAT slip that his vote, as recorded on the paper slip, has been "counted as recorded."

Issued 2,843 visas to Sikh pilgrims on Baisakhi: Pakistan High Commission

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Pakistan High Commission on Tuesday here said it issued 2,843 visas to Sikh pilgrims from India to facilitate their participation at the Baisakhi celebrations.

Under the provision of a bilateral protocol on visits to religious shrines, Sikh and Hindu pilgrims from India visit Pakistan every year. Pakistani pilgrims also visit India every year under the protocol. "On the occasion of Baisakhi celebrations, the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi has issued 2,843 visas to Sikh pilgrims from India to participate in the annual festival scheduled



to be held in Pakistan from April 13 to 22," the high commission said. "The pilgrims would, inter-alia, visit Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Gurdwara Nankana Sahib and Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib," it said in a statement. Charge d' Affaires at Pakistan high commission Saad Ahmad Warraich, extended his heartfelt felicitations to all those cel-

ebrating this auspicious festival and wished the visiting pilgrims a "fulfilling" yatra.

"The issuance of visas to religious pilgrims by the High Commission is in line with the Government of Pakistan's commitment to fully implement the bilateral protocol on visits to religious shrines between the two countries," the mission said.

TMC leaders end protest at Delhi Mandir Marg police station

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders, including Parliamentarians, ended their 24-hour 'dharna' at the Mandir Marg police station in the national Capital where they were detained on Monday for protesting outside the Election Commission office. The 10-member delegation of the TMC had staged a protest demanding to change the chiefs of central probe agencies like ED, CBI and NIA.

BJP dubbed the dharna outside the Nirvachan Sadan as a "drama" and an attempt to divert attention from the "misdeeds" of its leaders ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. "The TMC leaders created a scene outside the office of ECI to run away from the real issues. If they have any grievance, they can move the court. What are they doing outside the ECI's office?" BJP leader Rahul Sinha said. The 10-member TMC delegation comprised of Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien, Mohammed Namimul Haque, Dola Sen, Saket Gokhale, Sagarika Ghose, MLA Vivek Gupta, former MPs Arpita Ghosh, Santanu Sen and Abir Ranjan Biswas and TMC West Bengal students' wing vice-president Sudip Raha. AAP leaders, including Saurabh Bharadwaj, joined the TMC

protest at the police station. Police said they released the TMC leaders on Monday night.

However, the leaders stayed put at the police station through the night and continued their dharna. "Today, they again came back to the police station."

They are still allowed to go but they are not leaving the police station," a police officer said. In a social media post Gokhale said the party leaders were continuing their protest at the police station. "As we said - our protest is for 24 hrs. We're all at Mandir Marg Police Station, where we were detained, silently carrying on our protest," he said.

Former Union Minister Birender, wife join Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister Birender Singh and his ex-MLA wife Prem Lata joined the Congress on Tuesday, a decade after quitting the party. Their joining comes a month after their son Brijendra Singh joined the party after quitting the Congress.

Birender Singh (78) is the maternal grandson of the former leader Sir Chhotu Ram and had quit the Congress in 2014 to join the BJP. He was Union minister for steel in the first government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He also held the charge of rural development, panchayati raj, and drinking water and sanitation. On his return to the Congress,

Birender Singh said, "It is not just my 'ghar wapsi' but also 'vichar wapsi.'" Welcoming Birender Singh and Prem Lata into the Congress, party leader Mukul Wasnik said, "With their joining, I am sure the Congress will be strengthened in Haryana and help form the Congress government in the state." Former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda said, "With his (Birender Singh) rejoining, he has proved the age-old saying, 'East or West, Home is the best.' He is my elder brother and I am very happy about his return to the Congress fold." "We need to increase our strength by displaying unity and only then will we be able to save democracy and the Constitution," Hooda said.

Congress slams BJP for giving clean chit to China

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Slamming Home Minister Ramesh for his remarks that China couldn't encroach upon a "single inch" of land, the Congress Tuesday accused the Modi Government of giving a "clean chit" to the country and asserted its encroachment will be halted decisively when the party comes to power.

AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said each time the BJP gives a clean chit to China, the ruling party make it harder for India to deal with China's illegal encroachment. He underlined that in its manifesto, the Congress has clearly acknowledged the occupation of land and the threat posed by China and articulated a clear plan to strengthen the country's defences. His remarks came after Home Minister Shah asserted that



China couldn't encroach a "single inch" of land under the Narendra Modi government. He claimed that people will never forget how former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said "bye-bye" to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh during the 1962 China aggression. Reacting to Shah's remarks, Ramesh said, "On June 19th, 2020, at the all-party meet on China, the Prime Minister declared that not a single Chinese soldier had crossed

over into Indian territory. The Prime Minister's lie was used by the Chinese all over the world to deny their encroachments onto Indian territory." "Now, the only man who can give the Prime Minister competition in lying and falsifying facts - his Home Minister - has also given a clean chit to China. He has claimed that China 'couldn't encroach a single inch of land' under the Modi government." "These are the facts that the PM and HM are denying --

strengthen our defence," he said. From June 4 onwards, the Chinese encroachment on Indian soil will be halted decisively, Ramesh asserted, referring to the Lok Sabha election results date. The seven-phase Lok Sabha polls will begin on April 19 and end on June 1. The results will be declared on June 4. Addressing an election rally in Lakhimpur, Shah said the BJP-led government at the Centre secured the country's border with Bangladesh and stopped infiltration.

"During the Chinese aggression of 1962, Nehru had said 'bye-bye' to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. People of these states can never forget that," Shah said. "But now, China could not encroach even a single inch of our land. Even in Doklam, we pushed them back," he added.

Navy Chief inaugurates pier, residential accommodation at Karwar Naval Base

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar on Tuesday inaugurated a major pier and residential accommodation at Naval Base Karwar, Karnataka, navy said here. Giving details, officials said the pier 3 Offshore Patrol Vessel Pier is 350m long, capable of berthing OPVs, large survey vessels and Mine Counter Measure Vessels.

The pier would also provide various shore-based services, such as electrical power, potable water, chilled water for air conditioning, 30 tonnes mobile crane and other domestic services to the ships. The residential accommodation consists of two towers of 80 flats for Married Officers and 149 flats of Single Officers accommo-



modation along with related amenities and external services.

Further, six towers of Type-II accommodation consisting of 360 flats for Defence Civilians were also inaugurated. These infrastructure developments are part of ongoing Phase IIA of Project Seabird which will accommodate 32 ships and submarines, 23 yardcraft, a dual-use Naval

Air Station, a full fledged Naval Dockyard, four covered dry berths and logistics for ships and aircraft.

It will house around 10,000 uniformed and civilian personnel with families, significantly boosting the local economy and industrial growth.

The Naval Air Station with Civil Enclave is anticipated to enhance tourism in North Karnataka and South Goa.

Indian Coast Guard vessel makes port call in Brunei

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Coast Guard's (ICG) Pollution Control Vessel (PCV) Samudra Paheredar with integral helicopter made a port call at Muara, Brunei on Tuesday as part of its ongoing overseas deployment to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, Coast Guard said here.

Giving details, officials said the visit of ICG specialized vessel to ASEAN countries is in pursuance of India ASEAN Initiative for Marine Pollution, as announced by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in 2022 at Cambodia during ASEAN Defence Minister Plus Meeting. During the three-day visit, the crew of ICGS Samudra Paheredar will engage in professional interactions focusing on Marine Pollution Response (MPR), Maritime Search and Rescue (M-SAR), and Maritime Law Enforcement.



Activities include cross-deck training, Subject Matter Expert Exchanges and sports events with Brunei Maritime Agencies.

The visit aims not only to strengthen ties between the Indian Coast Guard and their Brunei counterparts but also to showcase India's ship-building capabilities, supporting the concept of "Atamirbhar Bharat" and "Make in India". Additionally, 25 National Cadet Corps (NCC) aboard ICGS Samudra Paheredar will participate in Beach Cleanup activities in collaboration with

local youth organizations, contributing to the government's initiative "Puneet Sagar Abhiyan".

This overseas deployment is a testimony to Indian Coast Guard's commitment to bolster bilateral relationships and enhance international cooperation with Foreign Friendly Countries (FFCs). Prior to Muara, ICGS Samudra Paheredar visited Vietnam and Philippines, demonstrating a seamless continuation of diplomatic maritime engagements in the ASEAN region.

ICGS Samudra Paheredar deployment to ASEAN region reflects India's shared concern and resolve towards marine pollution, promoting maritime safety and security through maritime cooperation, aligned with India's maritime vision encapsulated in SAGAR- Security and Growth for All in the Region, "Act East Policy" and Indo Pacific Vision.

NIA arrests key accused in ₹700 crore narcotics haul case at Attari

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Harwinder Singh alias Soshi Pannu, the key accused in the Rs 700 crore worth narcotics haul case, at Punjab's Attari in 2022, an official statement issued on Tuesday said.

The accused, a resident of Naushehra Pannuan in Punjab's Tarn Taran, used to distribute drugs, handle cash and launder drug proceeds through banking as well as hawala channels, as per the NIA investigations.

The NIA has made another major breakthrough in the Attari drug seizure case with the arrest of the key accused found to be actively involved in drug dealing and quality testing besides handling the proceeds of narcotics smuggling, the probe agency said in the statement. With this, the total number of arrests in the case has gone up to six, it added. The case relates to a major conspiracy hatched by the interna-



tional drug cartel to circulate drugs in India through various distributors and channelise the proceeds to foreign-based masterminds. The case came to light following two seizures, totalling 102.784 kgs of heroin drug valuing approximately Rs 700 crore, in April 2022 by the Indian customs, the NIA said.

The drugs, which had been concealed in a consignment of Licorice roots (Mulethi), had arrived in India from Afghanistan through Integrated Check Post (ICP) Attari, Amritsar, it said. The NIA, on taking over the investigation, had found that on the directions of Dubai-based

absconding accused Shahid Ahmed alias Qazi Abdul Wadood, the heroin consignment was sent into India by Afghanistan-based accused Nazir Ahmed Qani. It was meant for delivery to accused Razi Haider Zaidi in India for further distribution across the country, the probe agency said. Razi Haider Zaidi and Vipin Mittal were arrested earlier in the case.

The proceeds of narcotics amounting to Rs 1.34 crore were recovered from another co-accused, Amritpal Singh, and frozen under relevant legal provisions. Amritpal Singh was arrested on December 15, 2023, while attempting to flee the country. Shahid Ahmed alias Qazi Abdul Wadood and Nazir Ahmed Qani are absconding, the NIA said. A chargesheet was filed by the NIA earlier on December 16, 2022, against four accused persons, Shahid Ahmed alias Qazi Abdul Wadood, Nazir Ahmed Qani, Razi Haider Zaidi and Vipin Mittal, it added.

ED arrests one more man in ₹5,000 crore cyber fraud case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday said it has made a fresh arrest in an ongoing money-laundering investigation linked to the alleged duping of common people to the tune of about Rs 5,000 crore through cyber-crimes and online gaming.

Punit Kumar aka Puneet Maheshwari was arrested on April 3 from Terminal 3 of the Indira Gandhi International Airport shortly after he arrived from Nepal, the agency said in a statement. Kumar, a resident of Delhi's Moti Nagar area, is accused of "defrauding" the general public through various cyber fraud schemes, laundering the "proceeds of crime" and siphoning those out of India, it said. "He devised a distinctive method of defrauding individuals, utilising servers located in the UAE to orchestrate scams, with a parallel system established in India to support the syndicate's operations in the UAE," the agency alleged. The man, the agency alleged,

is "one of the important kingpins" within a syndicate responsible for orchestrating a series of cybercrimes and online gaming schemes across India between 2020-2024, amounting to huge illicit gains of Rs 4,978 crore — all of which has been siphoned abroad.

The accused had been "avoiding" summons issued by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The central agency last month arrested another accused in the case — Ashish Kakkar — from a hotel in Gurugram. He is lodged in jail under judicial custody at present. The money-laundering case stems from police FIRs registered in Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, and some others. The agency said its investigation into cybercrime cases has found that fraudsters use different modus operandi for cheating and generation of proceeds of crime such as investment fraud, part-time job fraud, online shopping fraud and loan fraud, among others.

India fame has increased all over world under Modi leadership: Rajasthan CM

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Tuesday said the Lok Sabha elections will prove to be a milestone in taking the country and the state forward. He said that India's fame has increased all over the world under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and the world is looking at India with hopeful eyes.

There has been a revolutionary change," he said. Sharma said that people of the country have benefitted through various schemes of the Central government including electrification of every house under Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana, tap water to every house under Jal Jeevan Mission and housing under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. The chief minister said that fulfilling the water requirement is the first priority of his government. "Water supply for irrigation and drinking water is being ensured in the state through ERCP and Tajewala Headworks Yamuna Water Agreement," he said. BJP's Lok Sabha candidate from Barmer seat and Union



Minister of State Kailash Chaudhary, senior party leaders and workers were also present with him. Later in the evening, Sharma conducted a road show in Jaipur's Sanganer area in support of the party candidate from Jaipur Manju Sharma. Shah also accused the

stopped child marriages. In Uttarakhand, there is the UCC," he said, drawing a comparison with the Congress manifesto. Questioning Congress's support for Article 370, he said the entire country considers Kashmir an integral part of India. Shah alleged that the Congress was responsible for the delay in the construction of the Ram temple, and asserted that it was the decisiveness of the Modi government which ensured that the temple was built in its tenure. He said the development of the Northeast is central to the overall growth of the nation and urged the people to vote for the NDA candidates in all the seats of the region.

Surrender on Katchatheevu shows complicity of Congress, DMK: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday once again targeted the Congress and DMK over the Katchatheevu issue, saying its 'surrender' shows the complicity of the two parties in harming the country's strategic interests. He also took a swipe at the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu, alleging that it was 'busy' furthering corruption and family rule. "For years, DMK took votes from the people of Chennai but did nothing much for the city. DMK is busy furthering corruption and family rule. Their MPs are not accessible to the people, particularly whenever the times are challenging," he said in a post on 'X', after completing a 2-km roadshow here, ahead of the April 19 Lok



Sabha polls. "The recent public information on the Katchatheevu surrender point to how Congress and DMK were complicit in harming our strategic interests and the well-being of our fishermen and fishermen. No wonder this time, Chennai is all set to reject DMK and Congress," he said.

Assam CEO notice to Congress over MCC violation charges

The Assam Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) has issued notice to the Congress on allegation of violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), raised by the BJP. A complaint was filed by the BJP on Monday, alleging that the Congress' guarantee cards, which are being distributed house-to-house, were in violation of the MCC. The CEO issued a show-cause notice to the state Congress president on Monday evening, seeking a response within 2 pm of April 11. "Whereas on the basis of a prima facie scrutiny, it appears that these Guarantee Cards bearing the Symbol and Photographs of Star Campaigners of your party are violative of the Model



Code of Conduct guidelines," the notice said. It said the complaint by BJP stated that the guarantee cards promised Rs one lakh to every educated youth in the first year and Rs one lakh per year to one female member of every poor family, without disclosing the source of funds to fulfil these promises. The CEO maintained that prima facie scrutiny indicated

that the card contains a form which collects certain details of the person, including data which are of the nature of personally identifiable information. It said that while electoral promises are in the realm of possibility, form distribution and data collection make the design transactional and in the nature of inducement of electors, which is a prohibited activity. The manifesto is expected to reflect the rationale for the promises and broadly indicate the ways and means to meet the financial requirement for it, as trust of the voters should be sought only on those promises which are possible to be fulfilled, it added. Maintaining that the guarantee cards are violative of MCC on preliminary

examination, the CEO issued the notice, asking the Congress to present in writing as to why appropriate action should not be taken against the party and its leaders. Earlier last week, the BJP was also served a show-cause notice by the CEO over allegation of violation of MCC, raised by the CPI(M) on similar grounds of collection of data of voters. The Left party had alleged that the BJP violated the MCC by collecting data of people, on the pretext of conducting a socio-economic survey, with the intention of increasing the number of beneficiaries under a government scheme. The Congress had also submitted a written complaint over the same matter before the CEO's office against the ruling BJP.

Shivakumar urges EC to direct Centre to release drought relief

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and Congress state president D K Shivakumar has appealed to the Election Commission to direct the Union government to release Rs 4,663 crore from National Disaster Response Fund and additional support fund of Rs 18,171 crore to the state to meet the severe drought situation. In a letter to the poll panel in the capacity of Congress state president, he pointed out that 224 out of 236 taluks are reeling under drought.

