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# Eid prayers offered within masjid premises for first time: LG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time, Eid prayers (namaaz) were offered within the masjid premises across the national capital on Friday. Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Thursday said this year's Eid was perhaps for the first time in the history of Delhi that 'namaz' was offered inside mosques and not on the roads, and added that it was an excellent example of harmony and co-existence.



Muslims celebrating Eid on Thursday to hold the festival prayers within the confines of their respective mosques.

Saxena greeted people on the occasion of Eid on Thursday and said this showed that all the issues could be solved with mutual discussions and goodwill. In a series of posts on X, Saxena said nowhere in Delhi namaz was offered on the road and that there was no "untoward incident" anywhere. "Reiterating the greetings of Eid-ul-Fitr, I heartily thank the Imams of all the mosques and Eidgahs of Delhi and all our Muslim brothers for offering prayers inside the mosque premises," L-G Saxena wrote on X in Hindi.

staggered timings, the 'imams' and members of the Muslim community "ensured that traffic on the roads was not affected, and no untoward incident took place and the common people did not face any problem."

"This is perhaps the first time in the history of Delhi that people offered 'namaz' entirely inside the mosques and Eidgahs and not on the roads. By doing this today, Delhi has set a great example of harmony and cooperation for the country," he said. Earlier, after meeting with L-G, Syed Ahmed Bukhari, shahi imam of Jama Masjid urged

goodwill," he added.

Issuing a letter to all imams of mosques in India on Wednesday, the shahi imam suggested that in areas with mixed faith populations, Eid prayers should be held within the confines of the mosque to avoid inconvenience to people of other religions. On how overcrowding of mosques could be avoided because of this, Bukhari said holding more than one prayer sessions would resolve the issue gracefully. When the number of worshippers in mixed settlements or places is high, more than one congregation should mandatorily be offered inside the mosque premises to ensure the Eid prayer is held in an atmosphere of warmth and goodwill," the shahi imam's letter said. "The spirit of the holy occasion of Eid demands spiritual peace to prevail all over and its waves of goodness reach all sections of society." The letter also elaborated on the process of holding multiple prayer gatherings. "In case of more than one congregation, every fresh congregation should be performed under the leadership of another imam," he wrote.

The L-G said that on April 4, he had discussed and appealed in this regard in a meeting with several 'imams' of Delhi. The community welcomed his suggestion of staggered timings of 'namaz' and assured him that it will be implemented. "Today, 'namaz' was not offered on the streets anywhere in Delhi nor did any untoward incident occur. Everything was completed in a cordial atmosphere. It is clear that all issues can be resolved through mutual discussion and

# Directorate of vigilance sacks personal secretary to Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



5 of the Central Civil Services (Temporary Service) Rules, 1965, with immediate effect," read the order. Per the order, a government servant named Mahesh Pal had accused Bibhav Kumar of obstructing a public servant from discharging his duty and abusing the complainant. The order claimed a case was registered against Kumar whose next hearing will take place next month.

In another setback for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, the directorate of vigilance on Thursday terminated the services of the Bibhav Kumar, personal secretary of Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal. The decision to sack Bibhav Kumar comes in light of a 2007 case against him for 'assault and use of criminal force to obstruct a public servant from doing his duty'.

The order was issued by YVJ Rajshekhar, the special secretary vigilance. The vigilance department has said that the employment of a private person is temporary, and a background check regarding his pending criminal case was not conducted. The Vigilance Department is not considering issuing order to vacate his official bungalow. Reacting to the development, AAP leader Jasmine Shah said, "First, the Delhi CM is arrested in the fake Delhi liquor case. Now, the LG has begun dismissing his entire staff, including his private secretary." "The Competent Authority hereby terminates the engagement of Bibhav Kumar, in terms of the provisions of Rule

obstructing the complainant, a public servant, from discharging his duty and abusing/threatening the complainant," the order said. The FIR further stated that without arresting Bibhav Kumar and another accused in the case, namely Rajeev Kumar, a charge sheet was submitted before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court where it's pending currently.

The vigilance department said that a background check regarding Bibhav Kumar's pending criminal case before his appointment was not done. The order came days after the ED questioned Kumar in the Delhi excise policy case. His services were terminated due to a violation of Central Civil Service Rules regarding temporary appointments. The termination was immediate, as per the order. The order said that the character and antecedent verification of the personal staff of ministers should be verified before engaging non-government officials. It said Bibhav Kumar's trial is at the stage of evidence and he is not clear from the angle of vigilance. BJP leaders on Thursday said

the removal of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's private secretary from his post by the Vigilance Directorate was an administrative decision that will pave the way for a probe into the alleged excise policy scam. It was necessary to remove Kumar from the post as his appointment was "illegal" and he was under the scanner of agencies in connection with a money-laundering case linked to the now-scrapped excise policy of the city government, Delhi BJP vice-president Kapil Mishra said, adding that his removal will now pave the way for an impartial investigation in the matter. Mishra said that firstly, his appointment was illegal; secondly, he was under investigation in corruption cases; and thirdly, and most importantly, Kejriwal is in jail. His team could potentially destroy evidence and influence witnesses at the behest of the accused in the liquor policy case. Removing him will help ensure a fair investigation." Delhi BJP secretary Harish Khurana said that the anti-corruption stand and high moral ground claimed by the AAP and its leaders like Kejriwal have fallen flat with Kumar's removal.

# Atishi, AAP LS candidate kick off Jail ka jawab vote se campaign in Kalkaji

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Kicking off the 'Jail ka jawab vote se' campaign in Govindpuri Extension, Kalkaji, senior AAP leader Atishi and Lok Sabha candidate Sahiram Pehalwan on Thursday led a 'padayatra' to go door to door to interact with the people of the area.



Delhi providing excellent healthcare, she added.

Expressing discontent over the arrest of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, residents emphasized that the BJP would face consequences of their conspiracy in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, the AAP leaders said. Asserting that Kejriwal considers Delhiites as his family, they vowed not to tolerate any injustice against him. Determined to make their voices heard, they declared their intent to deliver a powerful message through their votes with the 'Jail ka jawab vote se' campaign.