He also cited the recent statement of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at a press conference in Bengaluru. Referring to news reports quoting Sitharaman at the press conference, Shivakumar said she stated the Union government had written to the Election Commission on March 28 seeking permission to hold a meeting of the high-power committee to clear several proposals for disaster relief, including drought relief for Karnataka. "In her said statement she categorically conceded a

delay in releasing drought relief by giving a reason that the Election Commission has not permitted to hold a meeting of the high-power committee. People of Karnataka have been suffering due to lack of adequate relief funds to meet basic requirements like drinking water, fodder, employment and crop loss, etc." the DCM said. As a matter of right, the states are entitled for NDRF and other funds from the Union government whenever disaster

occurs in the states concerned, he underlined. According to Shivakumar, even the provisions of law and the model code of conduct for Lok Sabha elections will not come in the way of release of drought relief to the state. He said the Union Government has wrongly contended that the Election Commission has to permit a meeting of the high-power committee to clear drought relief funds to Karnataka, which is not required in the eyes of law.

Sikkim CM Tamang contesting from two seats

Sikkim Chief Minister and SKM supreme Prem Singh Tamang is contesting from two assembly seats - Soreng-Chakung and Rhenock - instead of Poklok-Kamrang constituency which he won in 2019. Elections to the 32-member Sikkim Assembly and the lone Lok Sabha seat in the Himalayan state will be held on April 19. Tamang is banking on welfare measures of his government like free LPG cylinder to all households every quarter, Rs 40,000 annual cash transfer to the women head of family under 'Aamaa Yojana', extra increment to indigenous people in state government service for raising an additional child, an assistant to take care of infants for one year and regularisation of service of 27,000 temporary government employees among others to win the elections. The 56-year-old Sikkim



Krantikari Morcha supreme is locked in a multi-cornered contest from the Rhenock assembly seat, in which his old ministerial colleague Som Nath Poudyal is one of the five rivals. The other candidates in the fray are Kapil Prasad Sapkota (Congress), Prem Chhetri (BJP), Laxmi Sharma (SRP) and Tika Ram Sharma (CAP-S). Out of 18,200 voters in the Rhenock assembly constituency, 9,000 are male voters and 9,200 female voters. Bishnu Kumar Sharma the sitting SKM MLA of Rhenock Assembly constituency was not renominated from that constituency as the Tamang is

contesting from the seat. In the Soreng-Chakung constituency, Tamang is locked in a quadrangular contest with Purn Singh Subba (BJP), AD Subba (SDF) and Pabin Hang Subba (CAP-S). Soreng-Chakung Assembly constituency has 17,789 voters of which are 8,269 male voters and 8,420 female. Tamang's elder son Aditya Golay is the sitting MLA from the Soreng-Chakung Assembly. Tamang had earlier won from the Soreng-Chakung in three successive elections between 1994 and 2004 as the then-ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) candidate. He had defeated the Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) nominee Tika Gurung in 1994 and 1999 assembly polls by more than 1,000 votes from the Chakung seat as it was known then. Tamang had defeated Satish Mohan Pradhan of Congress in 2004 assembly polls by 6,501 votes.

In 2009, Tamang shifted to the Upper Burtuk assembly constituency from where he was selected for a fourth term defeating his nearest Congress rival Arun Kumar Rai by 1345 votes. The diminutive leader later raised a banner of revolt against the then Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling after he was denied a berth in the Council of Ministers and later formed his own political party, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) in 2013.

NORTHERN RAILWAY NOTICE INVITING TENDER. Name of work and its location: 30-ELECT-08-T-2024-25-E3. Electrical work in connection with replacement of defective AT Panels and Cabling arrangement with other associated work in the jurisdiction of SSE/PS/MT/C.

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE (Through e-tendering). Name of work with its location: Provision of Audio conference system in lieu of old conference system with IP Based Audio conference system in Committee Room (Room No. 237), Rail Bhawan, New Delhi.

Public Notice. Notice is hereby given to the General Public that of Shyam Babu is the owner of FREEHOLD PLOT No. 235, AREA 138 SQ. YDS. PART OF KHASRA NO. 1342/22, IN KHANNA NAGAR, VILLAGE LONU...

Public Notice. This is to inform the general public that Mr. Rajesh Kumar & Mrs. Pinki Juneja are the owners of Unit No. 6, on second Floor (Back side) without roof rights built up property No. 7, area measuring 40 Sq. Yds. out of Khasra No. 266, 267, & 289, situated in the area of Village Nawada & the colony known as Bhagwati Garden Ext. Gali No. 17, Uttar Nagar New Delhi-53. They acquired the above Unit through Sale Deed dated 19.01.2023 Doc. No. 1581 executed by Mr. Gaurav Purohit & Mr. Gaurav Soanik in favour of Mr. Rajesh Kumar & Mrs. Pinki Juneja.

Lakshadweep women voters demand attention to basic issues

Women constitute the majority of voters in the Lakshadweep Lok Sabha constituency, yet they are concerned over the lack of interest shown by political parties in discussing their basic issues, such as the absence of proper sanitary napkin disposal facilities and gynecologists' in hospitals during the ongoing election campaign. The parties pay scant attention to our demands, women who spoke to by PTI in Agatti island, said. "We do not even have a mechanism on the islands to collect and dispose of used

sanitary napkins. Many either bury them in their compounds or burn them," lamented Salmath, leader of the disabled persons' wing of Dweepree, a women's self-help group. Plastic burning and dumping could pose serious environmental issues in the highly ecologically sensitive islands, she said. These women, constituting 50 per cent of the total electorate, are making these demands amidst the men-controlled machinery of political parties that are projecting various other matters affecting the islands to garner votes. This constituency spans across

the 10 inhabited islands of the Lakshadweep Archipelago, with an electorate of 57,574 as per data shared by the Chief Election Officer of Lakshadweep. Out of this total, 28,442 are women voters. No women have ascended to leadership positions in any political parties in Lakshadweep, and there is also a lack of local government system since the Panchayat administration system was dissolved some years ago. The women voters want their concerns to be incorporated into the broader political discourse, and solutions should be devised accordingly. "Nobody in politics speaks about the problems of women here. We have sent several petitions to get a replacement for the gynecologist who has left the island. They discussed it when we brought up the issue, but no solution has been found yet," said Shaharumma, another voter from the island and a Dweepree community resource person.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS. CHANGE OF NAME. I, Adarsh Gaur, S/o. Sh. Raj Kumar Gaur, R/o. House No. 29, Gali No-1, Balaji Enclave, Akbarpur Behrampur, Vijay Nagar, Near Tigri Golchakkar, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201009, hereby declare that both name Adarsh Gaur & Lucky are one and same person, in future, I, shall be known as Adarsh Gaur for all purposes.

Public Notice. My client, Sh. Atul Kumar Nangia who is owner of property bearing address One Shop, Pvt.No. 2, Janta Flat no. B-2-C/1-A on Ground Floor, Janakpuri, West Delhi, Delhi-110058, INDIA vide Registered REINDEMENT DEED executed by Kamlesh Nangia, Aika Chanda, Renuka Sandal in favour of Atul Kumar Nangia via document number 3104 on 23/04/2022. The previous chain documents of said property i.e. WILL executed by Sushil Kumar Nangia in favour of Kamlesh Nangia, Atul Nangia, Aika Chanda, Renuka Sandal have been lost. Any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notified to the undersigned, Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered A/D within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092, Mobile No. 9811215181

Public Notice. Notice is hereby given to the general public at large that I (Rakesh) own (1/2 undivided share), 3/Ajay Kaira (1/12th undivided share), 4/Meena Tewari (1/12th undivided share) & 5/Nilika Chopra (1/12th undivided share) in block No. 9A, area measuring 134 sq. yds. out of Khasra No. 971/761, situated at E.A. Karol Bagh, Delhi known as said property by virtue of Conveyance Deed dated 13.03.2024 executed by DDA in favour of I/Rakesh Tewari (1/2 undivided share), 2/Geetika Bahal (1/12th undivided share), 3/Ajay Kaira (1/12th undivided share), 4/Meena Tewari (1/12th undivided share) & 5/Nilika Chopra (1/12th undivided share) in respect of the entire property, duly registered as Doc No. 2024/11/2559, Book No. 1 Vol No. 9406, Page Nos. 163-174, regd. on 20.03.2024 in SRO-VII, Delhi. Now I, Rakesh Tewari (1/2 undivided share), 2/Geetika Bahal (1/12th undivided share), 3/Ajay Kaira (1/12th undivided share), 4/Meena Tewari (1/12th undivided share) & 5/Nilika Chopra (1/12th undivided share) are the owners of the said property. I/ICI Bank Ltd. is intending to create a registered equitable mortgage over the said property. In case any person/financial institution/Bank/Authority/Board or any other entity has any objection or vested interest over the said property, they may contact the undersigned within 14 days of this publication. It may be further noted that after the lapse of the aforesaid period no claim in any manner shall be entertained and the same will be considered as waived or abandoned. New Delhi, Dated: 08.04.2024. Mohd. Guffam, Advocate D/77/2019. Office: Gadi & Associates-A-4, Westend Colony New Delhi-110021, +91-9800022244

Public Notice. It is Publicly notified that the Residential Flat No 703, on 7th Floor, Tower- O, Aamarpali Princelyestate, Plot no. GH-02/A, Sec. -76, Noida, U.P., allottee of Sh. Nitin Mittal S/o Dr. C.M Mittal and Mrs. Smt. Disha Mittal W/o Sh. Niting Mittal Both R/o E-104, Mansarovar Garden, New Delhi-110015, had sold on the basis of General Power of Attorney which was duly registered on dated 01/06/2013, in the name of Dr. C.M Mittal (Chandra Mohan Mittal) S/o Late Shyuan Chand R/o E-104, Mansarovar Garden, New Delhi-110015, and agreement is not executed because agreement to sell is not registered so it is Publicly notified that the transfer of the property bearing Residential Flat No. 703, on 7th Floor, Tower-O, Aamarpali Princely Estate, Plot No. GH-02/A, Sec.-76, Noida, U.P., is going to be transferred through G.P.A. in the name of SMT. Manju Panwar Negi W/o S/O Shri Pawan Negi And Shri Pawan Negi S/O Shri Aam Chand Singh Both R/o B- 422/B, Sec-19, Noida, U.P.-201301. If same one has any objection he/she file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Group Housing Department of the Noida Authority with in 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. DR. C.M MITTAL (CHANDRA MOHAN MITTAL)

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE. Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender for the under noted work: 1 Name of Work with its location: Part-B: Replacement of Corroded Cantilever assemblies of GZB & JDW section in connection with Provision of corroded cantilever assemblies in polluted zones over Delhi Division.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE. ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005. Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Lost chance

Debate continues over whether adequate measures were employed to stave off the Manipur crisis

Addressing the Manipur issue during one of his election rallies, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asserted that "timely intervention" by both the Centre and the State Government played a crucial role in improving the situation. However, the statement begs a thorough assessment as the crisis resulted in the loss of several lives and property and led to the Opposition's criticism of the two Governments being impervious to the situation. Manipur has lived through various socio-political issues, including ethnic tensions, insurgency and demands for greater autonomy. This has led to a long military presence in the State, much to the consternation of the locals. The latest crisis erupted due to communal clashes and the subsequent violence exacerbated the existing challenges. Modi's assertion of timely intervention implies that the Government actions were prompt and effective in addressing the crisis. Indeed, the intervention of security forces and the deployment of additional troops might have helped restore law and order to some extent. Moreover, the coordination between the Centre and the State Government in deploying resources and initiating dialogue could have contributed to de-escalating tensions. Both the Centre and the State had the BJP Government, so the coordination was swift. However, ground reality suggests a more nuanced but different picture. The recurring nature of crisis in Manipur indicates underlying systemic issues that require comprehensive solutions; merely addressing the symptoms is unlikely to yield lasting peace.

The Prime Minister is right when he says that action was taken swiftly. Indeed, the Army was called in but what it did is a different story. Reports of alleged excesses during the crisis and selective action raised concerns about accountability and the protection of civilian lives. The role of political leadership in fostering inclusive dialogue and addressing the concerns of all stakeholders is paramount in resolving conflicts. While the Government's intervention may have focused on restoring order, the efficacy of broader reconciliation efforts and addressing community grievances remains questionable. Furthermore, the assessment of the Government's response should also consider the rehabilitation and compensation measures. The loss of lives and property entails a moral obligation on the part of the Government to provide adequate support and assistance to the affected individuals. Home Minister Amit Shah did visit the State when it was burning and tried to facilitate dialogue between the warring factions, albeit with limited success. The Prime Minister's on-site absence was conspicuous. With his compelling speeches, he might have helped quell the escalating turmoil. Unfortunately, he chose not to. While Modi's assertion might hold some truth in terms of immediate crisis management, a long-term action plan is missing to date. Sustained efforts towards addressing underlying grievances, promoting dialogue, ensuring accountability and fostering inclusive development are imperative for achieving lasting peace and stability in Manipur.

PICTALK



Students perform 'Bhangra' during a folk dance competition at Guru Nanak Dev University, in Amritsar

Iranian 'bogey' in Palestine conflict

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu aims to broaden the scope of the conflict by involving Iran, leveraging the negative perceptions of Iranians in the West



BHOPINDER SINGH

For decades, US-Israel has consistently blamed Iran for most of the terror attacks, even when actual participants have hailed from countries and organisations inimical to Iran. For example, the nationalities of the 19 hijackers of the 9/11 attack were 15 from Saudi Arabia, 2 from the United Arab Emirates and 1 each from Egypt and Lebanon. All were non-Iranians or even non-Shias — each from a country then known to be staunch allies of the United States of America. Yet within months of the attacks, then US President George Bush had gone on to coin the phrase 'axis of evil' including the troika of Iran, Iraq and North Korea.

Historical and irreconcilable antipathy between a Shia extremist Iran and between Sunni supremacist forces like Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida was always conveniently ignored. The fact that most turf wars (earlier and current), be it in the unforgiving swathes of Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria are played out between sectarian and ideological proxies from either of the two distinct sides, has also been ignored. A creative and often unconvincing conflation of the two historically-at-war forces by somehow linking with specious details of the so-called Iran 'hand' whenever there was a terror attack on assets and personnel of the 'Western' bloc (read, US-Israel-Sheikhdoms), was always insisted. The fact that Iran and its proxy Shia militias led by the likes of General Qasim Soleimani were at the forefront of taking on forces like ISIL, Al Qaida and other Sunni militias, has been successfully obliterated in larger imagination.

However, while Iran and its co-sectarian proxies like Hezbollah in Lebanon or Houthis in Yemen were naturally pitted against the rival Arab/Sunni forces (sovereign or otherwise) — the disproportionate demonising of Iran with its supposed role in terrorism, almost instinctively led to blaming Iran for all problems whilst overlooking the pernicious role played by the Sheikhdoms in breeding violent forces that were to go their way or even rogue e.g.,



Al Qaida or ISIL. The much-vilified Iran felt slighted and retained its belligerent posture and rhetoric against the 'West' which somehow was then used by the 'West' to prove its over-creative accusations against Iran. It became an endless circle of blame game and by owning the 'monopoly on truth', Iran was persistently fingered and accused of doing things that it did do and also for things that it probably didn't do!

Perhaps the only predominantly Sunni militia in the Middle East that has retained a modicum of support from the Iranians has been the Palestinian Hamas — they, have overlooked the sectarian angularity in favour of practicality by accepting Iranian support as the Sheikhdoms had virtually abandoned the Palestinian cause (after legitimising, normalising and formalising relations with Israel) and it was left to Tehran to support a virtually forgotten Hamas which was left to fend for itself. But realistically Iran's leverage on Hamas is not expected to be like the sort of substantial leverage it has on forces like Hezbollah, Houthis et al. Many independent experts have commented on the ignorance of Iranian authorities in the planning of the 7th October attack on Israel — the difference



YET, MUCH LIKE THE INSTINCTIVE NAME-CALLING OF IRAN AS THE PRINCIPAL ENEMY FOR EVERYTHING THAT GOES WRONG IN THE MIDDLE EAST, ISRAELIS LEFT NO STONE UNTURNED TO BLAME THE IRANIANS SQUARELY

between 'support' and 'leverage' is key in understanding the Iranian control over Hamas. So, Iran does support Hamas, but it is highly unlikely that it was privy to the attack plans in Israel, as so secret was the operation that not only was the famed Israeli intelligence caught by complete surprise, but so were many of Hamas operatives themselves. Yet much like the instinctive name-calling of Iran as the principal enemy for everything that goes wrong in the Middle East, Israelis left no stone unturned to blame the Iranians, squarely.