Delhi providing excellent healthcare, she added. "In such a situation, there is a lot of anger among the people over the illegal arrest of Arvind Kejriwal. People know that the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal is part of a conspiracy. CM Arvind Kejriwal has been arrested on false charges. In this regard, people are very angry about this arrest. And people will show their anger with their votes in the elections. In this Lok Sabha election, people will make the Aam Aadmi Party victorious," the senior AAP Leader affirmed. She said the BJP has committed a big mistake by arresting Kejriwal this will prove to be

# Sukesh goes on hunger strike protesting harrasment by Mandoli jail Superintendent

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI



and Satyendra Jain and is giving out open warnings to my client to retract statements given to the High Powered Committee against them and other jail officials."

Suresh Chandrasekhar, who is accused in a Rs 200 crore cheating case involving the wife of a former Fortis Healthcare promoter, has gone on a hunger strike protesting against the alleged abuse by a Mandoli jail Superintendent Dhananjay Rawat 'under the guise of his uniform'. Suresh's advocate Anant Malik said, "My client has been on a hunger strike for the past two days. He is being harassed by Superintendent Dhananjay Rawat in the Mandoli jail with the assistance of Deputy Superintendent RN Meena." Malik on behalf of his client wrote to the prison officials regarding the 'harrasment and torture' of Suresh by Rawat. He said, "Let me highlight the orders of the Hon'ble Courts wherein directions have been passed to the Jail Superintendent concerned to not harass or torture my client, however all in vain as Dhananjay Rawat till this very moment continues under the guise of his uniform to harass, torture, abuse, my client with the aid and assistance of Deputy Superintendent RN Meena." Claiming a connection with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), he said, "He (Dhananjay Rawat) further has used the name of the Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal

pendent inquiry on the complaint of Suresh, he said that he was in 'utter shock and dismay' to learn that 'the persons against whom the enquiry was to be conducted are being directed to conduct the said enquiry themselves'. "There cannot be any more brazen violation of law than this, despite there being specific directions in this regard to superior officials i.e. Dhananjay Rawat has been marked an enquiry in which the main allegations are against him. He is the umpire in a match where he should have been a suspended player. But the Delhi jails always choose to outdo themselves as far as lawlessness is concerned, the sole reason that the competent authorities have sanctioned approvals for prosecution of the Ex Jail Minister, Jail officials etc," he alleged. He also claimed that Rawat spoke to the client in a 'very abusive tone', saying "Kya Ukhaad liya tune high court jaaakey, Jail toh humari hai aur mera koi kuch nai bigaad sakta" (What difference have you made by going to the High Court? The jail is ours and no one can do any harm to me.) He also claimed that both of the jail officials are trying to destroy evidence available 'against Rawat's political masters' by putting pressure on his client.

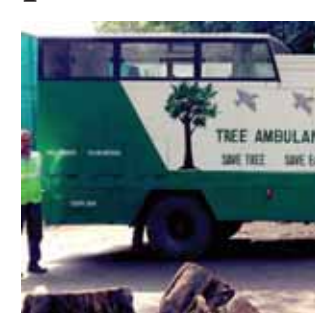
# Excise department revenue touches ₹7, 475.32 crore

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government excise department revenue touched Rs 7,475.32 crores in 2023-24 which is about 10 percent more than 6,830.04 crores earned as compared to the previous year. The department has generated the Value added tax (VAT) to the tune of 2,258.02 crores in 2023-2024, a whopping 76 percent more as against 1,282 crores in 2022-2023. The revenue is the highest that has been earned by the department in the last five years, making the promises of increased revenue through the new excise policy flat. Contrary to the tall claims of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) ruled Delhi government about the now scrapped liquor policy of increasing revenue for the government, between the period of 2022-2023 VAT collected on liquor in 2023-2024 saw a staggering increase of around 1000 crores in comparison to the previous year when the new policy was in place. The liquor policy came into force in Delhi in November 2021. With its effect, the Delhi government exited the liquor trade entirely, shutting all government-run vends, and the sale of liquor was handed over exclusively to private players.

The reason stated to do so was to eliminate the liquor mafia, increase revenue for the government, and enhance the consumer experience. However, with the new policy in place in Delhi in the year 2021 to 2022, the revenue through VAT saw a decline of more than 400 crores in comparison with the previous year. In 2021 to 2022, revenue through VAT stood at 1275.03 crores which is significantly less than the previous year of 2020-2021 with 1,702.8 crores. Following Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar's allegations of gross violations in the policy, the former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, who also held the excise portfolio in the Delhi government, in July 2022 withdrew the new liquor policy and reverted to the older policy which permits government-owned shops to sell liquor. Currently, the city has more than 684 liquor vends run by government organisations — Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC), Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC), Delhi State Civil Supplies Corporation (DSCSC) and Delhi Consumer's Cooperative Wholesale Store (DCCWS).

# NDMC launches Tree Ambulance initiative to protect trees from diseases



infestation of diseases, pests and termites. The hollow trunk of trees shall be provided a new lease of life through surgery and treatment by utilising the Tree Ambulance.

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) in a unique initiative to protect trees from disease and enhance its area green assets launched a 'Tree Ambulance' for treating ailing trees and maintaining the green assets in the areas falling under it. The civic body has customised an eco-friendly and CNG based Tree Ambulance which is equipped with two water tanks having 750 Litres & 250 Litres storage capacity and a high pressure pump with jetting hose, having provision for carrying equipment, pesticides, fungicides and insecticides in a bid to safeguard the trees of the area. The NDMC area possesses rich green assets including approximately 1.80 Lakh trees. These ambulances will be used to treat the ailing trees with

The procedure of tree surgery starts with removing the infected or hollowed out part, cleaning it with a brush, washing it properly, applying insecticides, fungicides on the infested portion and filling the hollow trunk with inert material like foam and covering it with chicken mesh followed by sealing it. The team will be deployed on these ambulances for checking the health of trees and to attend complaints or reports received from field staff related to the trees in the area. The team will treat them for pest infestation, hollow or drying trees on a regular basis for need of treatment and washing of trees on regular basis.

# Red rail launches features like seat guarantee, connecting trains

SAMAR PANDEY ■ NEW DELHI

To ease the summer vacation peak rush travel on trains, Red rail, a subsidiary of Red Bus which is a partner of the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has launched features like "Seat Guarantee" and "Connecting Trains" to address the challenges faced by passengers dealing with uncertain travel plans due to waitlisted tickets. "Seat guarantee" feature ensures a refund of ticket amount if a waitlisted ticket fails to get confirmed after chart preparation. Passengers will also receive an extra 2X refund as a voucher coupon, for future bus or train bookings and "Connecting Trains" feature is for the issue of limited seat availability by suggesting alternative routes. Passengers can see more options when direct trains are fully booked or waitlisted," said a statement by the company. "The importance of new features is aimed at improving train travel for millions of passengers. These enhancements aren't just about making reservations easier but also about easing the worries of train travelers," said Prakash Sangam, Red Bus (CEO).

# Delivery boy apprehended for stealing two wheelers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



A 22 year old delivery boy was apprehended by the Delhi Police for stealing two-wheelers for delivery purposes while also renting them to his colleagues in south Delhi area. According to the police on Thursday, he stole a total of five two-wheelers including two bikes and three scooters. The accused delivery boy was identified as Vicky Singh. "The team visited the various crime spots in the area and collected CCTV footage and meticulously analysed the same. As per the data analytics, the team members laid traps in the auto-theft prone areas. During the analysis of CCTV footage of multiple spots one person was noticed committing auto-lifting in different areas of South Delhi," DCP South District Ankit Chauhan said while adding that the photos of the suspects were developed through technical apparatus and circulated within the police net to get their identities. Location of the accused persons was zeroed down through surveillance and technical analysis. Raids were

# Court acquits 11 people accused of involvement in 2020 north east Delhi riots

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court has acquitted 11 persons accused of being involved in the 2020 northeast Delhi riots, saying they were entitled to the "benefit of doubt" as charges against them were not proved "beyond reasonable doubt". Additional Sessions Judge Pulastya Pramachala was hearing a case against 11 men who were accused of being part of an unlawful assembly during the riots that committed arson and theft at a property in Ganga Vihar on February 24, 2020. "I find that charges levelled against the accused persons in this case are not proved beyond all reasonable doubts and they are entitled to benefit of doubt. Hence, accused persons are acquitted of the charges levelled against them," the judge said in a verdict on Wednesday. The Gokulpuri Police Station had registered a case against Ankit Chaudhary alias Fauzi, Sumit alias Badshah, Pappu, Vijay, Ashish Kumar, Sourabh Kaushik, Bhupender, Shakti Singh, Sachin Kumar alias Rancho, Rahul and Yogesh. The court said only two police witnesses — assistant sub-inspectors Jahangir and Mahesh — had identified the accused, while three other witnesses did not support the

prosecution's case. It said Jahangir's testimony did not appear "very convincing" as despite having identified the accused persons as part of the riotous mob, he was silent and took no action for 10 months. The court noted the police officer's testimony, saying he knew the addresses of the accused persons and was aware that the Delhi Police was trying to nab those involved in the riots. "This situation is very unnatural and improbable. It rather shows that probably he was fed the name and identity of the accused persons as culprits in this case... Therefore, his testimony cannot be relied upon in respect of identifying the accused persons," the court said. It also found inconsistencies in the statement of Mahesh, who testified that he had informed the investigating officer (IO) about the identities of some accused 10 days after the incident, but the IO did not record his statement. "It is worth mentioning here that such a claim does not find any support from the testimony of IO. Rather I find this to be a totally improbable scenario that an IO while looking for culprits of the incident would ignore such important information being given and would opt not to record his statement," the court said.

It noted that initially there was no evidence with the IO and he filed the earliest chargesheet (which was later followed by two supplementary chargesheets), merely based on the disclosure statements of the 11 accused. According to criminal procedure, disclosure statements are not admissible as evidence in court. Continuing its observations, the court said, "In that situation, IO would have been a happy man to find a witness like prosecution witness 6 (Mahesh) to inform him the name of some persons at least as culprits in the present case. It said the IO did not mention showing any photographs to either police witnesses and also failed to explain the reasons for not examining the two officials earlier, despite knowing that they were on duty at the spot. "I have the same opinion that his (Mahesh's) evidence is not credible in respect of identifying the accused persons during the incident," the court said. It said the prosecution did not tender as evidence the alleged video of the incident. "In such a situation, I find that prosecution has failed to prove beyond all reasonable doubts that the accused persons herein were part of the mob which was behind the incident," the judge said.



**OPINION 6**  
EDUCATION'S CULTURAL  
IMPACT IS PROFOUND

**WORLD 8**  
ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE IN GAZA KILLS THREE  
SONS OF HAMAS LEADER ISMAIL HANIYEH

**MONEY 10**  
APPLE WARNS OF PEGASUS-LIKE SPYWARE  
ATTACKS ON SELECT INDIVIDUALS

Published From  
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR  
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH  
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 34 Issue 101  
\*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY APRIL 12, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

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## Centre proposes CAA, NRC; Mamata disposes



TMC Supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses people on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr festival, in Kolkata, Thursday

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

A fresh round of tug of war between the BJP and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee erupted on Thursday with the latter asserting that she will not allow implementation of the CAA, NRC and the Uniform Civil Code in the state. While the BJP accused Mamata of resorting to vote bank politics on the occasion of Eid and trying to polarise the society. The ruling party at the Centre accused the TMC supremo from deviating from core issues like economic upliftment of all communities

but instead, she attempted to "sow the seeds of division" among people. Addressing a gathering at the Red Road on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, the TMC supremo claimed that some people will try to "engineer riots" during elections and urged those who participated in the programme "not to fall prey to the plot". "We will not accept the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, National Register of Citizens and Uniform Civil Code. We will not accept any forcible implementation of these. I do not know how to hate people. I do not deliver

hate speeches. I want everybody to live like brothers, in peace and harmony. If we will live unitedly, nobody will be able to cause harm to us. Do not let anybody break this unity," Banerjee said. "Till I am alive, nobody will be able to cause harm to you. I will keep fighting them. I have learnt from fear people not fearing death, but it's the other way round. There will be people who will be trying to engineer riots in the name of religion. You keep your cool and we will not let them to succeed in initiating riots here," Banerjee said.