In recent times, beyond the rhetorical sabre-rattling by Iran's actual proxy i.e., Hezbollah and the odd firing of rockets and gunfire (not exactly the opening of a front), both Hezbollah and Iranians have confined themselves to verbosity as opposed to any major military action. But the Israelis have way gone beyond pulverising the Gaza Strip killing an unprecedented 30,000 Gazans, attacking NGO-Aid personnel with impunity and now even hitting the Iranian consulate building in Syria's capital, Damascus. Two senior Iranian commanders of the Quds Force along with at least 9 others have been killed. Most likely these Iranian forces would have been involved in overlooking and

supporting operations in the Syrian theatre along with forces of Syrian President, Bashar al Assad (a co-sectarian ally) against forces of disparate militias from the same fount that germinated ISIL, Al Qaida etc., But like in the killing of the legendary Iranian General Suleiman Qasimi, even this time the Israelis insisted on the rote like that they had, "been behind many attacks on Israeli and American assets and had plans for additional attacks".

More likely than not, an increasingly isolated (externally and internally) Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, is seeking to expand the conflict contours by drawing in Iran as the Iranians remain the favourite "bogey" that elicits negative reactions amongst most Jews and Americans, irrespective of their partisan loyalties. Strangely, it legitimises Netanyahu's disproportionate belligerence and missteps by deflecting blame games from himself by taking on the Iranians, who were not exactly the primary participants. It is an age-old invocation of a formula of convenience and half-truths.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GUARDIANS OF THE SEA

Madam — Apropos news article, "Navy chief awards INS Sharda for anti-piracy operations", published on April 8, is my response. India's maritime security landscape has reached a critical juncture, characterised by multifaceted challenges and escalating threats. With approximately 95 per cent of Indian trade flowing through the seas, safeguarding maritime routes has become paramount. The Indian Navy has responded decisively to these challenges, deploying its strongest-ever presence in the Gulf of Aden, with 11 warships patrolling at any given time. Over the past 100 days alone, the Navy has deployed over 21 warships, put 5,000 personnel to sea and conducted 900 hours of aerial surveillance to address threats. However, the Navy's tasks are further complicated by the increasing presence of the Chinese military in the Indian Ocean, with a growing number of vessels, including research and surveillance ships, submarines and the potential future deployment of aircraft carriers. To counter these evolving threats, the Indian Navy maintains an unprecedented fleet of 46 warships at sea, including conventional submarines, destroyers and stealth frigates. Through constant monitoring, robust deployments and strategic preparedness, the Indian Navy remains committed to safeguarding India's maritime interests and ensuring stability in the region.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

CONTENTIOUS MATTER

Madam — Apropos news article, "CAA: Why the hullabaloo?", published on April 7, this is my response. I was bullied on the first day in my new school. It was my first experience with ragging as well as with the game of othering. Fortunately for me, the school administration and teachers did not treat me differently rather they embraced me with affection. I shudder at the thought of what might have happened if my class teacher after calling the roll number asked me in front of those students to prove that I was a student of that school. But should

Modi will hit a hat-trick



Apropos news article, "High on rhetoric, low on originality", published on April 8, this is my response. The Congress manifesto contains a bundle of lies. Economically it is not viable and practically not possible. One lakh per woman household, One lakh for the educated unemployed, an increase in the payment of wages to the 100 days job scheme and a waiver of students and farmers loans do involve a

huge pay out of state exchequer. Generating funds when the Government is reeling under debt is impractical. Secondly, there is no mention of the most crying problem of jobs and unemployment rising.

Thirdly about women folk, it speaks about reservations in jobs and law-making. The Congress ruled the nation for over six decades. It has not done anything for the empowerment of women. How to rely on its promise? Regarding education, it says NEP will be corrected to the wants of time. Skill-based innovation education is the need of the hour. The less said about ending corruption, the better. Its rival BJP is sitting pretty on zero tolerance for corruption and Modi is likely to hit a hat-trick, the Congress manifesto does not carry promises to face the mighty BJP.

N R Ramchandran | Chennai

any teacher ask such a question to a student when his roll number had already been recorded in the attendance register? It was the school authorities who had recorded the name of the student in the attendance register. Asking such a question means the authorities do not have faith in themselves. Should a Government ask some voters to prove whether they are citizens of a country or not after being elected by the votes including the votes of those voters? If they were not citizens how could authorities allow them to vote? And how could a Government challenge the way it had been elected while completing its term of five years? Anything that can increase the divide between different communities and create fear psychosis in the minds of the voters of our country should be avoided.

Sujit De | Kolkata

WHO WILL UP VOTE FOR?

Madam — Apropos news article, "In a quandary", published on April 8, this is my response. The most politically significant Uttar Pradesh has a lion's share in the formation of Government at the Centre

because out of a total number of Parliamentarians(543), as many as 80 are elected from UP alone even as the state sends 32 Members to Rajya Sabha culminating in the cliched political saying, 'the way to Delhi passes through the very Uttar Pradesh!'

On the face of it, the SP is embattled with a strenuous 'horses for courses' exercise given that the party is replacing candidates on an hourly basis while on the contrary, there's palpable indecision in the grand old party over naming the candidates even in its home constituencies like Amethi and Raebareli. Mr Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party happens to be a significant ally in the Congress-led INDIA-Bloc notwithstanding, their strategies are different from each other. However, scenes in politics keep changing kaleidoscopically till the last instant and surprises being sprung out of the blue till the end cannot be ruled out either. Hence, let's wait and watch the way this political cookie crumbles this time around!

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

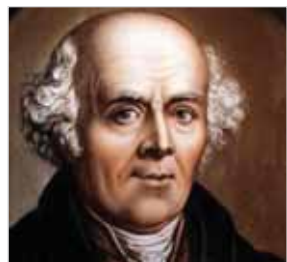
Unlocking the strength of homeopathy

On this World Homeopathy Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to promoting wellbeing for all, guided by the principles of homeopathy



SUBHASH KAUSHIK

Physicians in the early days of the birth of homeopathy persisted in proving its unorthodox nature as a medical science, disregarding its approach to treatment and the laws of nature. Despite their skepticism, the system managed to attract many converts, including numerous reputable physicians from conventional medicine. Notably, Dr Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, himself practiced allopathic medicine before rejecting its crude methods of healing. The year 1796 marks the discovery of homeopathy by Dr Hahnemann. This discovery, documented in literature and science, began with his repeated consumption of cinchona (quinine) bark, leading to the development of malaria-like symptoms. Intriguingly, cinchona bark was traditionally used to treat malaria, leading Hahnemann to formulate the principle of 'like cures like', also known as the Law of Similia. Since then, homeopathy has garnered widespread acceptance among like-minded physicians who have propagated this healing



system across various regions. World Homeopathy Day, celebrated annually on April 10th, commemorates the birth anniversary of the visionary who introduced this gentle healing system to the world. As we approach the grand symposium scheduled for April 10th and 11th, 2024, at the Yashobhoomi Convention Centre in New Delhi, organised by the Ministry of Ayush through its homeopathy organisations, I am filled with pride to witness the enthusiastic participation and fervour among practitioners. This symposium, dedicated to celebrating the legendary Dr Samuel Hahnemann on his 269th birth anniversary, will feature the esteemed presence of the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Draupadi Murmu, adding prestige to the event.

The principle of "like cures like" has endured over time, offering holistic solutions to diverse health challenges. As the world increasingly embraces traditional and complementary medicine, global initiatives in this realm are gaining momentum. Contemporary scientific advancements recognise the concept of Precision Medicine, favouring research in personalised medicine tailored to an individual's unique genetic makeup, epigenetics and lifestyle factors. Homeopathy, with its emphasis on individualisation in treatment, rejects the one-size-fits-all approach, acknowledging each person's uniqueness. Through comprehensive consultation, homeopathy practitioners customise treatments, aiming to restore holistic health and vitality. Research exploring homeopathy's role in epidemics and public health is also a priority. Notably, India has emerged as a leader in Homeopathic research, contributing significantly to the sector's advancement. It is crucial to recognise the role of homeopathy in health-

care. By integrating homeopathy into mainstream medicine and fostering collaboration among practitioners, researchers and policy-makers, we can unleash its full potential and ensure universal accessibility. As renowned healing experts emphasise, there is no division between "alternative/complementary medicine" and conventional medicine; there is only effective medicine validated by rigorous testing. In the words of John Henry Clark, a prominent figure in homeopathy, "As Hahnemann's heirs, much remains for us to accomplish. He has shown us the better way; it is for us to go forward." On this World Homeopathy Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to promoting health and wellbeing for all, guided by the timeless principles of homeopathy. Together, let us envision a future where holistic healing is accessible to all, enriching lives and communities alike.

(The writer is Director General, Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

PEACE NECESSITATES MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Universal embrace of tolerance could prevent wars, ethnic and religious conflicts



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

The reason why the world has no peace today is because many nations and most individuals deny the supremacy of a moral order, in their inter-personal, inter-communal and international relationships. The number of such individuals and nations increasing day-by-day who think that wickedness, cunningness and vice are better than virtue and violence is better than non-violence. Some whole societies or nations think that man is merely an animal, hankering after material progress and comforts.

They believe that man is satisfied merely by sense gratification and that he is an animal that lives from sensation to sensation! They refuse to accept the evidence, namely that man has a conscience and that he has higher aspirations, such as the aspiration for peace, calmness and bliss. Even a most degraded person also has an inner aspiration for solace, satisfaction and peace. However, they fail to realise that peace, contentment and bliss are not the qualities of bodily cells; they are the qualities of the conscious self in its state of moral greatness.

Because of their materialistic thinking and attitude, scholars have given to society what is called the materialistic interpretation of history. This view of man and history has been popularised and publicised by historians, economists and social scientists. The result is that the modern man does not believe in the supremacy of the moral law. Man has, therefore, ceased to apply human values to his problems.



Take, for example, the problem of nuclear weapons. There have been many agitations and conferences to bring about disarmament. In the talks for disarmament or in the negotiations for the reduction of nuclear weapons, the only quality brought to bear is the fear of a way and the resulting annihilation. The talks are vitiated and they do not lead to actual disarmament because no moral values are brought to bear on the problem. The lack of a sense of moral responsibility is, in fact, the most sinister aspect of modern civilisation. The whole modern thinking of man is characterised by a lack of moral responsibility. A psychiatrist, today, would explain that a person murdered because he had developed a complex after his father had beaten him with a stick when he was a small boy! So, the responsibility is of the father who had been cruel to his son! In many other forms, the attitude that I am not responsible runs through every aspect of modern life. This has undermined the moral quality of life. So, if we now want world peace, the real effort lies in giving man a sense of moral responsibility. Let man realise that it is his moral responsibility to eliminate these because these cause peacelessness not only to him but to others as well.

Today we see people killing people in the name of Religion, but has any religion ever taught its followers to kill innocent people? The chronicles of mankind or various civilisations or nations bear witness to the truth that property is worth inestimable and incalculable amount and millions of men have been lost in the slaughterhouse of intolerance during the last 2000 years or so because of intolerance that ensued from a hurt ego, an unfulfilled selfish motives or narrow-mindedness that could not stand the existence of different views, different lifestyles, different cultures and different self-interests. Can anyone calculate or imagine how many families lost their peace and harmony and how many cities and civilisations were ruined because of intolerance? If only this virtue, called Tolerance, had been sustained—all or many other virtues also would have survived, for, when tolerance is lost, man loses his patience, self-control, spirit of non-violence, etc. Therefore it is not too late in the day, for, if even now those who are killing innocent people begin to observe this virtue mankind can be saved from the scourge of wars.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)

Role of education in shaping Viksit Bharat

The significance of ethical education and interdisciplinary approaches in promoting societal change and nation-building cannot be overstated



SUDHIR HINDWAN



The lives of students are amidst a major transformation, largely due to rapidly changing value systems across the globe. However, this transformation, driven solely by acquisition, is unlikely to yield positive results. Instead, it risks turning education, a highly revered institution, into a mere business venture where success is measured solely by material possessions. Moral and ethical education stands as the key to success, enabling the new generation to embrace values and approaches that can nurture the creative urges of the student community within an environment marked by rapid change. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge the challenges posed by this transitional phase.

Keywords such as knowledge, wisdom, creativity, motivation and encouragement are prerequisites for a successful education system. A competent education system must possess an inner strength capable of deploying myriad strategies to tackle unforeseen challenges. Fostering the latest skills and transmitting new moral codes and cognitive thinking surely are crucial areas that can lay a robust foundation for the Viksit Bharat 2047 campaign. While our education system is known for embracing values and approaches that shape the creative urges of students and academicians, it faces increasing challenges during this transitional phase. Efforts must be made to bridge the gap in existing knowledge regarding the contemporary importance of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies. Higher education institutions in India need to enrich each discipline with diverse content and ideas. Even science students should be exposed to international, national, socio-political and economic issues through multidisciplinary practices, as initiated by NEP 2020. Such policies serve as catalysts for innovation and foster academic collaboration across multiple disciplines and institutions of higher learning.

In recent years, there has been substantial change in the content and nature of various disciplines, with a focused approach to integrating real-life experiments of democracy, the environment, globalisation and governance into the new education system framework. It's crucial to demonstrate how



INTELLECTUAL SKILLS SHOULD PREPARE STUDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES ON A GLOBAL SCALE, FOSTERING COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

new higher education approaches can drive change and instil confidence among the masses. The latest research and developments in education globally should be disseminated to upgrade research and teaching accordingly. The strength of the higher education system lies in its internal dynamism, ensuring inclusive growth and contributing significantly to the Viksit Bharat @2047 Campaign.

India's entrepreneurial skills have propelled us forward, overcoming tertiary constraints and fostering innovation. Remarkable initiatives have focused on connectivity and developing new connections, rather than relying solely on the market or cut-throat competition. As Lucy Larcom once said, "If the world seems cold to you, kindle fire to warm it." This sentiment rings true for our forgotten appreciation of traditional values and ethics. The vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 can be achieved by nurturing creativity and responsibility among students, equipping them with moral knowledge and employable skills. This not only broadens ethical horizons and enhances decision-making capabilities but also clarifies what is ethically and morally correct. Practical approaches and workshops can help develop skills through critical thinking and diverse forms of expression.

Ethics transcends clichés, prompting a shift from what is to what ought to be. It's essential to instil a strong sense of responsibility alongside artistic and academic freedom. Despite years of efforts to eliminate major threats, terrorism, caste violence and class conflict persist. Blaming others for these issues is naive; we must acknowledge our role in them. Preservation of identity is important, but efforts to preserve cultural, linguistic, regional or religious identities sometimes damage the socio-political system's fabric. The world also faces the spread of narrow-minded faith, but histo-

ry shows that such faith seldom survives. A robust education system is needed to cultivate responsibility among the youth, playing a pivotal role in achieving our nation's development goals.

Sensitising students and society through low-cost, intense webinars can be highly effective in this regard, particularly in an era of rapid globalisation. Mass media can play a role in political and social mobilisation, with student participation facilitating mass sensitisation. Improving course content through academic discourse and introducing innovative mechanisms in social sciences can enhance the relevance of education. Academic programmes and services should provide supplemental support to teaching and learning, fostering community development both inside and outside the classroom. Research centres should be established to ensure academic excellence in social sciences.

Intellectual skills should prepare students to engage with socio-economic and political issues on a global scale, fostering collaboration with stakeholders from other institutions. Community education programmes should encourage lifelong learning. To enhance student standards, self-academic orientation and excellence should be developed, incorporating problem-solving and inquiry-based learning activities in a collaborative environment. A new syllabus should provide insight into the problem of terrorism and its causes, paving the way for a comprehensive strategy to combat it. Understanding the nexus between organised crime and terrorism is crucial. Cultural exchanges among students can promote harmony and creativity, transcending social divisions. It's imperative to focus on empirical and normative understandings to address societal concerns effectively. The Government's inspiring vision for the future is promising,

positioning India at the forefront globally.

In conclusion, the transformative journey of education towards Viksit Bharat@2047 necessitates a holistic approach, emphasising moral and ethical education alongside academic excellence. The challenges posed by rapid global changes require proactive measures to bridge knowledge gaps and foster interdisciplinary collaboration. It is imperative to instil a sense of responsibility and cultivate creativity among students to address contemporary issues effectively. Efforts should focus on integrating real-life experiences into the education system and fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Embracing diversity and inclusivity in education will strengthen the fabric of society and contribute to national development goals. Moreover, initiatives like low-cost webinars and mass media engagement can amplify the impact of education, promoting social awareness and civic engagement among the youth.

As we navigate through complex socio-political landscapes, it is crucial to uphold traditional values while embracing innovation and progress. By nurturing a generation equipped with moral clarity and practical skills, we can pave the way for a brighter future for India and the world. In essence, the journey towards Viksit Bharat@2047 requires collective efforts from educators, policymakers and society at large. By prioritising ethical education, fostering interdisciplinary learning and embracing diversity, we can build a strong foundation for a prosperous and inclusive future. Together, let us embark on this journey towards excellence, guided by the principles of integrity, empathy and resilience.

(The author, a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav award, is a professor and expert on strategic affairs; views are personal)

Election manifestos: Rituals no one is serious about

From the Congress to the BJP and even smaller players, manifestos are released with much fanfare yet often fail to hold substance

It is election time and the season of manifestos. The Indian National Congress which is the world's largest political party; the BJP, an outfit representing the interests of those believing in Sanatan Dharma and even the Kerala Congress (Mani), a single MP party that stands for safeguarding the Roman Catholic Church have all released election manifestos that promise manna from heaven. If the past experiences are any indication, these manifestos do not have the value of the paper on which they are printed. How many among our elite electorate go through the promises made by the parties in their manifestos? Releasing the manifestos has become a kind of ritual. The Congress which ruled



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

the country from 1947 to 1977 had given a lot of promises to the voters. Provision of round-the-clock drinking and irrigation water, power supply to all villages, jobs for the millions and subsidised grains to the poor section of the society were some of the promises which figured in all the manifestos released by the GOP since the first General Election held in 1952. Interestingly, the party has

never let down the voters as it repeats the same promises in every manifesto without failure. It has kept its promises this time too without failure. For nearly six decades the Congress has kept the country and its people poor, illiterate, unhealthy and unemployed.

The License Permit Raj of the Congress era was to keep the country perpetually poor. While other countries made giant strides in industrialisation and agriculture operations, independent India remained stagnant and weak. A Congress prime minister went to the extent of asking the people to skip meals a day in a week so that all Indians get at least two square meals a day. If there had been a Nobel Prize for the politicians who suc-

ceeded in sustaining poverty, malnutrition and underdevelopment, the Congress leaders would have walked away with the honors. The GOP had some of the best brains who brought in brilliant ideas but the Royal Family that controlled the party had other ideas. They were afraid that if the people came out of poverty and started getting proper education, they would ask for a share in the power.

The difference that stand out in the 2024 election manifesto is the decision by the party to cancel the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution. This means that once the Congress forms a Government at the Centre, it would bring back the special status enjoyed by Jammu & Kashmir which was abolished by the BJP

Government. The manifestoes of the Congress, CPI(M) and CPI proclaim that they would dump the Agniveer scheme launched by the BJP Government. The truth is that the Communist parties never support any move that would help India to progress and develop economically and socially. The saying in Kerala, is that if the CPI(M) declares that something was detrimental for the country, one can be rest assured that it would be good for the nation and the people.

There is an adage in Malayalam which states that if one doesn't like his wife, he would find fault with whatever good work she does. There is this story about a husband who comes back home after a hard day's job and ask his wife

what was there to eat. The poor woman replies that she has prepared tapioca and green chilly.

"Has the tapioca been boiled," asked the husband. The wife replied in the affirmative to which the husband got furious and assaulted her shouting that how dare she do such a thing. Next day when he came home and asked her for food, she said there was tapioca. The man asked her whether tapioca has been boiled and the poor woman, fearing about last evening's thrashings, told him that she has not boiled it. The husband thrashed her many times asking why she did not boil the same! This was a story quite vogue in Kerala in 1950s. This is the attitude of the CPI(M) and the CPI. Both the parties have only one mission

and that is to vote out the "corrupt and communal" Modi Government. The Congress and Communists have declared that they would dump once and for ever the Agniveer scheme launched by the Defense forces. The agniveer programme is a right measure in the right direction though it has some limitations. Only 25 per cent of those who are recruited would be absorbed in the forces while 75 per cent would be removed after three or four years of service.

This is in the hope that all those who launch weapons and warfare manufacturing units would employ the Agniveers who would have been benefited by the three year long skill development program. One has to read this

statement together with the findings of various trade and industry bodies like the CII, FICCI etc which has pointed out time and again that the employability of those passing out of high schools and colleges is poor.

This is not a paean to Narendra Modi or his Government. If the Congress and Communists have to stay in the race to form an alternative to the BJP Government, leaders of these parties should come out with out-of-the-box solutions and promises. Unfortunately, the manifestos of these parties show that they have not moved an inch from the hate-Modi groove they are entrapped in.

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

Turkey, Israel engage in trade tit-for-tat

AP ■ ANKARA (TURKEY)

Turkey and Israel announced tit-for-tat trade barriers on Tuesday as relations between them further deteriorated amid the war in Gaza. Turkey, a staunch critic of Israel's military actions in Gaza, first announced that it was restricting exports of 54 types of products to Israel with immediate effect. The products include aluminum, steel, construction products, jet fuel and chemical fertilizers. Responding to the Turkish trade restrictions, Israel said it was preparing a ban on products from Turkey. The move came a day after Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Israel had barred Turkish military cargo planes from joining an operation to air-drop humanitarian aid to Gaza and vowed to respond with a series of measures against Israel

until it declares a ceasefire in Gaza and allows aid to flow in without interruptions. "There is no excuse for Israel to block our attempt to deliver aid by air to starving people of Gaza," Fidan said, in announcing retaliatory steps against Israel. The trade-restricting measures also come as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government is faced with intense pressure at home to halt trade with Israel. Critics accuse the government of engaging in double standards by leveling strong accusations against Israel while continuing lucrative commercial relations. Erdogan, whose ruling party has roots in Turkey's Islamic movement, has been an outspoken critic of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians since coming into office in 2003. The Turkish leader stepped up

his criticism of Israel following its military actions in Gaza, describing Israel's actions in Gaza as war crimes verging on "genocide" and asserting that the Hamas militant group, considered a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States and European Union, is a group fighting for the liberation of its lands and people. In a post on X, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said Erdogan was "once again sacrificing the economic interests of the people of Turkey for his support of the Hamas murderers in Gaza." In the same post, he said had contacted organizations in the US and asked them to stop investing in Turkey and refrain from importing Turkish goods. Turkish exports to Israel amounted to USD 5.4 billion in 2023, according to the Turkish Statistics Office.

Mixed rulings in EU court on climate cases

AP ■ STRASBOURG

Europe's highest human rights court ruled Tuesday that its member nations have an obligation to protect their citizens from the ill effects of climate change, but still threw out a high-profile case brought by six Portuguese youngsters aimed at forcing countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The European Court of Human Rights sided with more than 2,000 Swiss members of Senior Women for Climate Protection, who also sought such measures in a mixed session of judgements in which a French mayor similarly seeking stronger government efforts to combat climate change was also defeated.

Lawyers for all three had hoped the Strasbourg court would find that national governments have a legal duty to make sure global warming is held to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels, in line with the goals of the Paris climate agreement.

"I really hoped that we would win against all the countries, so obviously I'm disappointed that this didn't happen," said 19-year-old Sofia Oliveira, one of the Portuguese plaintiffs. "But the most important thing is that the Court has said in the Swiss women's case that governments must cut their emissions more to protect human rights. So, their win is a win for us, too, and a win for everyone!" In a reference to its fundamental Convention of Human Rights, "the court found that Art. 8 of the Convention encompasses a right for individuals to effective protection by the state authorities from the serious adverse effects of climate change on their lives, health, well-being and quality of life."

Judgments from the European Court of Human Rights set a legal precedent against which future lawsuits would be judged in the Council of Europe's 46 member states.

Although activists have had successes with lawsuits in domestic proceedings, this was

the first time an international court ruled on climate change. "This is a turning point," said Corina Heri, an expert in climate change litigation at the University of Zurich. She said Tuesday's decision confirms for the first time that countries have an obligation to protect people from the effects of climate change and will open the door to more legal challenges. Ahead of the ruling, a large crowd gathered in front of the court building to cheer and wave flags, including climate activist Greta Thunberg, who was coming off of multiple arrests during a demonstration in The Hague over the weekend.

The decisions have "the potential to be a watershed moment in the global fight for a livable future. A victory for any of the three cases would be one of the most significant developments on climate change since the signing of the Paris Agreement," said Gerry Liston, a lawyer with the Global Legal Action Network, which is supporting the Portuguese students.

The European Union, which doesn't include Switzerland, currently has a target to be climate-neutral by 2050. Many governments have said that meeting a 2030 goal would be economically unattainable. The groups were confident that the 17 judges would rule in their favor, but the mixed decision could undermine a previous ruling in the Netherlands. In 2019, the Dutch Supreme Court ordered the government to cut emissions by at least 25% by the end of 2020 from benchmark 1990 levels.

The Urgenda decision, referring to the climate group that brought the case, relied on the European Convention of Human Rights. It could be overturned if Tuesday's decision concludes there is no legal obligation for countries to combat climate change. "A court ruling is binding on all countries," said Dennis van Berkel, who represented Urgenda in the Netherlands. Together with five more young people, 16-year-old André dos Santos Oliveira took Portugal

and 32 other nations to court, arguing the failure to stop emissions violated their fundamental rights. Their case was thrown out. "The extreme heat waves, the rainfalls, followed by with greenhouse effects. And what worries me is the frequency in which they started happening more and more. That's what really scared me. And, I thought to myself, well, what can I do?" she said. But judges ruled in favor of a group of Swiss retirees also demanding their government do more. Senior Women for Climate Protection, whose average age is 74, say older women's rights are especially infringed on because they are most affected by the extreme heat that will become more frequent due to global warming. Earth shattered global annual heat records in 2023, flirted with the world's agreed-upon warming threshold, and showed more signs of a feverish planet, Copernicus, a European climate agency, said in January.

Germany rejects allegations that it's facilitating acts of genocide in Gaza at UN court

AP ■ THE HAGUE

Germany on Tuesday strongly rejected a case brought by Nicaragua at the United Nations' top court accusing Berlin of facilitating breaches of the Geneva Convention and international humanitarian law by providing arms and other support to Israel in its deadly assault on Gaza. The minute we look closely, Nicaragua's accusations fall apart," Christian Tams, a member of Germany's legal team, told the 16-judge panel at the International Court of Justice. On Monday, Nicaragua urged judges to order a halt to German military aid to Israel, arguing that Berlin's support enables acts of genocide and breaches of international humanitarian law in Gaza. The head of Germany's legal team, Tania von Uslar-Gleichen, said Nicaragua's claims "have no basis in fact or law. They are dependent on an assessment of

conduct by Israel, not a party to these proceedings." Preliminary hearings held on Monday and Tuesday are focused solely on Nicaragua's request for so-called provisional measures, including a court order for Berlin to halt military and other aid to Israel and reinstate funding to the UN aid agency in Gaza. Tams said that Germany had licensed only four exports of weapons of war to Israel since October, "three of which concern test or practice equipment." Showing judges a photo of German aid being air-dropped over Gaza, Tams added that Berlin continues to provide humanitarian support to Palestinians "every single day under extremely difficult conditions, constructively engaging with international partners." Nicaragua's case is the latest legal attempt to rein in Israel's offensive by a country with historic ties to the Palestinian

people, after South Africa accused Israel of genocide at the same court late last year. It also comes against a backdrop of growing calls for Israel's allies to stop supplying the country with weapons — and as some supporters, including Germany, have grown more critical of the war. At Monday's hearings, Nicaragua's Ambassador to the Netherlands, Carlos José Argüello Gómez, accused Germany of "failing to honour its own obligation to prevent genocide or to ensure respect of international humanitarian law." However, another lawyer for Germany, Samuel Wordsworth, argued that the court could not rule Germany was violating the obligation to prevent genocide because its judges have not ruled that Israel is breaching the Genocide Convention. In a preliminary phase of the case brought late last year by South Africa, the UN court has

said that it is "plausible" that Israel's actions in Gaza could amount to breaches of the convention. "How can it be said that there was a failure to ensure respect of a third state, if the failure on the part of that third state to respect is not established in the first place?" Wordsworth said. The court will likely take weeks to deliver its preliminary decision, and Nicaragua's case will probably drag on for years. Israel strongly denies that its assault amounts to genocidal acts, saying it is acting in self defense after Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on October 7, killing some 1,200 people. Since then, 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.

Biden to meet Japan PM Kishida

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida begins a much-anticipated visit to Washington on Tuesday aiming to spotlight shared concerns about provocative Chinese military action in the Pacific and at a rare moment of public difference between the two nations over a Japanese company's plan to buy an iconic US company. Kishida and his wife will stop by the White House Tuesday evening ahead of Wednesday's official visit and formal state dinner as President Joe Biden looks to celebrate a decades-long ally he sees as the cornerstone of his Indo-Pacific policy. Kishida will be the fifth world leader honored by Biden with a state dinner since he took office in 2021. Ahead of the White House visit, Kishida is set to visit Arlington National Cemetery and stop by the US Chamber of Commerce Tuesday. Biden and Kishida on Wednesday will hold talks and take part in a joint news conference before Biden fetes the Japanese leader



with the state dinner in the East Room. The prime minister has also been invited to address a joint meeting of Congress on Thursday. He will be just the second Japanese leader to address the body; Shinzo Abe gave a speech to Congress in 2015. The visit comes after Biden announced last month that he opposes the planned sale of Pittsburgh-based US Steel to Nippon Steel of Japan, exposing a marked rift in the partnership at the very moment the two leaders aim to reinforce it. Biden argued in announcing his opposition that the U.S. needs to "maintain strong

American steel companies powered by American steel workers." Ambassador Rahm Emanuel, Biden's envoy to Tokyo, sought Monday to downplay the impact of Biden's opposition to the U.S. Steel acquisition to the relationship. Emanuel noted that in February the Biden administration approved a plan that would drive billions of dollars in revenue to a U.S.-based subsidiary of the Japanese company Mitsui for crane production in the United States. "The United States relationship with Japan is a lot deeper and stronger and more significant than a single commercial deal," said Emanuel, the former

mayor of Chicago, in a joint appearance at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies with Japan's chief envoy to Washington. "As we would say in Chicago, you got to chill." Nippon Steel announced in December that it planned to buy U.S. Steel for \$14.1 billion in cash, raising concerns about what the transaction could mean for unionized workers, supply chains and U.S. national security. Shigeo Yamada, Japan's ambassador to Washington, declined to comment on whether Kishida would raise the Nippon-US Steel deal with Biden. Biden has sought to place greater foreign policy focus on the Pacific even while grappling with the fallout of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the grinding Israel-Hamas war. Last year, Biden brought together Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland, a historic summit between leaders of two countries that have a difficult shared history.

S Korea's president faces major test in parliamentary polls

AP ■ SEOUL

South Koreans vote Wednesday in a hotly-contested parliamentary election that's largely seen as a referendum on conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol and a possible sign of a deepening domestic divide. Regardless of the results, Yoon will stay in power and his major foreign policy agenda will likely continue. But a failure by his governing People Power Party to restore a parliamentary majority could make him a lame duck for the remaining three years of his single five-year term, experts say. Since taking office in 2022, Yoon, a former top prosecutor, has been grappling with low approval ratings and a liberal opposition-controlled parliament that has limited his major policy platforms. Pre-election surveys indicate that the liberal opposition parties will likely maintain a dominant position in the single-chamber, 300-member National Assembly. But many observers say it's still too early to determine who will win the election because many electorates are being closely fought and many moderate voters will make last-minute choices. "What would matter to the People Power Party is whether it can become the biggest party or the second biggest party," said Choi Jin, director of the Seoul-based Institute of Presidential Leadership. "If his party loses the elections, Yoon will find it difficult to move forward even a single step on state affairs." Of the 300 seats, 254 are to be elected through direct votes in local districts and the other 46 allotted by the proportion of the votes cast for the parties. Election observers say candidates in about 50 to 55 local districts are in neck-and-neck races. Polling stations will open at 6 a.m. and close at 6 p.m. South Korea has 44 million eligible voters, and about 31% of



them, or nearly 14 million people, have already cast ballots during two-day early voting last week. It was the highest turnout of its kind in the history of South Korean parliamentary elections, according to the National Election Commission. South Korea's toxic conservative-liberal division deepened during the 2022 presidential election, during which Yoon and his main liberal rival Lee Jae-myung spent months demonizing each other. Yoon eventually beat Lee by the narrowest margin in the country's presidential race. Lee, now the chairman of the opposition Democratic Party, is a harsh critic of Yoon's major policies and is eyeing another presidential bid. He faces an array of corruption investigations that he argues were politically motivated by Yoon's government. There was a brief soul-searching about South Korea's divisive politics after Lee was stabbed in the neck in January by a man who, according to police, tried to kill Lee to prevent him from becoming president. But as the parliamentary election approached, the rival parties began churning out abusive rhetoric and crude insults against each other. Ruling party leader Han Dong-hoon called Lee "a criminal" and labeled his past comments as "trash." Lee's party spokesperson described Han's mouth as a "trash bin." Han accused Lee of using a sexist remark against a female ruling party candidate.