### NATION SHOCKED

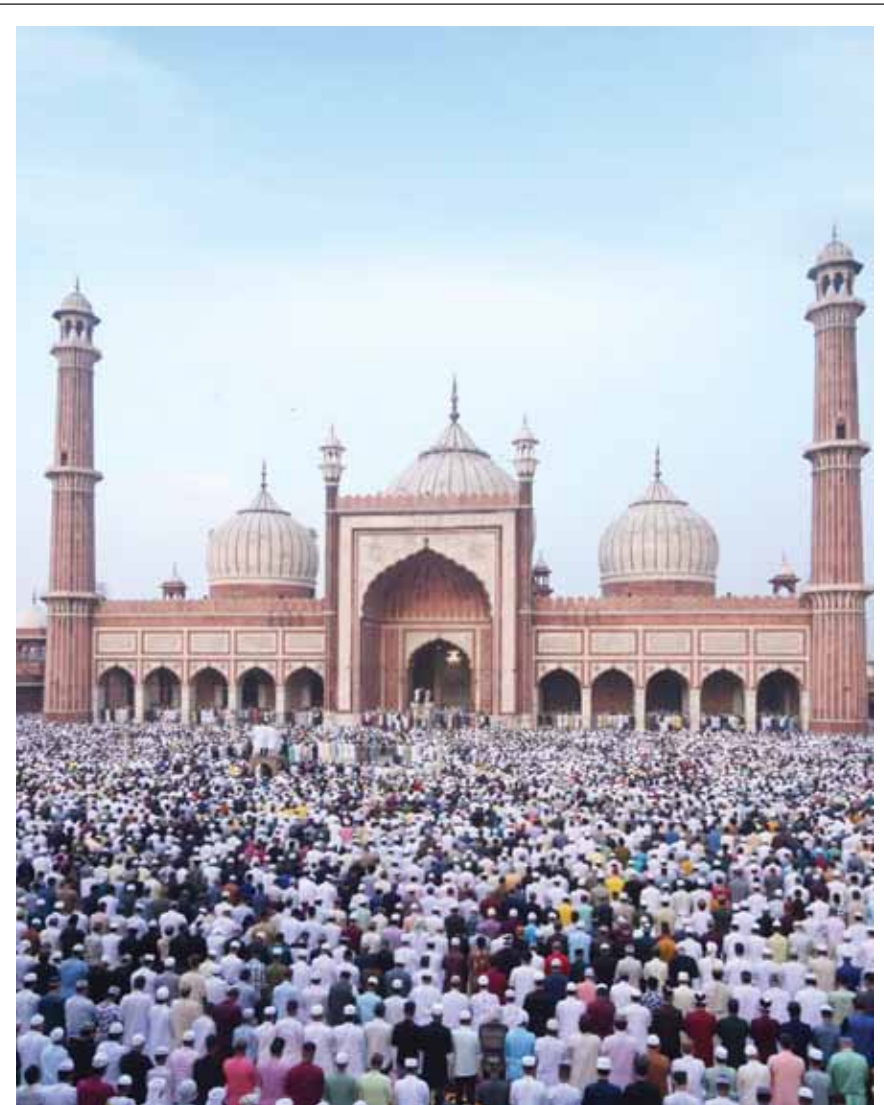
## Drunken driving leaves six school children dead

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

Six children were killed and around 20 injured on Thursday after a school bus carrying them overturned in Mahendragarh. Reports indicated the driver was allegedly drunk and the bus did not have the fitness certificate. Also, questions were posed as to how the school was open despite public holiday on account of Eid. President Droupadi Murmu said the news of death of schoolchildren was heart-rending and prayed for strength to the bereaved families to bear "this cruel blow". In a post on X in Hindi, President Murmu said, "The news of the death of innocent children in a school bus accident in Mahendragarh district of Haryana is heart-rending. May God give strength to the bereaved parents and relatives to bear this cruel blow. I pray for the

speedy recovery of the injured children." Reports said the bus belonged to a private school and was being driven rashly at a high speed due to which the driver lost control and rammed the vehicle into a tree, causing it to overturn, police said. Given the severity of the incident, the Haryana government ordered a probe and issued a show-cause to the school and some other schools that remained open on Thursday despite a public holiday on account of Eid. Moreover, the government has ordered a probe into the incident following the registration of an FIR, Transport Minister Aseem Goel said. Instructions were given to senior officials that a committee be formed to conduct a detailed probe covering various aspects. The committee will comprise higher officials of the state government, Goel told reporters.

Continued on Page 4



For the first time, Eid prayers (namaaz) were offered within the masjid premises across the national Capital on Thursday. Delhi L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena said this year's Eid was perhaps for the first time in the history of Delhi that 'namaaz' was offered inside mosques and not on the roads, and added that it was an excellent example of harmony and co-existence. Saxena said nowhere in Delhi namaaz was offered on the road and that there was no "untoward incident" anywhere. The L-G thanked the Imams of all the mosques and Eidgahs of Delhi and the Muslim fraternity for offering prayers inside the mosque premises. (A detailed story on Page 3)

Photo: Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

## Electoral Bonds' details not under RTI Act: SBI

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

The State Bank of India (SBI) has refused to disclose under the RTI Act the details of the electoral bonds furnished to the Election Commission (EC), claiming that it is personal information held in a fiduciary capacity, even though the records are in the public domain on the poll panel's website. Holding that the electoral bonds scheme was "unconstitutional and manifestly arbitrary", the Supreme Court directed the SBI on February 15 to furnish the complete details of the bonds purchased since April 12, 2019 to the EC, which would publish the information on its website by March 13. On March 11, the court dismissed the SBI's petition seeking an extension of the deadline and ordered it to disclose the details of the electoral bonds to the EC by the close of business hours on March 12. RTI activist Commodore Lokesh Batra (retired) approached the SBI on March 13 seeking the complete data of the electoral bonds in the digital form, as provided to the EC after the Supreme Court's order. The bank denied the information citing two exemption clauses given under the Right to Information (RTI) Act -- section 8(1)(e) that is related to records held in a fiduciary capacity and section



8(1)(j) that allows withholding personal information. "Information sought by you is containing details of purchasers and political parties and hence, cannot be disclosed as it is held in fiduciary capacity disclosure of which is exempted under sections 8(1)(e) and (j) of the RTI Act," the response furnished by the central public information officer and deputy general manager of the SBI said on Wednesday. Batra had also sought the details of the fees paid by the SBI to senior advocate Harish Salve to defend its case against the disclosure of the electoral bonds' records, citing that the records are held in a fiduciary capacity and the information is personal in nature. It is "bizarre" that the SBI denied the information that is already on the EC's website, Batra said.