China's top leaders will lead delegation to North Korea

Beijing (AP): A top Chinese leader will lead a delegation to North Korea this week, both countries announced Tuesday, in what would be the highest-level meeting between the two countries since the pandemic began. Zhao Leji, who is chairman of the National People's Congress and considered the No. 3 official in the ruling Communist Party, will visit North Korea from Thursday to Saturday, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said. No details were released on what was described as a goodwill visit, except that the delegation would attend the opening ceremony for the "China-North Korea Friendship Year." "The specific arrangements for the visit are still under negotiation," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said. A dispatch from North Korea's official KCNA news agency also announced the trip. Zhao is one of the seven members of the Politburo Standing Committee, the Communist Party's top leadership body headed by Chinese leader Xi Jinping. Zhao's visit to North Korea will be the first bilateral exchange involving a Chinese Politburo Standing Committee member since the pandemic started. In 2019, the two countries held a pair of summit meetings, for one of which Xi travelled to Pyongyang. North Korea and China are expected to hold a number of exchanges to mark the 75th year since they established of diplomatic ties, according to South Korea's Unification Ministry. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been pushing to boost partnerships with China and Russia in a bid to strengthen his regional footing and join a united front against the United States. Kim traveled to Russia in September for a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The US, South Korea and others accuse North Korea of supplying conventional weapons for Russia's war in Ukraine in return for advanced weapons technologies and other support.

Myanmar military begins training for draftees as resistance forces keep pressure on

AP ■ BANGKOK

Myanmar's military has begun basic training at military bases and schools across the country for draftees called up under the country's recently activated conscription law, state-run media reported on Tuesday. The authorities activated the conscription law in February in a bid to replenish the ranks that have been depleted in nationwide battles against ethnic minority armed groups and armed pro-democracy resistance forces opposed to military rule. The struggle began when the army seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. Over the past five months, the army has lost territory in northern Shan state and in Rakhine state in the west, and is under growing attack elsewhere. It appeared this week that it may also lose the important trading town of Myawaddy, in Kayin state on the border with

Thailand. Opening ceremonies for training were held in various regional commands and military schools in Mon and Shan states and Taintharyi, Magway and Mandalay regions, as well as in the capital, Naypyitaw, the state-run Myanmar Alinn newspaper reported Tuesday. It said the first batch of trainees were those who voluntarily reported to the army after the military government sent letters summoning them. The conscription law's activation has created fear, anxiety and defiance among young people and their parents. Some are leaving the country, while others are fleeing into border areas controlled by ethnic minorities or joining resistance groups. Independent Myanmar media reported Tuesday that a few young people staged brief protests against conscription at three locations in Yangon, the country's largest city. The protests on Monday were carried out as flash mobs to evade attacks or arrests by the author-

ities. Under the law, men aged 18 to 35 and women 18 to 27 can be drafted into the armed forces for two years. The military has said about 14 million men and women of the total 56 million population of the country are eligible for military service and it will draft 5,000 people at a time and up to 60,000 people a year. Evading conscription is punishable by three to five years in prison and a fine. Myanmar's military is also reportedly tapping an unlikely source to fill its depleted ranks, turning to members of the the Muslim Rohingya minority, who seven years ago were the targets of a brutal counterinsurgency campaign incorporating rape and murder that saw an estimated 740,000 flee to neighbouring Bangladesh as their villages were burned down. Analysts say the move is meant not only to counter the army's attrition through deaths, desertions and defections, but also constitutes a divide and conquers strategy

meant to reignite tensions between ethnic groups in Rakhine. Rohingyas have lived especially in Rakhine for generations, but they are not officially recognised as an indigenous ethnic minority, instead being called Bengalis and described as illegal immigrants. They have been denied citizenship and other basic rights including freedom of movement, and are the targets of widespread social discrimination. The UN has estimated that 600,000 Rohingyas are still living in Myanmar. The main anti-military resistance force in Rakhine state is the Arakan Army, which is part of the movement seeking greater autonomy for the Rakhine ethnic group that dominates the area. Rakhine nationalists were among the leading persecutors of the Rohingya minority, but now the Arakan Army and the Rohingyas have a common enemy in the military government to took power in 2021, making them uneasy allies.

King Charles III receives banknotes with his portrait

London (PTI): Britain's King Charles III was on Tuesday presented with the first set of banknotes bearing his portrait by Bank of England representatives at Buckingham Palace in London. The 75-year-old monarch, who has been undergoing cancer treatment, was pictured with Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey and Chief Cashier and Executive Director of Banking Sarah John. It is seen as a historic moment as it is the first time the Bank of England has changed the image of the British monarch on a banknote, as King Charles' late mother, Queen Elizabeth II, was the first monarch to appear on a Bank of England note in 1960. "The King was presented with GBP 5, 10, 20 and 50 notes," the palace said. "These are the first notes which feature the image of His Majesty. The notes will go into circulation on 5th June 2024," it noted.

Pak Sikh man runs 'Iftar Langar' on Lahore's outskirts

PTI ■ LAHORE

For more than two decades, Sardar Jitendar Singh and his family have followed a unique tradition that draws from the principles of their faith - they run 'Iftar Langar' that provides food for poor Muslims during the Ramadan month. Langar is a communal meal offered to visitors to any Gurdwara where all people are treated equally and offered the same food as part of the Sikh community tradition since the times of Guru Nanak. People also offer langar in their private capacity. Singh, a pharmacist, moved to Lahore along with his family from Peshawar where Sikh families started feeling vulnerable because of rising terror incidents in which some Sikhs lost their lives in targeted attacks in recent years.



In Peshawar, Singh, 38, had his pharmacy shop and also practised as a Hakeem (herbal practitioner) before he shifted to Lahore last year. He opened his clinic and started practising here. Since 2000, Singh's family has

been involved in philanthropic work in Peshawar. "I had to leave my ancestral province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) because of security concerns. However, I did not leave the practice of helping the destitute, especially widows and orphans,

in Lahore too," Singh told PTI on Tuesday. This Ramadan, he has arranged 'Iftar Langar' for Muslims in the Burki area, barely half an hour away from Lahore's city centre. "Besides that, we also offer monthly support money,

wheel-chair, sewing machines and free ration for the needy," Singh said and added that some affluent people from his community are also contributing by way of money and material donations. He is of the view that he is doing charity work for the sake of humanity. "Every Sikh has to dedicate one-tenth of his or her income for charity as per the sayings of Baba Guru Nanak. Sewing machines help widows to earn livelihood, while vendor carts are given to the needy to make their living," Singh said. Free ration is provided to the poorest of the poor and on Eid day, Singh also distributes Eidi (Eid money) to poor children of the locality. Singh was born in the Boner district of the Malakand division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province but sometime in the 20th century, his family moved to Peshawar for business and later to Lahore.

Ukrainian N-plant occupied by Russia is 'extremely serious'

AP ■ KYIV
An explosion caused by an alleged drone attack at Europe's largest nuclear plant in Ukraine on Tuesday posed no direct threat to its safety but underscored the "extremely serious situation" at the facility that repeatedly has been caught in the war's crossfire, the UN's atomic watchdog agency said. The International Atomic Energy Agency said its team was aware of an explosion at a training centre next to the plant. It said it was "informed" the blast was from a drone attack.

The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant is one of the 10 biggest nuclear plants in the world, and fighting in the southern part of Ukraine where it is located has raised the spectre of a potential nuclear disaster like the one at Chernobyl in 1986, where a reactor exploded and bled deadly radiation across a vast area. Neither side has in recent months been able to make significant advances along the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line crossing eastern and southern Ukraine. Drones, artillery and missiles have featured heavily in what has become a war of attrition. Russia and Ukraine have frequently traded accusations over the Zaporizhzhia plant. On Monday, Moscow alleged Ukraine was behind drone

attacks on the facility a day before, and Kyiv accused Russia of disinformation tactics. The IAEA reported Sunday that its inspectors had confirmed "the physical impact of drone detonations" and watched as "Russian troops engaged what appeared to be an approaching drone". Energoatom, the Ukrainian nuclear plant operator, blasted Russia's latest allegations in a statement Tuesday. It accused Moscow of publishing "propaganda" and "false statements" to manipulate public opinion. It noted that Russia has deployed troops and landmines at the site, which is one of four atomic power plants in Ukraine. The other three remain in Ukrainian hands. "The dangerous game of the (Russian) occupiers at the nuclear facility

must be stopped," it said. The most recent strikes did not compromise the facility, according to the IAEA. But the watchdog has repeatedly expressed alarm about the plant amid fears of a nuclear catastrophe. 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. According to Ukrainian emergency services, a nuclear disaster would compel the evacuation of some 300,000 people. Also, Ukraine's intelligence agency claimed Tuesday it struck an aviation training centre in southwestern Russia with a drone and said a fire on board a Russian navy corvette on the Baltic coast was "not accidental".

Pakistan's ex-PM Gillani becomes Senate chairman; PML-N's Nasir gets deputy role

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
Veteran Pakistan Peoples Party leader and former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani was elected unopposed as chairman of the Senate on Tuesday, as lawmakers from jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party boycotted the elections to the key posts in the upper house of Parliament. Saidal Khan Nasir of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was also elected as the deputy chairman. No one had filed nomination papers against the two candidates supported by the ruling alliance led by the PML-N. The Senate met amidst protest by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmakers who were demanding that the session should be postponed until the election of senators from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province where polling was scheduled to be held on April 2 but postponed due to the controversy over the oath of members elected on reserved seats. Subsequently, PTI boycotted the elections of chairman and deputy chairman Senate.

Early this month, elections were held in Islamabad, Punjab and Sindh, but not in PTI-ruled KP province - where Senate polls were delayed on 11 seats due to provincial assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati's refusal to administer the oath to opposition lawmakers on reserved seats. These seats were allotted to the PPP, PML-N, and other parties after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) rejected a plea by the PTI and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) for the allocation of these seats. After the session began, 41 newly-elected senators were administered oaths. The total strength of the Senate is 96, but currently, only 85 senators are its members as elections for 11 senators from KP are still pending. With the election of the chairman and his deputy, the ruling alliance further solidified its grip on power as now it controls both Houses of Parliament. After taking oath as the Senate chairman, Gilani, 71, addressed the Senate, saying that Pakistan faced an assault by "those who sought to incite hatred, those who sought to replace norms of stability and abuse democracy." "Of the many crises we confront, the most dangerous is an attempt to sow hatred amongst us, toxic polarisation and incitement of violence," the new Senate chairman said. Gilani, who was prime minister from 2008 to 2012, said his ambition was to build bridges, enable dialogue and provide space for disagreements within the parliamentary norms for the progress of the country. He said the senators presented the unity of the federation, adding that the Senate represented the diversity and strength of the nation. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif congratulated and conveyed his best wishes to Gilani and Nasir. The premier noted that elections of the Senate chairman and deputy chairman are a continuation of the democratic process. "It is hoped that you will play your role for the upliftment of the Constitution and the development of the country," Shehbaz said.

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Cameron heads to Washington for Ukraine talks

Washington (AP): British Foreign Secretary David Cameron is in Washington on Tuesday to press senior Republicans to unlock money for Ukraine, after meeting a skeptical Donald Trump in Florida. Cameron says victory for Ukraine is "vital for American and European security," but the former president and presumptive Republican candidate is a critic of continued US support, and lawmakers aligned with him are holding up an aid package for Kyiv in Congress. The UK's Foreign Office confirmed the meeting and said it's "standard practice" for government ministers to meet allied nations' opposition leaders in election years. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met in February with UK Labour Party leader Keir Starmer, who is the favourite to become prime minister in an election later this year. When Cameron was prime minister in 2012, he met the then-Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney. British officials did not say how the meeting went. Cameron and Trump have had several notable differences of opinion in the past. Cameron called Trump's proposal during his first presidential campaign to ban Muslims from the US "divisive, stupid and wrong." Cameron was British prime minister during the UK's 2016 referendum on whether to leave the European Union — a move he opposed but Trump enthusiastically supported. Cameron resigned after voters narrowly rejected his call to remain in the bloc. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak unexpectedly brought Cameron back into government last year as Britain's top diplomat. In Washington, Cameron plans to urge US lawmakers to approve a new aid package for Ukraine, warning Congress that it is putting the security of the West at risk by continuing to hold up the funding. He's due to hold talks with lawmakers including Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, and is hoping to meet House Speaker Mike Johnson, whose role is key. In a video posted last week on social network X, Cameron said: "Speaker Johnson can make it happen in Congress."

US Commander worried about Chinese South China Sea aggression

Melbourne (AP): The head of the US Indo-Pacific Command said on Tuesday that he was "very, very concerned" about China's aggression toward Philippine forces near disputed islands in the South China Sea. The Chinese coast guard has repeatedly clashed with Philippine patrol vessels near the Philippines-occupied Second Thomas Shoal. Last month, several Filipino seamen were injured when a Chinese vessel sideswiped a smaller Philippine vessel and another two Chinese coast guard ships used high-pressure water spray to shatter the Philippine vessel's windscreen. Asked if the submerged reef in the Spratly Islands was the most dangerous flash point in his area of command, US Adm John Aquilino told a forum at the Lowy Institute, a Sydney-based international policy think tank: "I'm very concerned about what's happening at the Second

Thomas Shoal." "I'm very, very concerned about the direction it's going," Aquilino said. "These actions are dangerous, illegal and they are destabilising the region." "What's next and how far are they willing to go in that area?" Aquilino asked. The United States, Japan, the Philippines and Australia held their first four-way joint exercises in Philippine waters in the South China Sea on Sunday, which they said were intended to uphold freedom of navigation and overflight in a region contested by China. Aquilino said the joint exercise demonstrated the nations' ability to operate safely, effectively and lawfully in the region. "Those types of events and things are exactly what we need to do to demonstrate that strength amongst the like-minded allies and partners and that we will continue to operate anywhere that international law allows," Aquilino said.

US plan linking AUKUS submarine pact to Taiwan upsets China

AP ■ BEIJING
China on Tuesday said it will resolutely oppose any plan by the Biden administration to connect the AUKUS pact between Australia, the UK, and the US to the Taiwan issue, saying it will risk nuclear proliferation and exacerbate the arms race in the Asia-Pacific. Reacting to reports quoting US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell's recent remarks suggesting linking the AUKUS pact to the Taiwan issue to deter any Chinese aggression, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here that the American official's remarks fan the flames of conflict, and are malicious in intent. "China is strongly dissatisfied with this and resolutely opposes it," she said, adding that it increases the risk of nuclear proliferation and exacerbates the arms race in the Asia-Pacific region, undermining regional peace and stability.



China claims the self-governing island of Taiwan as part of it and vows to integrate with its mainland. The AUKUS submarine project could help deter any Chinese move against Taiwan, Campbell was quoted as saying at Washington's Centre for a New American Security think tank last week. Campbell argued that the 2023 AUKUS pact involving Australia's acquisition of nuclear-powered attack submarines was part of efforts to counter China's growing power in the Indo-Pacific region.

He also made a rare linkage between Taiwan and AUKUS, saying that new submarine capabilities would enhance peace and stability, including in the Cross-Strait that separates China and Taiwan. AUKUS' submarine capabilities "have enormous implications in a variety of scenarios, including in cross-strait circumstances," Campbell was quoted as saying. Mao said Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory and Taiwan's issue is its internal affair, which no external force has the right to intervene. "What is the intention of the US

in trying to link the so-called 'trilateral security partnership' submarine plan with the Taiwan question?" Mao asked. China's will to defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity is unwavering, and no one should underestimate or misjudge it, she said. Mao also said the US, the UK, and Australia are not direct parties to the South China Sea dispute and should not intervene in efforts by the relevant parties to resolve the issue through negotiation and consultation. The recent tension in the South China Sea and increased regional confrontation are inseparable from the US actions in roping in its allies, she said, referring to Washington's backing to the Philippines which during the last few months trying to assert its claim over the Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea which is strongly resisted by China. The coast guard ships of China and the Philippines jostled to assert their claim over the area.