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## DTC to set alarm bells for dozing drivers at the wheels

**SAUMYA SHUKLA** ■ NEW DELHI

The major problem of 'fatigue' faced by the heavy transport drivers may be addressed soon as the national Capital's transport arm - Delhi Transport Corporation - is here to address the concern that cause 40 percent road mishaps across the country including Delhi. Passengers playing on DTC buses can now take a sigh of relief as a prototype test will begin on Monday with introduction of a stand-alone gadget that includes an IR camera for streaming and a Raspberry Pi 4 board to monitor and then alert the driver if he doze while being on wheels. In simple terms the system will consist of a webcam or a dashcam which can be installed anywhere in the vehicle in the vicinity of the driver to analyse his/her facial expressions. The system will give an alert through a mobile application or vehicular system or an admin control dashboard, for an owner of a large fleet, through real time tracking and monitoring. According to a survey by the Central Road Research Institute (CRRI), drivers who exhaust themselves doze off while driving



a r e accountable for about 40 percent of road mishaps and hence DTC is working to solve the problem of road accidents, by working on one of its biggest contributors- driver fatigue. Interestingly, a 22 year old boy Vedansh Arun, currently in the final year of New Delhi's Netaji Subhas University of Technology, has developed this unique prototype to solve the problem of road accidents. "The motive behind this prototype was to solve the issues of road accidents that are recently happening due to drivers dozing off out of fatigue and sleep deprivation," said Vedansh. "The speaker of the vehicle can also alert the driver so as to make him realise that he needs to take a break or stop," Vedansh added.

The prototype can currently give alerts but in the future, the college student adds, vehicles can be halted too. It can be plugged into the vehicle's electrical system directly and activates as soon as the vehicle is started. It has the following attributes- drowsiness detection, tiredness level detection, head pose estimation for distraction analysis and facial emotion analysis. It will be road tested by the Delhi Transport Ministry on the DTC buses for the proof of concept and the estimated time of the product installation in the buses can be six months. Recollecting the DTC bus accident that occurred on November 4 in 2023 in Delhi's Rohini area in which one person died and several others were injured due to the bus driver experiencing heart attack while driving, he said, "In such cases, we have a vehicle halting mechanism. At first the speed of the vehicle will be reduced if we detect any that the driver's eyes are close up to a certain extent. If there is no response from the driver, we will gradually halt the vehicle."

Continued on Page 4

## Jailed K Kavitha now arrested by the CBI

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday arrested Bharat Rashtia Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha in connection with a corruption case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. Kavitha, 46, the daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, was held in Tihar jail where she was lodged after her arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to the excise "scam" on March 15. A CBI source said they had earlier recorded Kavitha's statement and now got some crucial evidence to arrest her. "Investigation has so far revealed that one of the accused in the case, Vijay Nair, received kickbacks to the tune of at least Rs 100 crore from a group called South Group controlled by Sarath Reddy, Kavitha, and Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy on behalf of AAP leaders," the source added. The CBI arrested Kavitha in jail number 6 of Tihar prison around 12 noon on Thursday under Section 120-B (criminal conspiracy) read with Section 477-A (falsification of accounts) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 7 (offence relating to public servant being bribed) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, the



officials said. The agency had questioned Kavitha inside the prison on Saturday after obtaining permission from a special court. The BRS leader was questioned on WhatsApp chats recovered from co-accused Buchi Babu's phone and documents related to a land deal after which Rs 100 crore was allegedly paid to Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in kickbacks to swing the now-scrapped excise policy in favour of a liquor lobby. While Kavitha will remain in Tihar jail on Thursday, the agency is likely to produce her before a court on Friday to seek her remand. If the CBI gets her remand, Kavitha will be moved to a lockup at the agency headquarters where she will be questioned by officers of the Anti-Corruption Branch, which is probing the case, the officials said.

Continued on Page 4

## Dismantle barriers, challenge stereotypes, clarion call in South Delhi's LS Polls

**ARCHANA JYOTI** ■ NEW DELHI

Unfazed by political stalwarts like Ramvir Singh Bidhuri from the BJP and Sahiram Pehlwan of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Rajan Singh, a trans person, has thrown his hat into the political arena as an independent candidate to vie for the South Delhi Parliamentary seat. This constituency boasts a diverse electorate, spanning from affluent neighborhoods to urban slums. "There are 130 registered transgenders in my constituency. But I am confident of garnering over

10,000 votes from my supporters. This will be just the beginning. I want to tell the political parties that we too can be vote catchers irrespective of our orientation. At the end of the day work matters," Singh asserted as he aimed to advance political empowerment for the transgender community. He underscored the urgent need to dismantle barriers, challenge stereotypes, and ensure that the voices of all, irrespective of gender identity, are accorded respect in politics. Regardless of the electoral outcome, 25-year-old Singh's



candidacy however marks a historic milestone as the first instance of a third-gender individual contesting in Lok Sabha elections. Delhi has its first transgender Councillor as Bobby Kinnar, an AAP candidate who won Sultanpuri ward in 2022. Originally hailing from

Chapra in Bihar, and raised in Delhi, Rajan Singh boasts of achievements like receiving the President's National Bravery Award for saving a child. He's not new to politics. He Served as Joint Secretary after winning elections at Aryabhata College in Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) as an independent candidate in 2016-17. "Life has not been very easy for me since childhood. My book, 'Mera Kya Kasoor' (What is My Fault), delves into my journey and the challenges I've faced," he added. "I want to use my experiences to educate and empower the transgender community."

Continued on Page 4

## Four decade jinx broken by India at the Cannes Festival

**PTI** ■ NEW DELHI

Indian filmmaker Payal Kapadia's "All We Imagine As Light" on Thursday scripted history by becoming the first Indian title in over 40 years to feature in the prestigious Competition section of the Cannes Film Festival, where it will vie for the top prize Palme d'Or. Iris Knobloch, president of the Cannes Festival, and Thierry Fremaux, General Delegate, announced the official selection line-up for the 2024 edition of the gala at a press conference streamed live from Cannes, France. Besides Kapadia, British-Indian filmmaker Sandhya Suri's "Santoshi" will also be



showcased at the 77th edition of the film gala. The movie will be screened under the Un Certain Regard section. Kapadia's "All We Imagine As Light" will be presented under the main segment alongside 19 other highly anticipated titles, including films from master directors Francis Ford

Coppola ("Megalopolis") and Yorgos Lanthimos ("Kinds of Kindness"). "Oh Canada" by Paul Schrader, "Bird" by Andrea Arnold, "The Shrouds" by David Cronenberg, and "Anora" by Sean Baker are also part of the main Competition slate. Kapadia, an alumna of the Film & Television Institute of India (FTII), is best known for her acclaimed documentary "A Night of Knowing Nothing", which premiered at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival's Director's Fortnight side-bar where it won the Oeil d'Or (Golden Eye) award. "All We Imagine As Light", also written by Kapadia, marks her narrative feature debut.

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# Former Congress spokesperson Rohan Gupta joins BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD

Former Congress spokesperson Rohan Gupta joined the BJP on Thursday, marking the defection of yet another visible opposition face to the ruling party in the election season. Gupta, along with some other leaders, joined the BJP in the presence of Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri and the party's national general secretary Vinod Tawde as he accused his former party of having lost direction and credibility due to its drift from its traditional stands on issues, such as nationalism and Sanatan Dharma. Former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Parampal Kaur, who recently resigned from the service, her husband Gurpreet Singh Maluka, who is the son of senior Shiromani

Akali Dal leader Sikander Singh Maluka, and Youth Congress leader Jahanzaib Sirwal also joined the ruling party at a ceremony, lauding India's rise under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Gupta last month turned down the Congress's candidature for him from the Ahmedabad East Lok Sabha seat, a BJP citadel, and then quit the party as he blamed his "constant humiliation and character assassination by a leader connected with the communication department" of the grand old party for his decision, an apparent swipe at Jairam Ramesh, the Congress general secretary in charge of the party's communication department. The leader who has "Ram" in his name asked them to keep mum when Sanatan Dharma was being insulted, Gupta told



Ranjan Dimri

reporters, adding that those who have never fought an election are formulating the vision for the Congress. The Congress has gravitated to the Left, the former social media head of the party said. On one hand, the party said it respected the Supreme Court verdict paving the way for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya but on the other, it did not attend the consecration ceremony of the temple, he said. Gupta cited the Congress's stand on a host of issues, including its opposition to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and aligning with a party like the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) despite its strident criticism in the past, to make his point. Gupta expressed his support to the BJP leadership's agenda of a "viksit Bharat" by 2047 and

lauded Modi's vision. Recently, another former Congress spokesperson, Gourav Vallabh, also joined the BJP. The three other leaders lauded Modi for India's global rise and development under his watch. Tawde said their presence will further strengthen the BJP. Sirwal said "political brokerage" in Jammu and Kashmir has been finished by the BJP. Maluka said he is joining the saffron party for the development of Punjab. Gujarat Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi told reporters in Ahmedabad that Gupta's allegiance to the BJP was exposed when he decided to turn down the Lok Sabha poll ticket offered to him by the Congress. "Unofficially, Gupta was associated with the BJP for a long time. It was an inside story and we knew it beforehand that

staying with the Congress was his game. The Congress party gave him positions, prestige and he used this to make money and then went on to betray the party," Doshi alleged. "We knew everything from the start. The party gave him a chance to contest the election and this (his backing out of the poll race) revealed everything. Now, he is reading out the script given to him by the BJP," the Congress leader said. While withdrawing his candidature from Ahmedabad East, Gupta had said he was doing so at his ailing father's insistence. His father refused to avail of treatment in the ICU, where he was rushed to due to a panic attack, unless he gave in to his demand, Gupta had said. In 2004, Gupta's father, a Congress candidate, lost the Lok Sabha polls from Ahmedabad.

## India ready to cooperate if Pakistan incapable of fighting terror: Rajnath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Days after his remarks 'ghus ke mareng', Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has now said India is ready to cooperate with the neighbouring country if "it feels incapable" of fighting terrorism. It was in obvious reference to Pakistan as Rajnath some days back had said in an interview to a television channel India will not hesitate in entering the country to kill terrorists who escape by crossing the border. In the latest jibe at Pakistan, Rajnath on Thursday said India was ready to cooperate to stop terrorism if the neighbouring country "feels incapable". In an interview to ANI, the defence minister also warned that Pakistan would have to suffer consequences if it tries to destabilise India using terrorism. "If Pakistan feels incapable, India is ready to cooperate to stop terrorism," the Defence Minister said. In the interview, Rajnath Singh also spoke about the Emergency period during the Indira Gandhi era. The veter-



an BJP leader recalled how he was not even given parole during his mother's demise. "I was not given parole to attend my mother's last rites during the Emergency, and now they (Congress) call us dictators," Rajnath said. In the earlier interview, Rajnath said if terrorists tried to disturb peace in India, then "ghus ke mareng". He, however, maintained that India never attacked any country. "India has never attacked any country or tried to capture their territory. But if anyone threatens India or its peace, they will not be spared," he said.

In glimpses from an exclusive podcast shared by ANI on X, Rajnath warned that Pakistan will have to suffer the consequences of its actions in case it tries to destabilise India using terror as a tool. The defence minister added that Pakistan must rein in terror emanating from its soil, adding that India is ready to offer its support if needed. "If Pakistan feels incapable [to curb terror], India is ready to cooperate to stop terrorism," Rajnath said. He also said Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (POK) "was, is and will remain part of India".

## India, US decide to reactivate IndOOS to collect data in high seas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

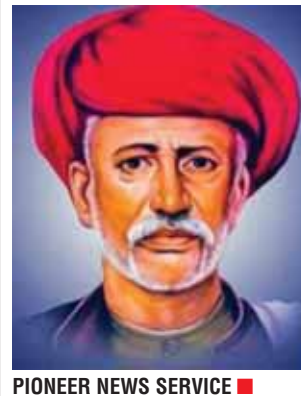
India and the US have decided to reactivate the Indian Ocean Observing System (IndOOS), a network of 36 moored buoys in the high seas to collect high-resolution ocean and atmospheric data for weather forecasts. The IndOOS array of buoys fell into neglect and disrepair during the years of the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to gaps in observational data considered crucial by weather forecasters, particularly since the links between the Indian Ocean Dipole phenomenon and monsoon were established. The reactivation of IndOOS was discussed last month during a meeting of Earth Sciences Secretary M Ravichandran with Rick Spinrad, Administrator of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the US. The moored buoys are part of the Research Moored Array for African-Asian-Australian Monsoon Analysis and Prediction (RAMA) programme that was born out of a collaboration between the Ministry of Earth Sciences and