Pak deploys police and paramilitary forces ahead of Eid al-Fitr

Lahore: Pak authorities have deployed more than 100,000 police and paramilitary forces at mosques and marketplaces across the country ahead of the massive Eid al-Fitr holiday, officials said Tuesday. Eid al-Fitr, which means feast, will be celebrated in Pakistan on Wednesday, subject to sighting of the moon. The three-day holiday marks the end of Ramadan, Islam's holy month of fasting. Though attacks during Eid are rare in Pakistan, intelligence agencies alerted the Interior Ministry that militants could use the holiday to target civilians, government and military buildings, and compounds housing police, officials said. The country has witnessed a surge in militant attacks in recent years, mostly claimed by Pakistani Taliban and separatists who mainly operate from the southwestern Baluchistan province. Security was also being beefed up at places where high-profile personalities are expected to say their Eid prayers. Taliban spokesperson for the Interior Ministry Abdul Mateen Qani said forces were fully alert to ensure security during Eid al-Fitr in Afghanistan. He said security forces will be deployed in all crowded areas, including mosques. In addition, the police chief office in the capital, Kabul, has requested that citizens avoid setting off fireworks or otherwise disturbing the peace. Abdullah Khan, a senior defense analyst and managing director of the Islamabad-based Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, said he had no specific information about possible attacks, but "militants can hit soft targets, as people in a large number say their Eid prayer at mosques and open places." On Tuesday, people were shopped as usual at various markets, with women buying bangles, jewelry and clothes for themselves and their children. More than 52,000 police were being deployed at mosques as part of a security plan under which about 8,000 police were sent to sensitive places and markets in the provincial capital Lahore, according to a statement issued by Punjab police.

Sri Lankan President calls for legalising agreements with IMF

PTI ■ COLOMBO
Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe has emphasised the importance of legalising agreements with the IMF to ensure there is no repeat of reversing decisions after agreeing with the global lender, which he said, represents the debt-trapped country's "final opportunity" for economic recovery. Wickremesinghe's remarks come barely three weeks after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said it has reached a staff-level agreement with Sri Lanka for the next phase that would enable it access to USD 337 million from the nearly USD 3 billion bailout approved in 2023 for the island nation. Two tranches of USD 330 million each were released in March and December 2023 even as the global lender has praised Colombo for its macroeconomic policy reforms, which it said, "are starting to bear fruit." Wickremesinghe, also the finance minister, highlighted the country's "history of reversing decisions after agreeing to

IMF programmes and stressed that this represents the nation's final opportunity for economic recovery." President Wickremesinghe also underscored the importance of legalising the agreement with the IMF to ensure that its benefits can be realised for the people of Sri Lanka. Wickremesinghe made these remarks while addressing a meeting with lawyers in Kandy, about 120 km northeast of Colombo, on Sunday. He also expressed plans to introduce a new legal framework geared towards modernisation across various sectors. He sought the support of the legal community for these initiatives, emphasising the significance of their involvement in advancing these efforts, he was quoted as saying by the President's Media Division. He highlighted the country's history of reversing decisions after agreeing to IMF programmes and stressed that this — the IMF collaboration — represents the nation's final opportunity for economic recovery. In March, Transport Minister

Bandula Gunawardena had echoed a similar sentiment. "The previous 16 agreements with the IMF were all violated. It was after violating the agreements that the country went bankrupt. If we violate the agreement again even after bankruptcy, the country will not last. Besides killing each other, there will be no alternative. So, no matter how much we don't like it, the government of Sri Lanka must take the country on the path of debt restructuring and in accordance with the IMF pact," Gunawardena had then said. Wickremesinghe and Gunawardena were perhaps referring to the fact that in April 2022, Sri Lanka declared its first-ever sovereign default since gaining independence from Britain in 1948 and the unprecedented financial crisis led the then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to quit office. A statement from the President's media division on Monday said, Wickremesinghe emphasised the importance of modernising the legal system to effectively implement the

government's programme aimed at fostering rapid economic growth in the country. The President emphasised the collective responsibility of all citizens towards the country and underscored the need for making crucial decisions to address its economic challenges, it said. "Wickremesinghe emphasised the importance of deciding whether to continue with the current economic system or to bolster the country's economy by prioritising a competitive export-driven approach. President Wickremesinghe stressed the importance of avoiding future economic crises through strategic economic policies and initiatives," the statement added. Earlier in the month, on April 2, the World Bank's bi-annual report said that Sri Lanka's bankrupt economy is on the recovery path; projected a moderate growth of 2.2 per cent in 2024, and said, an estimated 25.9 per cent of Sri Lankans were living below the poverty line in 2023, an increase for the fourth year in a row.

'Gunmen kill 6 cops in southeastern Iran'



AP ■ TEHRAN (IRAN)
Gunmen ambushed a police convoy in Iran's restive southeast on Tuesday, killing six policemen, media reports said. The attack on a road in Sistan and Baluchistan province also left two other policemen wounded, according to yjc.ir, a website affiliated with the state broadcasting company. The report said the Jaish al-Adl militant group has claimed responsibility for the attack. The report could not be independently verified. The militants have allegedly been fighting for greater rights for the ethnic Baluch minority in the region. Iran and some other nations consider it to be a terrorist group.

The attack was the second in as many weeks targeting security forces, indicating deterioration of the security situation in the region. Last week's clashes in three separate areas of the province left 10 Iranian troops and 18 militants killed during the fighting and six more members of the security forces died later in the hospital. The province, bordering both Afghanistan and Pakistan, has occasionally been the site of deadly clashes involving militants, armed drug smugglers and Iranian security forces. In December, militants killed nearly a dozen police officers in an attack on a police station in the province. Sistan and Baluchistan is one of the least developed parts of Iran.

Novels from Asia, Europe and S America vie for Booker Prize

AP ■ LONDON
Novels that depict people struggling with the forces of nature, history or economics in settings from rural Argentina to Communist East Germany are among six finalists announced Tuesday for the International Booker Prize for translated fiction. The shortlist for the 50,000 pound (\$63,000) award includes Argentine writer Selva Almada's "Not a River," a fishing story with troubling undercurrents; German author Jenny Erpenbeck's "Kairos"; a doomed love story set in the final years of East Germany's existence; and Brazilian writer Itamar Vieira Junior's tale of subsistence farmers, "Crooked Plow." Human relationships are at the centre in "The Details" by



Ia Genberg of Sweden, intergenerational epic "Mater 2-10" by Korean writer Hwang Sok-yong and sibling saga "What I'd Rather Not Think About" by Dutch novelist Jente Posthuma. "These books bear the weight of the past while at the same time engaging with current realities of racism and oppres-

sion, global violence and ecological disaster," said broadcaster Eleanor Wachtel, who is chairing the judging panel. The winner will be announced May 21 at a ceremony in London. The International Booker Prize is awarded every year to a book of fiction in any language that is translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland. It is run alongside the Booker Prize for English-language fiction. The prize was set up to boost the profile of fiction in other languages — which accounts for only a small share of books published in Britain — and to salute the underappreciated work of literary translators. The prize money is split between the winning author and their translator.

Chandrayaan-3 team receives award for Space exploration

PTI ■ WASHINGTON
India's Chandrayaan-3 mission team has been presented with the prestigious 2024 John L. 'Jack' Swigert Jr. Award for Space Exploration in recognition of it raising the bar for space exploration. The award was received by India's Consul General in Houston D C Manjunath on behalf of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) during the opening ceremony of the annual Space Symposium in Colorado on Monday. As the first nation to land on the Moon's South Pole, Chandrayaan-3, a mission developed by the ISRO, extends humanity's space exploration aspirations to new and fertile areas for understanding and cooperation, the Space Foundation said in a press release. "India's leadership in space is an inspiration to the world," Space Foundation CEO Heather Pringle said in a statement in January when the award was announced. "The pioneering work of the



entire Chandrayaan-3 team has again raised the bar for space exploration, and their remarkable lunar landing is a model to us all. Congratulations and we can't wait to see what you do next!" he said.

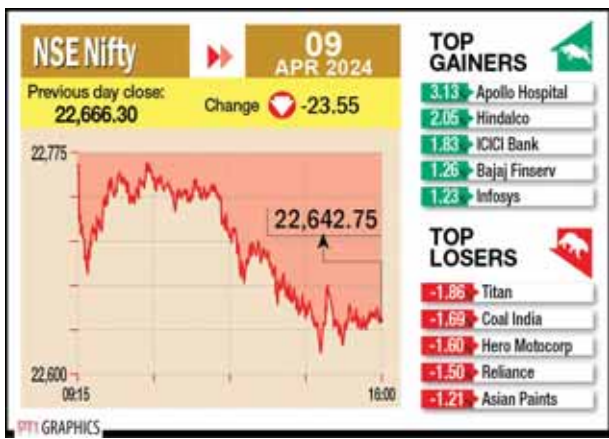
The John L. "Jack" Swigert Jr. Award for Space Exploration recognises extraordinary accomplishments by a company, space agency, or consortium of organisations in the realm of space exploration and discovery.

The award honours the memory of astronaut John L. "Jack" Swigert Jr., one of the inspirations for the creation of the Space Foundation. A Colorado native, Swigert served with retired U.S. Navy Captain James A. Lovell Jr. and Fred Haise on the legendary Apollo 13 lunar mission, which was aborted after the perilous rupture of an oxygen tank while en route to the Moon, the release said. People around the world watched as NASA overcame tremendous odds and returned the crew safely to Earth. In that spirit of accomplishment, the Jack Swigert Award is presented annually at the Space Symposium by the Space Foundation. In August, India made history as its Moon mission Chandrayaan-3 became the first to land in the uncharted south pole of the Earth's only natural satellite.

Sensex breaches 75,000 mark, Nifty scales new peak

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices hit new peaks on Tuesday with Sensex breaching the historic 75,000-mark for the first time during intra-day before ending the session marginally lower on profit-booking at higher levels. Putting a break on its record-breaking rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 58.80 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 74,683.70. During the day, it climbed 381.78 points or 0.51 per cent to reach the all-time peak of 75,124.28. The NSE Nifty closed 23.55 points or 0.10 per cent lower at 22,642.75. During the day, it climbed 102.1 points or 0.45 per cent to hit the record peak of 22,768.40. From the Sensex basket, Titan, Reliance Industries, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra,



IndusInd Bank, UltraTech Cement, Wipro and ITC were the major laggards. ICICI Bank, Infosys, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, Nestle and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the major gainers. In the broader market, the

BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.47 per cent and the smallcap gauge declined 0.15 per cent. Among the indices, consumer durables went lower by 1.10 per cent, industrials declined 0.55 per cent, capital goods (0.48 per cent) and telecommunication (0.29 per

cent). Metal jumped 0.53 per cent, realty (0.50 per cent), financial services (0.22 per cent) and teck (0.10 per cent). In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul ended

lower. European markets were trading mostly lower. Wall Street ended on a mixed note on Monday. "The Indian market reached a fresh intra-day peak before seeing profit-booking at higher levels in anticipation

of tomorrow's key US inflation data, which carries weight in determining future rate cuts by the US Fed. Concerns have emerged amidst recent better-than-anticipated US employment and manufacturing data, suggesting a potential shift in expectations regarding rate cuts this year," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 684.68 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.18 per cent to USD 90.54 a barrel. The BSE benchmark jumped 494.28 points or 0.67 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 74,742.50 on Monday. The NSE Nifty climbed 152.60 points or 0.68 per cent to 22,666.30.



Gold, silver trade at record levels for second day in Delhi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Extending the record breaking run to the second day in a row, gold and silver hit lifetime high levels in the local market here on Tuesday following strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities. Gold prices rose by Rs 140 to scale a new peak of Rs 71,840 per 10 grams in the national capital. Gold had settled at a record Rs 71,700 per 10 grams on Monday. Silver prices jumped by Rs 500 to a record high of Rs 84,500 per kg. Silver breached the 84,000 level for the first time on Monday. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in Delhi markets are trading at a new record high of Rs 71,840 per 10 grams, up Rs 140, amid bullish cues in the overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,350 per ounce, up USD 14 from the previous close. Traders continue to propel the momentum which aided the gold prices to new highs on a daily basis. Further, the dollar index traded lower and US

Treasury yields retreated which provided additional support for the safe haven asset, Gandhi said. Additionally, silver prices also traded higher at USD 28.04 per ounce. In the previous close, it had finished at USD 27.80 per ounce. "The upcoming US Consumer Price Index (CPI) data is anticipated to impact gold prices significantly. With prices already at elevated levels, the data could trigger profit booking, potentially leading to a decline towards the Rs 70,000 zones. "Therefore, maintaining long positions with agile stop-loss strategies aligned with risk management is advisable," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities, said. In futures trade, gold spurred to all-time high of Rs 71,739 per 10 grams on MCX in day trade. The most-traded June contract of the metal was trading at Rs 71,481 at 1700 hrs, up by Rs 569 or 0.8 per cent. The August delivery contract of gold breached the Rs 72,000 per gram level intra-day. The August contract traded Rs 574 or 0.81 per cent higher at Rs 71,813 per grams at 1700 hrs.



RBI launches survey of manufacturing firms

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank has launched the next round of quarterly order books, inventories and capacity utilisation survey of manufacturing companies, a key input for the monetary policy formulation. The 65th round of survey is for the reference period January-March 2024 (Q4:2023-24), the central bank said. The Reserve Bank has been conducting the order books, inventories, and Capacity Utilisation Survey (OBICUS) of the manufacturing sector on a quarterly basis since 2008. The information collected in the survey includes quantitative data on new orders received during the reference quarter, backlog of orders at the beginning of

the quarter, and pending orders at the end of the quarter. It also collects data on total inventories with a breakup between finished goods (FG), work-in-progress (WIP) and raw material (RM) inventories at the end of the quarter, item-wise production in terms of quantity and value. The level of capacity utilisation (CU) is estimated from these responses. "The survey provides valuable input for monetary policy formulation," the Reserve Bank said. While the survey findings are published by the RBI, it treats the company-level data as confidential and never disclosed. The next bi-monthly monetary policy is scheduled to be held from June 5 to 7, 2024.

Manoj Panda appointed 16th Finance Commission member

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has appointed economist Manoj Panda as a member of the 16th Finance Commission. The 16th Finance Commission, chaired by Arvind Panagariya, has four members. Former expenditure secretary Ajay Narayan Jha and retired bureaucrat Annie George Mathew are full-time members of the commission, while SBI Group Chief Economic Advisor Soumya Kanti Ghosh is a part-time member. In a notification, the Department of Economic Affairs said Manoj Panda, former Director, Institute of Economic Growth, is being appointed as a full-time member of the 16th Finance Commission. The member would hold



office from the date of assuming charge up to the date of submission of Report or till October 31, 2025, whichever is earlier, the notification said. The appointment of Panda came after Artha Global Executive Director Niranjan Rajadhyaksha expressed his inability to join the Commission. Rajadhyaksha was named a full-time member on January 31, but later in February he

expressed his inability to join as a member citing personal reasons. The first meeting of the 16th Finance Commission was held on February 14. The government constituted the 16th Finance Commission under the chairmanship of Panagariya on December 31, 2023. The panel would submit its report to the President by October 31, 2025. The report would be for five years

commencing April 1, 2026. Besides suggesting tax devolution between centre and states and revenue augmentation measures, the commission would review the present arrangements for financing disaster management initiatives with reference to the funds constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The Finance Commission is a constitutional body that gives suggestions on centre-state financial relations. The erstwhile 15th Finance Commission under NK Singh had recommended that states be given 41 per cent of the divisible tax pool of the Centre during the five-year period 2021-22 to 2025-26, which is at the same level as was recommended by 14th Finance Commission under Y V Reddy.

Ola to shutdown operations in UK, Australia, New Zealand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ride-hailing services provider Ola has decided to shut down operations in the UK, Australia and New Zealand and will continue to focus on India business, its promoter ANI Technologies said on Tuesday. The Softbank-backed

company said that it sees immense opportunity for expansion in India. "Our ride-hailing business is growing rapidly, and we remain profitable and segment leaders in India. The future of mobility is electric - not just in personal mobility, but also for the ride-hailing business and there is immense opportunity

for expansion in India. With this clear focus, we have reassessed our priorities and have decided to shut down our overseas ride-hailing business in its current form in the UK, Australia and New Zealand," an Ola Mobility spokesperson said. The company had launched these operations in phases in

2018. ANI Technologies has reported a narrowing of consolidated net loss to Rs 772.25 crore in the fiscal 2023, according to a regulatory filing. The company posted a consolidated loss of Rs 1,522.33 crore in the financial year (FY) 2022. The consolidated revenue

from operations increased by about 48 per cent to Rs 2,481.35 crore in FY23 from Rs 1,679.54 crore in the year-ago period. On a standalone basis, ANI Technologies, which comprises a ride-hailing business, has reported a narrowing of loss to Rs 1,082.56 crore in FY23 compared to a loss of Rs

3,082.42 crore in FY22. "We remain very excited and focused on our mission to serve 1 billion Indians. As a technology-first business, leading with innovation, we are confident to spearhead the country's mobility ambitions and lead the next phase of growth in the industry at large," the spokesperson said.