NOAA in 2008. "We want to reactivate RAMA. I discussed it with the NOAA chief during my visit to Washington in March," Ravichandran said. NOAA has agreed to provide instrumentation and India will give ship-time from July for restarting the RAMA array, he said, adding that about 60-90 days of ship-time will be required for the purpose. In an article published in the Bulletin of American Meteorological Society (BAMS), weather forecasters from several countries wrote that the pandemic disrupted the deployment and maintenance cruises for the observational array and also resulted in supply chain issues for procurement and refurbishment of equipment. RAMA moored buoys are usually replaced once a year because sensors fall out of calibration and batteries run

down. This servicing is typically done using research vessels primarily from Indonesia, India and South Korea in partnership with NOAA. However, these research cruises were put on hold for more than two years during the pandemic, with only a single servicing cruise that turned around two buoys in the southwest Indian Ocean in January 2022, the weather scientists wrote in the BAMS article. Observations of the ocean are essential for operational services such as cyclone warnings, storm surge alerts, initial conditions for monsoon predictions and climate forecasts, tsunami warnings and harmful algal bloom detection. The RAMA moored buoys also provide important verification data for air-sea flux products and satellite measurements. Marine observations are crucial in monitoring and forecasting weather and climate over the Indian Ocean and the surrounding rim countries. They also help maintain long-term continuous maritime records, provide information on the ocean's health and are critical for establishing baselines to assess natural variability and human-forced climate change.

## Modi pays tributes to Jyotirao Phule on birth anniversary



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday paid tributes to eminent social reformer Jyotirao Phule on his birth anniversary, saying he dedicated his life to fighting injustice and promoting equality, and his thoughts give strength to millions. "Today, we pay homage to the great Mahatma Phule on his Jayanti. A visionary social reformer who dedicated his life to fighting injustice and promoting equality, his thoughts give strength to millions," Modi

said on X. "His relentless efforts in the field of education and women empowerment have left an indelible mark on society. Today is an occasion to reiterate our commitment to fulfilling his vision to empower the poor and marginalised," he added. An icon for the movement to emancipate the backward and deprived sections of society, the 19th-century reformer dedicated his life to social justice and equality. His wife Savitribai Phule was also a pioneering social reformer, lauded especially for her role in women's education.

## Dismantle barriers, challenge...

From Page 1  
Rajan Singh remains undaunted by the prospect of losing his security deposit amidst the presence of political heavyweights. For him, he says, more important is to amplify the voices of marginalized communities, particularly transgender individuals who confront systemic marginalization not only in politics but also in various facets of life. "My slogan is 'By voting we will become Chief Ministers and Prime Ministers, by studying we will become Superintendent of Police (SP) and District Magistrate (DM)'. The 2011 census has pegged the total transgender population in India at 487,203. However, as per the latest Election Commission

data, the registered transgender voters for the 2019 elections stand at only around 40,000 - a mere ten per cent of their total population. In 2014, the Election Commission, for the first time, recognized transgenders as the "third gender" following a landmark ruling by the Supreme Court. Yet, of the total 28,527 registered transgender voters, only 1,968 exercised their right to vote in that year's Lok Sabha elections. Singh posed a pertinent question, "Where are the rest?" It is evident that they are disenchanted, irrespective of which party triumphs, he added and pointed out that despite some strides forward, such as the recent appointment of the

first transgender judge and the establishment of exclusive OPDs at RML Hospital in Delhi along with dedicated toilets for the transgender community in the national capital, struggle for equal opportunities and rights nationwide continue. "Marginalised transgenders in the country are in need of its identity. Given that every national party and their leaders have closed all the doors for us, I will open all the doors for my community once I reach Parliament." He, however, underscored that not everyone is apathetic; many empathize with their plight. Singh cites his college history teacher, who understood his sexual orientation and encouraged him to persevere in his studies to silence detractors.

"During my DUSU election also, I won by a good number of votes. Clearly, many students were keen to ensure my victory. These elections will be no different," he exuded confidence. As he embarks into new political journey, Rajan Singh's agenda encompasses key initiatives, including the establishment of a Transgender Commission at the national level to safeguard rights and address discrimination, at least one seat to be nominated for transgender in Parliament, implementation of separate queues for important services to mitigate harassment and discrimination, and nationwide advocacy efforts to put the transgender issues on the social landscape.

## DTC to set alarm bells for dozing drivers at ...

From Page 1  
Additionally even if the driver does respond, the vehicle's maximum speed will be reduced. What makes this product intriguing is the story of a young boy behind it who never wanted an ordinary job. "In the second year of college, I went to a cybersecurity hackathon in Chhattisgarh organised by IIIT. My friend and I stood first in the competition. Since I never wanted to do an ordinary job, we began with a startup that outsources technology for others. However, in the fourth month it was shut down as my friends worried about their placements," said the machine learning

engineer. However, he never was interested in seating for job placements. In 2023, he interned at a company Bharat Supply and Support where he worked on three to four projects for the Indian Army. "The problem of driver fatigue is more severe in army convoys as officials don't sleep for about 50 hours. I worked on it fully, however the project was of somebody else. When I put forward the idea for normal vehicles, I was asked to develop a prototype," said Vedansh, who then developed the project alone without any help since the higher echelons in the company weren't interested in the project.

## Drunken driving leaves...

From Page 1  
He said the bus involved in the accident was fined recently as it did not have certain documents and the fact that it was still being used was a clear lapse on the part of the school authorities. Directions have been given to the district transport officer concerned that a FIR be registered against the school, the minister said. He added that if the probe reveals a lapse on the part of the motor vehicles inspector of the area -- that he failed to take action even though the bus did not have valid documents -- action will be taken against him as well. "We had challaned the bus for Rs 15,500 due to a lack of documents, but clearly, a lapse of the school authorities has been found," Goel said. The minister said he has directed officials that the fitness of all school buses be checked. The district transport officer will issue circulars in this regard to district education officers, he added.

Mahendragarh Deputy Commissioner Monika Gupta said the administration is ensuring the best treatment for the injured children. Action will be taken against the driver and the school authorities, she told reporters, adding that no one will be spared. Asked about the bus not having a fitness certificate and other valid documents, Gupta said "all these are matters of an inquiry and will be part of the FIR". She said the private school was open on Eid and the district education officer has sent a proposal to the state government for cancelling its recognition. Education Minister Seema Trikha, who met the injured children in the hospital, said the biggest lapse was that the school was open on a holiday. Affidavits will be taken from all private schools to the effect that their buses are running in accordance with norms and action will be taken wherever violations are found, Trikha said.