Russian sanctions disrupted LNG supply to GAIL: Gazprom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former unit of Russian energy giant Gazprom said sanctions by Moscow had led to disruption in its sources of supplies, leading to the default in supply to Indian gas utility GAIL. GAIL had in December last year filed an arbitration claim before the London Court of International Arbitration seeking USD 1.8 billion from SEFE for "non-supply of LNG cargoes under long-term contract." Last week, GAIL in a regulatory filing said SEFE had in its 'Statement of Defence' before the

arbitration panel denied that "it owes anything other than an alleged contractually limited sum properly evidenced." In 2012, GAIL signed a 20-year deal to buy as much as 2.85 million tonnes per annum of liquefied natural gas (LNG) with Russian energy giant Gazprom. The deal was signed with Gazprom Marketing and Singapore (GMTS), which at the time was a unit of Gazprom Germania, now called SEFE. SEFE ownership changed after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Clarifying the circumstances

of the default, SEFE said in April 2022 Gazprom transferred the German company to a Moscow DJ which "did not possess a foreign trade license." "...Following this transfer, the new shareholder ordered Gazprom Germania to be liquidated," it said. "On May 11, 2022, the already extremely precarious situation escalated: the Russian Federation sanctioned Gazprom Germania — at this point under trusteeship of the German Federal Network Agency — with a comprehensive, complete supply freeze.

Solo travel to countries like UAE, Egypt, Singapore gaining momentum: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

More and more Indians are looking for solo travelling to countries like the UAE, Egypt, Singapore and Vietnam, a report said on Tuesday. Solo travellers represented about 65 per cent of visa applications for the UAE, 60 per cent for Egypt, 40 per cent for Singapore and 45 per cent for Vietnam, according to a report by online platform for visa applications Atlys. The report is based on visa applications submitted for processing for travelling during summer this year on Atlys platform. Atlys is a mobile visa application app that has e-visa



mandate for over 133 countries. When it came to group tours, around 20 per cent of visa applications for such trips were for the UAE, 30 per cent for Egypt, 25 per cent for Singapore, and 20 per cent for Vietnam, it added. The report further found that men dominated the visa

application scene, with 77 per cent applying for the UAE, and 71 per cent for Singapore. Meanwhile, 30 per cent of women travellers applied for Singapore visas and 25 per cent applied for the UAE, it added. Dubai was popular among travellers from Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi, and Hyderabad while for Vietnam most visa applications were from cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi, said the report. Travellers from cities, including Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi, showed interest in exploring Singapore and people from Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Delhi showcase a keen interest in Egypt, it stated.



RIL, Disney propel Q1 deal activity to two years high: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The USD 8.5 billion merger between Reliance and Disney helped the overall deal activity in the March quarter of 2024 reach a nearly two-year high, a report said on Tuesday. The overall number of transactions, including mergers and acquisitions and private equity investments, inched up to 427 from 422 in the quarter-ago period, but the values surged by 43 per cent to USD 20.416 billion, the report by the consultancy firm Grant Thornton Bharat said. This performance is the highest in deal activity since the June quarter of 2022, the report said. The March 2024 quarter witnessed a 36 per cent drop in the number of high-value deals of over USD 100 million from 28 to 18, while billion-dollar deals registered an uptick compared to the previous quarter. There were three billion dollar deals collectively valued at over USD 12 billion, that accounted for nearly 59 per cent of the total deal values in Q1 2024, it said.

The overall deals included 120 merger and acquisition transactions, while the remaining were private equity transactions, the report said. Domestic volumes remained dominant in M&As, but they have shown a declining trend over the past year. However, on the other hand, cross-border activity, witnessed its second-highest quarterly volumes in the last five years. The PE activity surged with 307 deals amounting to USD 8.1 billion, which is a 51 per cent rise by value and a 10 per cent rise in volumes over the previous quarter. The retail sector led the volumes for the month followed by IT and banking, while media and entertainment, telecom and retail led in values. The merger of Viacom18 Media with Star India, creating an enterprise value of USD 8.5 billion was termed as the deal of the quarter in the report. The firm's partner Shanthi Vijetha said the surge in deal activity, driven by increased private equity involvement and notable mega mergers, showcases the resilience of the market despite fluctuations.

Godrej Properties sales bookings up 84 per cent in FY24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Godrej Properties on Tuesday reported an 84 per cent increase in sales booking last fiscal to a record Rs 22,500 crore on higher volumes and launch of premium housing projects amid strong consumer demand. Shares of the company zoomed 7.85 per cent to hit a 52-week-high of Rs 2,791.20 on the BSE in day trade. The stock closed up 4.64 per cent at Rs 2,708 per share. Godrej Properties sold 14,310 homes during the last fiscal and has surpassed the sales booking numbers of Bengaluru-based Prestige Group, which on Monday

reported pre-sales of Rs 21,040 crore during 2023-24. Mumbai-based Godrej Properties, part of business conglomerate Godrej Group, may emerge as the largest listed real estate developer in terms of sales bookings in the 2023-24 financial year. Among major developers registering bumper sales numbers, Macrotech Developers (Lodha Group) has reported sales of Rs 14,520 crore in the previous fiscal. DLF is yet to announce its numbers for the full 2023-24 but the company has already sold properties worth Rs 13,316 crore during the first nine months of this fiscal. In a regulatory filing, Godrej



Properties said the company has achieved its best-ever quarterly and annual sales during the fourth quarter of the last fiscal and for the full 2023-24, respectively. Its sales bookings during the last fiscal grew by 84 per cent year-on-year to more than Rs

22,500 crore. In volume terms, the sales bookings rose 31 per cent year-on-year during the entire last fiscal to 20 million square feet (sq ft). "This is the highest-ever annual sales announced to date by any publicly listed real estate developer in India. This

was achieved through the sale of 14,310 homes with a total area of 20 million sq ft," the company said. In an interview with PTI, Godrej Properties Executive Chairperson Pirojsha Godrej said, "We had a slow start but we are happy to have caught up. The team has been performing very well and the market is being very supportive." He noted that sales bookings in the Delhi-NCR market crossed Rs 10,000 crore in the last fiscal and said the company plans to launch multiple housing projects in Delhi, Noida and Gurugram in the current financial year. Asked about factors driving sales, Pirojsha said the real

estate sector has turned into an upcycle since 2022 and there is a lot of "consumer exuberance". He said the customers especially while buying under-construction properties are preferring top developers who have financial wherewithal to deliver projects. "In the last boom time in early 2000, people have burnt their fingers badly while buying homes from less strong developers," he pointed out. Pirojsha said the company's strategy to expand business across major cities and the decision to acquire land during the downturn of the real estate sector have helped the company achieve record sales.

East Bengal eye hat trick of wins

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

East Bengal would look to notch a hat-trick of wins and keep their hopes of securing a play-offs berth alive in the Indian Super League when they face Punjab FC in their final round match here on Wednesday.

The Carles Cuadrat-coached Red and Gold Brigade comes into the match with wins over Kerala Blasters and Bengaluru FC.

With 24 points from 21 matches, a win on Wednesday will keep East Bengal in the reckoning for the play-offs but they are in a disadvantageous position as compared to Chennaiyin FC and NorthEast United, who have 24 and 23 points respectively with each of them having one more match in hand than the Kolkata side.

The match at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium will be played behind closed doors following a fire incident on March 13 in the stadium's CCTV room, which left a man dead due to suffocation. There is just one spot left for the



Twitter Photo

play-offs with five teams having already made the cut. East Bengal, Chennaiyin FC and NorthEast United will be making an all-out effort for the lone remaining spot. The top two teams at the end of the league stage will automatically qualify for the

semi-finals. Teams finishing between third and sixth will feature in a single-leg play-offs to determine the other two semi-finalists.

For Punjab FC, who played for the first time in the ISL with the JLN Stadium as their home venue, things have taken a turn

for the worse as they have 21 points from as many games this season.

At one point, they had a definite chance of sealing a spot in the top six. However, dropping 11 points from a possible 15 in their previous five matches derailed their charge to the

play-offs completely.

Punjab FC came back strongly to get some crucial results under their belt in the second half of the current campaign. However, having not kept a clean sheet in their last three games, a failure to do so in this match will result in their longest ever such run in

the competition. In the frontline, Punjab FC have relied primarily on their attacking trio of Wilmar Jordan Gil, Luka Majcen, and Madih Talal.

Being the first-ever promoted team in league history, Punjab FC have a chance to make an impact by spoiling the play-offs qualifications prospects of East Bengal FC.

The previous fixture between the two sides had resulted in a goalless draw in December.

East Bengal have found the back of the net multiple times in each of their last two matches. Doing so again in this game will make it their longest such streak in the ISL.

The Kolkata side will look up to Naorem Mahesh Singh to deliver the goods and the India forward has scored four goals and assisted twice in 20 league appearances this season.

Dimitris Chatziisaia is the key man for Punjab FC. The Greek central defender has helped them keep five clean sheets in the 19 appearances he has made for them in the current campaign.



Injuries are challenging, delighted to be back: Chanu

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

She heaved her lowest weight in years at the World Cup recently but Olympic silver-medallist Mirabai Chanu is actually quite chuffed about her performance as she managed it on the back of just one month's training after enduring a challenging injury breakdown.

With only four months to go for the Paris Olympics, Chanu, who was competing in her first tournament since her Asian Games breakdown, finished 12th at the IWF World Cup with a total effort of 184kg (81kg+103kg), a whopping 33kg behind China's Hou Zhihui, who will look to defend her Olympic title.

"I was delighted to be back in competition. Everything is okay now, recovery is good. I'm training at 70 per cent," Chanu told PTI.

After watching her opponents raise the bar by breaking records in the 49kg weight class, Chanu's confidence received a significant boost when she heaved the barbell after just a month of training.

"It felt very good. After the injury (at Asian Games), I lifted weights after 4-5 months and I got a lot of confidence," she said.

"Weightlifting is different, there is always fear as to what will happen. I felt confident that I was able to make a recovery so fast," added Chanu, who is exclusively managed by IOS Sports.

An Asian Games medal is the only one that Chanu, who has a personal best of 88kg in snatch and 119kg in clean and jerk, hasn't been able to get her hands on. She has stood on the podium at the Olympics, World Championships, Commonwealth Games and the Asian Championships.

In the 2022 edition of the continental showpiece, she not only missed a medal in Hangzhou but also suffered hip tendonitis, with less than a year to go for the Olympics.

What ensued was a dark and challenging period for the 29-year-old as she could only do upper-body exercises and relied on her mother, who travelled to Patiala, for emotional support.

"When we returned from the Asian Games, the doctor said I need to rest. But even after that, it didn't get okay. I used to feel pain while squatting. Injury always leads to mental disturbance. You keep on thinking what will happen in the future? Will I be able to train?"

"I called my family, my mother stayed here with me. That gave me a lot of support. I relaxed my mind and did the exercises that I could in 4-5 months." Chanu's perseverance paid off and she was able to make a relatively quick recovery.

"I only just started training...Hardly one month. Given that, I was able to perform well. But now we know what I have to work on and what needs to be done. Everything is going well and if things continue I will give my best in Paris." Only wrestler Sushil Kumar and shuttler PV Sindhu have won back-to-back medals in individual sports for India at the Olympics.

"This time 200kg won't fetch a medal. There will be a tough fight. Plans are in place for a 205kg plus total but execution needs to be perfect.

"The daily training will determine how the total will be in Paris," chief coach Vijay Sharma said.

At the Tokyo Games, a total effort of 202kg was enough for Chanu to fetch the silver. But with competition increasing, Sharma reckons a 205kg plus total is the minimum she will have to lift.

"We need to work really hard for a medal. Because of the injury, we have to go slow. Every training session is important. We don't want to risk anything by going fast.

"The main training is left. 184kg was an easy task. The most important thing is to go from 184kg to 205kg. A lot of things need to be done.

"We are going slow because we have time if we go fast we can face problems. We need to peak in July-August. Slowly the training load will increase. It will happen, we just need to be injury-free."

As far as the coveted 90kg snatch mark goes, both Chanu and Sharma are confident that it will come soon.

UEFA set to crack down on players intimidating referees at Euro 2024

AP ■ NEW DELHI DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)

UEFA's top referee has vowed to crack down on players arguing with referees and "mobbing" them on the field at the upcoming European Championship in Germany.

Roberto Rosetti, UEFA managing director of refereeing, addressed a gathering of coaches from the 24 competing teams on Monday in Germany and called on them to ensure their players show respect for game officials.

"Unacceptable players' behaviour is a problem for officials. The players are following you and, if you are calm, your players are more calm," he told the coaches,



according to a UEFA statement on Tuesday.

"We want to avoid unnecessary cards and protect the image of the game, so we will be strong with mobbing and clear dissent. This is about protecting the image of the game and a positive legacy for future generations. We have to do something and we need you because you are super important for us."

Rosetti is an experienced Italian referee who oversaw the European Championship final in 2008, when Spain beat Germany 1-0.

UEFA also said it will make a decision soon on whether to allow teams to pick 26 players instead of the usual 23 for the tournament. The expanded squads were used as

a temporary measure at the last European Championship in 2021 to allow players to be replaced quickly if they tested positive for COVID-19 while in camp.

Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman argued last month for a return to 26-player squads because "you have to deal with more injuries these days," but Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann disagreed in comments Monday.

Nagelsmann said he favoured sticking with 23 because he was concerned about the atmosphere in a larger squad suffering if too many players aren't getting game time.

UEFA said there was no consensus among the coaches at Monday's meeting.



It is Nikhat time, Lovlina needs to be more proactive: Fernandez

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Indian men's boxing coach Blas Iglesias Fernandez has backed world champion Nikhat Zareen (50kg) to bag a medal at this year's Paris Olympics but feels that Tokyo Games bronze-medallist Lovlina Borgohain's (75kg) chances will boil down to her level of aggression in the ring.

The 68-year-old Cuban, who served for over two decades as the men's coach and also became the first and only overseas Dronacharya awardee, has been appointed by the Sports Authority of India as High Performance Coach for a two-year period.

Fernandez is stationed at the National Boxing Academy in Rohtak, Haryana. Speaking recently on the sidelines of the multi-nation camp for junior boxers at the National Centre of Excellence in Rohtak, Fernandez evaluated India's chances at the upcoming Summer Games.

"I love the boxing (style) of Nikhat. She is very intelligent. She has good ring tactics. She knows when she is winning and when she is losing," Fernandez told SAI Media. "This is Nikhat's time to prove herself. It's true that she had lived in the shadows of Mary Kom but now it's her chance to prove herself and make India proud," he said.

The Cuban was a part of the Indian men's coaching staff when Vijender Singh claimed the first Olympic medal in the country's

boxing history back in the 2008 Beijing edition.

He also hit the headlines in 2014 for coping a disciplinary ban for losing his cool after L Sarita Devi's controversial semifinal loss in the Asian Games.

The veteran says he sees potential in Borgohain too but she has to come across more purposeful, especially when the chips are down in the ring.

"Lovlina has to show more killer instinct. I have seen some of her bouts and I think she lost them because Lovlina was not aggressive and proactive enough.

If she can box to her potential, she can finish among the medals in Paris," said Fernandez.

The 26-year-old Borgohain has endured a mixed run after her Tokyo medal. She moved up from 69kg to 75kg and did not finish among the medals at the 2022 World Championships and the Commonwealth Games.

But the tall Assam girl bagged her Paris ticket after winning the silver medal at the 2023 Hangzhou Asian Games before being crowned world champion last year.

Zareen and Borgohain are among four Indian women boxers who have qualified for the July-August Summer Games in Paris.

The others are Preeti Pawar (54kg) and Parveen Hooda (57kg). Fernandez is hoping that India's male boxers will also qualify for the Paris Games. It will depend on how they fare in the second and final world qualifiers in Bangkok from May 23 to June 3.

CANDIDATES CHESS Indian performance satisfactory so far, say Barua, Thipsay



PTI ■ TORONTO

Indian Grandmasters Dibyendu Barua and Pravin Thipsay are quite impressed with how the country's five-strong contingent, led by the prodigal R Praggnanandhaa, has performed so far at the prestigious Candidates Chess Tournament here.

The Candidates tournament has a rest day after four rounds of intensive chess with Ian Nepomniachtchit from Russia leading the standings. India's D Gukesh is a joint second on the table with Praggnanandhaa at fourth along with Vidit Gujrathi.

With 10 rounds still to go, Barua feels that Koneru Humpy can still strike back in the women's competition after succumbing to her first defeat at the hands of lowest seed and youngest participant Nurgul Salimova of Bulgaria.

"Vidit can bounce back and Gukesh can score well. I would not rate Humpy out of equations as yet, she has the acumen and a great will to win, we will know in a few days," Barua, a three-time national

champion who was second Indian chess player after Viswanathan Anand to become a GM, told PTI.

In women's section, R Vaishali holds the joint third position. Humpy slipped to joint sixth on 1.5 points.

Grandmaster Pravin Thipsay said the Indians are in with a good chance. "Nakamura is not motivated so that leaves the Indian trio plus Nepo and Fabio Caruana," Thipsay said.

Praggnanandhaa's long-time trainer R B Ramesh said that it's a good beginning for the 18-year-old.

"I think Pragg did exceptionally well coming out with that loss and I also feel bad that he could have done better against Gukesh," he said.

When asked about his absence from Praggnanandhaa's corner, Ramesh said that it was a conscious decision. In the Women's event Tan Zhongyi of China has taken the early lead with. A full point behind is R Vaishali, Praggnanandhaa's sister.

Aleksandra Goryachikina might feel threatened as of now as the rating favourite in the section as she the one trying to compete desperately with Tan. The women's section may see a lot of turnaround as the matches progress but on everyone's mind is Tan who has steely nerves and the will to win. Pairings women round 5: R Vaishali (2) vs Anna Muzychuk (Ukr, 1.5); Koneru Humpy (1.5) vs Aleksandra Goryachikina (Fid, 2.5); Tingjie Lei (Chn, 1.5) vs Kateryna Lagno (Fid, 2); Zhongyi Tan (Chn, 3) vs Nurgul Salimova (Bul 2).

For Djokovic and Bopanna, dedication, experience is mantra for success

PTI ■ MONTE CARLO

For Rohan Bopanna, experience counts a lot while unflinching dedication towards the game is paramount for Serbian great Novak Djokovic to be successful on the challenging ATP Tour as the two oldest world number ones in singles and doubles formats engaged in a fun chat at Monte Carlo Masters.

Bopanna, at the age 44, was already oldest player to hold number one rank in the world in the doubles and 36-year-old Djokovic surpassed Roger Federer to become the oldest number one in the latest singles rankings chart.

The ATP Tour brought the world number ones for a short conversation as they prepared for the prestigious tournament.

"Tennis teaches us so many wonderful things. Experience wins and that is where I have got it," Bopanna told Djokovic in a video posted by ATP.

The Serbian responded by saying it is not just all about experience. "I would say experience but also still being dedicated and devoted to the game every single day.

"I see him (Bopanna) in the gym for countless hours and also more hours with the physio, bit more than before (laughs) but it is amazing to share the tour with you for so many years.

"What an incredible moment to be oldest number in singles and doubles. It is great for Serbian and Indian tennis," said Djokovic, who has won a record 24 men's major titles.

Djokovic has not played in India since featuring in the now defunct International Tennis Premier League (ITPL) which was held from 2014 to 2016.

"Hopefully we can do something in India soon, we can play there, have not been to India for many years. It is a huge and amazing country.

"To have tennis at high level of popularity in India is extremely important for our sport and you are contributing to that along with Sania Mirza, (Mahesh) Bhupathi and (Leander) Paes paved the way," he said to Bopanna, who won the Miami Masters title last month.

"We are old but gold," said Djokovic and ended the conversation with a 'Namaste'.

India to keep five Tests hockey series alive against Australia

PTI ■ PERTH

The Indian men's hockey team would aim for a cohesive effort to avoid a hat-trick of losses when it takes on a formidable Australia in the third Test of the five-match series here on Wednesday.

The Indians were drubbed 1-5 and 2-4 by Australia in the first two matches of the series, which is a part of preparations for this year's Paris Olympics for both the sides.

The tour is of huge significance for India as it will provide valuable inputs about the areas to improve to chief coach Craig Fulton.

And the first two matches have already done that as the Indian defence was put under continuous pressure by quick turnovers by the Kookaburras. The Indian defence, led by skipper Harmanpreet Singh, did not have the best days in the first two games as it wilted when put under pressure and conceded both penalty corners and soft field goals.

The lack of ideas from the forwards inside the opposition circle is another area the Indians would need to address. The likes of Mandeep Singh, Abhishek, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Gurjant Singh and Sukhjeet need to make use of



the chances they get if they are to outplay a strong side like Australia.

The Indian mid-field, however, has been decent so far. Vice-captain Hardik Singh has been the backbone of the mid-field, which combined well with the strikers, to create plenty of opportunities.

India coach Fulton was expected to try different strategies during the tour and he already started that which was evident in the last two games. From short and brisk passing hockey using the flanks to counter-attacking moves, all these gameplans were on full

display from the Indians in the two games.

The Indians also used long aerial lobbs from the deep to build attacks but failed to breach a resolute Australian defence. With a world renowned drag-flicker in skipper Harmanpreet, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay and Amit Rohidas in the rank, India boast of a potent force in penalty corners and all their three goals in the tour came from set pieces.

But Fulton would be expecting more direct strikes from his penalty corner specialists. The fourth match of the series will be played here on April 12 followed by the final games on April 13.



RR looks to keep winning juggernaut rolling

JAISWAL FORM A CONCERN

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Yashasvi Jaiswal would be desperate to let his bat do the talking when an unbeaten Rajasthan Royals take on an under pressure Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League here on Wednesday. RR could not have asked for a better start to the season, registering four consecutive wins from as many games. But Jaiswal, who has been terrific for the national team of late, has tallied just 39 runs in four games. If he is back amongst the runs, it will be icing on the cake for RR as his opening partner Jos Buttler returned to form with an unbeaten century against Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Sanju Samson has been leading RR from the front, scoring 178 runs from four games including two fifties. But it is Riyan Parag's performance with the bat that has been a revelation for RR. The all-rounder from Guwahati is the third highest run-getter in the tournament so far with 185 runs, including two unbeaten half-centuries. The likes of Shimron



Hetmyer and Dhruv Jurel also needs to contribute more in the middle-order.

Rajasthan also boast of potent bowling attack in the form of pacers Trent Boult

and Nandre Burger, and leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, who has been their stand-out

performer with eight wickets, the second highest

But Ravichandran Ashwin's patchy form is a surprise. He has taken just one wicket

from four matches while giving away eight runs per over. GT, on the other hand, witnessed a mixed bag campaign so far with two wins and three losses out of five games.

The Shubman Gill-led side would look to avoid a hat-trick of losses on Wednesday but it would be easier said than done against an opponent on rampage. They would be looking to bounce from back after a 'poor' effort with the bat against Lucknow Super Giants. Veterans Mohit Sharma and Umesh Yadav have been the stand-out performers with the ball for GT but they fell flat in front of little-known Punjab Kings cricketers Shashank Singh and

Ashutosh Sharma in a thrilling tie. The Afghan trio of Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad also need to raise their game.

TEAMS (FROM)
RAJASTHAN ROYALS: Sanju Samson (c), Jos Buttler, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Riyan Parag, Donovan Ferreira, Kunal Rathore, Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Sen, Navdeep Saini, Keshav Maharaj, Sandeep Sharma, Trent Boult, Gill, personally, have had a decent outing with the bat so far, scoring 183 runs from five games with a strike rate close to 147. His opening partner B Sai Sudharsan too has been among runs but is yet to register a fifty in the tournament. He replaced Wriddhiman Saha at the top in the previous and is expected to bat alongside Gill also on Wednesday. Veterans Mohit Sharma and Umesh Yadav have been the stand-out performers with the ball for GT but they fell flat in front of little-known Punjab Kings cricketers Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma in a thrilling tie. The Afghan trio of Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad also need to raise their game.

GUJARAT TITANS: Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Matthew Wade, Wriddhiman Saha, Robin Minz, Kane Williamson, Abhinav Mandhar, B Sai Sudarshan, Darshan Nalkande, Vijay Shankar, Azmatullah Omarzai, Shahrukh Khan, Jayant Yadav, Rahul Tewatia, Kartik Tyagi, Shshant Mishra, Spencer Johnson, Noor Ahmad, Sai Kishore, Umesh Yadav, Rashid Khan, Joshua Little, Mohit Sharma and Manav Suthar.

We could have assessed the pitch better: Varun



Chennai Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakaravathy says misreading the pitch contributed immensely to their downfall against hosts Chennai Super Kings here. The pitch used for the game on Monday behaved differently compared to the ones used for the first two games. KKR managed only 137/9 and CSK chased it down in 17.4 overs. "When I saw the wicket, it appeared to be a flat one. But the way it behaved was totally different," said Chakaravathy in the post-match media interaction. "We could have assessed the

pitch better because it was very slow initially. It was tough to connect the ball, but I felt 160 would have been a par score. "Also, there was a lot of dew. The last over that I bowled to (Shivam) Dube made a lot of difference since the seam was very wet, and I couldn't grip the ball much," said the mystery spinner. The seven-wicket defeat on Monday was KKR's first loss of the season. Chakaravathy failed to get a single wicket, finishing with figures of 0/26, but he was the most economical of the lot. "We have plans for every batsman, but the most important thing is to execute them. In every team, some batters are going to dominate, and you have to find a way to counter them," he said. CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad too felt strokeplay was tough on the surface. "The wickets in the last two games were really good. It came on to the bat really well, and we kept playing our shots. "In this game, the ball was slightly holding in the second innings, and there was some amount of dew as well. I believe the sudden climate change, with a lot more humidity and dew played a part," said Gaikwad.

Half century against KKR will help Ruturaj decision making as captain: Morgan

Chennai Super Kings skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad's 58-ball 67 against Kolkata Knight Riders in an IPL game here will not only make him a confident batter but also an assured captain, feels World Cup winning former England skipper Eoin Morgan. Gaikwad, who has taken over leadership duties from the legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni, had scores of 15, 1, 46 and 26 in the first four games before striking big against KKR on Monday, who was his first half-century of the current season. "This innings (67 vs KKR) will build a huge amount of belief and confidence for him (Gaikwad) in his game. Playing an innings like this, early in the tournament will give him a lot of reassurance on his decision-making and pass on a message to the team," Morgan, a JioCinema



TATA IPL expert, was quoted as saying in a press release. Morgan, who had led KKR to the final of the 2021 IPL, was happy to see the CSK skipper in sublime touch. "He is a classy player, we have seen that for a long time now and it is great to see him in such touch. He had a great game, right from the toss to captaincy decisions, getting the spinners on after the

powerplay, he was exceptional today." Among other experts, former India pacer RP Singh lauded Jadeja for bowling with exceptional control. "The best part about Jadeja's bowling is he bowls at a good length and the pace at which he bowled today was great. He left no doubt as to who the best performer of the match was, took a couple

of catches, got three wickets, and gave an all-round performance." His former India teammate Robin Uthappa was happy to see Daryl Mitchell slowly fitting into the shoes of Ambati Rayudu, who was stellar during his time at the CSK. "This is what you want from a player coming in at number three and play the role that Ambati Rayudu did for CSK, playing aggressively, maintaining the momentum of the game while building important partnerships for the team and he played that role well today," Uthappa said. "He (Mitchell) was very proactive in his innings today. Before this innings, he took a little bit more time but today he adjusted the attack, took the pressure off Gaikwad, especially in that over where he played the reverse-sweep at the end," Uthappa concluded.

Viyaskanth joins SRH as replacement for Hasaranga

Sunrisers Hyderabad on Tuesday roped in young Sri Lanka leg-spinner Vijayakanth Viyaskanth as a replacement for the injured Wanindu Hasaranga in the ongoing edition of the Indian Premier League. The 22-year-old Vijayakanth, who has played one T20 for Sri Lanka, is a like-for-like replacement for leg-spinner Hasaranga. He has joined Sunrisers for a base price of Rs 50 lakh. "Sunrisers Hyderabad have signed Vijayakanth Viyaskanth as a replacement for the injured Wanindu Hasaranga for the remainder of the Tata Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024," an IPL statement said. Hasaranga was set to turn



out for SRH in the 2024 IPL after being bought by the 2016 champions for Rs 1.5 crore last year. However, chronic heel pain in his left foot ruled him out of the IPL this year. He previously played for Royal Challengers Bengaluru. He had a stellar 2022 season, taking 26 wickets with an economy of 7.54, but in 2023 he played only eight games and took nine wickets with an economy of 8.9.

Nitish lifts SRH after early wobble against PBKS

Young Nitish Reddy showed tremendous character during a vital 37-ball 64, which lifted Sunrisers Hyderabad to a challenging 182/9 against Punjab Kings in their Indian Premier League match here on Tuesday. Left-arm seamer Arshdeep

Singh (4/29) was the standout bowler for PBKS, but SRH still eventually finished with a total that looked improbable at one stage. Abdul Samad chipped in with a 12-ball 25 before Jaydev Unadkat ended the SRH innings with a last ball six. The match got underway on an eventful note as Travis

Head (21 off 15 balls) would have been out first ball after a clear edge. But the opener must thank Kagiso Rabada for prolonging his stay in the middle as the South African lead pacer, having opened up Head completely, was not sure if he had indeed induced an edge. Wicketkeeper Jitesh Sharma

went up straightaway but Rabada didn't join his colleague loudly enough, as the batter got a reprieve with PBKS refusing to take a review. Replays showed a clear edge, and it was strange on Rabada's part who was smashed for three successive boundaries by Head for a 16-run third

over. Head got a thick edge for a four, got the second boundary through the off-side, and then played one on the rise through mid-on for his third straight four off Rabada. Despite living a charmed life, Head failed to capitalise, thanks to PBKS skipper Shikhar Dhawan, who ran

back and kept his eyes on the ball to complete an excellent catch, which was followed by his trademark thigh-slap celebration. It was a big breakthrough for PBKS and their captain was delighted, and so was bowler Arshdeep Singh, who was the beneficiary of Dhawan's judgement and athleticism.

Was told about leading CSK in 2022: Gaikwad

The charismatic Mahendra Singh Dhoni told Ruturaj Gaikwad to be prepared for Chennai Super Kings captaincy back in 2022 and he has been ready ever since even though there were no "deep conversations" between the two on how to lead one of the most successful IPL units. Gaikwad, who led from the front in the win against Kolkata Knight Riders on Monday night, was stunningly appointed CSK captain a day before the IPL opener on March 22. The team's earlier leadership experiment with Ravindra Jadeja did not work but the CSK think-tank has been bullish about Gaikwad's long-term reign.

Dhoni is known for his no nonsense approach and that is how he discussed the transition with Gaikwad. "To be honest, not really deep conversations. I feel it was in a very chilled state. Just one conversation I would say. Just we were practicing and he came and told me all this stuff," Gaikwad said in the post-match press conference after the seven-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders here on Monday. "Obviously, everyone, others on the outside, would think they are big shoes to fill, but I feel I would always be myself and I would like to continue the culture that has been going on. "I remember in 2022 when he told me, 'Probably not next year, but after that, you might get a



chance to lead, so be ready for it'. So, obviously after that, I was always ready for it," said the opener. A franchise like CSK is quite

meticulous with its planning and that is why head coach Stephen Fleming was discussing field and bowling changes with Gaikwad last year.

"It was nothing new to me or a surprise or a shock. I know how to control the game. I know how the game progresses, which change (to make), and what to do when, as I was doing for the state team (Maharashtra) as well. "Even last year, Fleming and I used to discuss captaincy after every game, about how I felt, what changes, bowling changes that I felt we needed to do, this or that. Every game, we had one-on-one conversations so that really helped." When asked what change had he brought in as skipper, Gaikwad asserted that he believes in continuity. "Captaincy-wise, I don't want to be a specific kind of character. Just let things flow and keep the culture of CSK going. The success

that we had and the things we have been doing, I don't want to change a single bit of it. "I just want to come here, make my own decisions and just give as much freedom as possible because that's what has been happening from when I joined CSK. Nothing really changes and I'm enjoying a lot." "Captaincy, while batting, is a totally different approach" Gaikwad's batting as the skipper this season has not been at his usual best but he made an unbeaten 67 against KKR. When asked if captaincy had compelled him to make some changes to his batting, he said, "Sometimes there are phases where you get good balls. Sometimes there are phases

where you are slightly unlucky. Sometimes there are phases where things don't really fall in shape. "So, you don't really need to think on that. I always felt I was in good shape, starting really well, good headspace, so I wasn't really worried. "And captaincy, while batting, is a totally different approach. Even when I was playing my first game, or the first fifty I scored for CSK, I think (it was a) similar kind of situation. "We were chasing 140 and I always wanted to stay till the end and make sure I finish the innings so pretty much same. Nothing really changes even though I am captain or not," he said referring to the 138-run target set by KKR.