## Jailed K Kavitha...

From Page 1  
The ED had arrested Kavitha from her Banjara Hills residence in Hyderabad. It has alleged that one of the accused, Vijay Nair, received kickbacks to the tune of at least Rs 100 crore from a group called South Group (controlled by Sarath Reddy, Kavitha, Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy) on behalf of AAP leaders. The CBI, which has so far filed three charge sheets against a number of accused, including former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, has alleged that kickbacks worth around Rs 90-100 crore were paid in advance to some AAP leaders and public servants by some people in the liquor business from south India through Nair and co-accused Abhishek Boinpally and Dinesh Arora. Earlier, Kavitha had approached the court for interim bail, claiming her 16-year-old son has exams and needs her "moral and

emotional support". "From the material placed before this court, it appears that the Applicant not only engaged in destruction of material evidence by formatting her phones before joining the investigation and after being served with notice requiring her to do so, along with her digital devices, which stands established by way of the forensic report in this regard, but also has been instrumental in influencing witnesses and there is every likelihood of her continuing to do so in case the relief prayed for is granted to her," Special Judge Kaveri Baweja said while rejecting her interim bail application. The judge said Kavitha was stated to be highly educated, and by no standards can be said to a vulnerable woman who could be made a scapegoat for committing the alleged offences. She is undoubtedly a "well-educated" and "well-placed woman in the society".

## Four decade...

From Page 1  
The film is about Prabha, a nurse, who receives an unexpected gift from her long estranged husband that throws her life into disarray. Her younger roommate, Anu, tries in vain to find a private spot in the big city to be alone with her boyfriend. One day the two nurses go on a road trip to a beach town where the mystical forest becomes a space for their dreams to manifest, according to the plotline. Writer-lyricist Varun Grover and filmmaker Anurag Kashyap congratulated Kapadia on the selection. "HUGE moment for Indian cinema. Cracking Cannes main competition for an Indian film is so rare an event that it happens only once (if at all) in the life of a generation. Go Payal Kapadia and team!" Grover, who made his directorial debut "All India Rank" recently, wrote on X.

## Centre proposes CAA, NRC...

From Page 1  
In an apparent reference to the BJP, Banerjee alleged that with the elections closing in, the central government agencies are being "used" to scare the people, mainly the opposition leaders. "A few people want that during this election to scare people in the name of agencies. Drive the CBI, ED, Income Tax, and NIA after them. I will tell them (BJP) to construct a jail and put everyone behind the bars. But will you be able to put the entire population of 130 crores in jail? I am ready to give blood for the country, but not ready to allow this torture go on," she said. Banerjee without taking any name further alleged that at the moment when the election is around, a selected few Muslim leaders in the country were getting calls with offers. "Today, during this election time, you are selecting and calling chosen Muslim people asking them what they want... I tell you they do not want anything,"

she elaborated. Asserting that in Bengal, people are living in peace because there is brotherhood among different communities. "Remember your honesty has helped people in Bengal to stay in peace. Live in peace and it is our responsibility to look after your security and nobody will be able to torture you," she said. She asserted that her party TMC's fight is against the BJP. "We are in West Bengal with your blessings. Remember it's the TMC who is fighting against the BJP. We will decide about the INDIA bloc later. But in Bengal, please see that no vote goes to any other party," she said. TMC national general secretary and her nephew Abhishek Banerjee accompanied her at the Eid meet. BJP Rajya Sabha MP Samik Bhattacharya said people wanted to hear the chief minister's plan for the economic uplift of all

communities but instead, she attempted to "sow the seeds of division" among people. "Instead of spreading the message of amity, brotherhood among the Muslim brethren at the gathering on Red Road, the CM tried to sow the seeds of division and polarisation for her narrow vote bank politics," Bhattacharya alleged. The BJP leader said the chief minister should unveil a roadmap to develop West Bengal which belongs to all communities and improve their economic conditions. "Instead of speaking about ways to stop the migration of youths, including Muslims, from Bengal to other states, she tried to pit one community against another ahead of other religious festivals. This is dangerous politics and we call upon people of the state not to fall prey to the machinations of TMC supremo," the BJP state spokesperson said.

## Electoral Bonds' ...

From Page 1  
On the question of Salve's fee, he said the bank has denied information that involves taxpayers' money. The EC published the data furnished by the SBI on its website on March 14, with the details of the donors and political parties that redeemed the bonds. On March 15, the apex court pulled up the SBI for not furnishing the complete information by withholding the numbers unique to each electoral bond that would help match the donors with the recipient political parties, saying the bank was "duty-bound" to reveal the information. A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said it had directed the disclosure of all the details of the bonds, including the names of the purchasers, amounts and dates of purchase. All details have to be furnished by the SBI, the CJI observed, as the court admonished the bank for furnishing incomplete information, a day after the EC put out the entire list of entities that purchased the bonds for making political donations. The SBI had said a total of 22,217 electoral bonds of varying denominations were purchased by the donors between April 1, 2019 and February 15 this year, of which 22,030 were redeemed by political parties.





# BJP flays RJD leader Misa for remarks against PM Modi

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA**

The BJP lashed out at RJD leader Misa Bharti on Thursday for threatening to put its leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in jail if the INDIA bloc is voted to power at the Centre and said people will give the opposition parties a fitting reply in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls for such remarks.



Talking to reporters in Patna on Thursday, Bharti raised the issue of electoral bonds and said BJP leaders in Bihar as well as the prime minister will be put behind bars for raising donations through the scheme by misusing central agencies. Reacting sharply to the RJD leader's remarks, BJP chief J P Nadda said those facing a probe for alleged corruption and out on bail are "abusing" Modi, who has an unblemished political career. "They are hurling various kinds of abuses on Modi. In the last 23 years, Modiji served as the Gujarat chief minister for more than 12 years and as the prime

minister for 10 years. Modiji has worked as the country's chief administrator and there is no blemish on him. Misa Bharti is saying she will send such a person to jail," Nadda told a poll rally in the Anadaman and Nicobar Islands. Such remarks against the prime minister reflect the frustration of the opposition leaders, he said. Nadda said RJD supremo Lalu Prasad, who was involved in the fodder scam, is out on bail on health grounds while his daughter, Bharti, is also an accused in a land-for-jobs case. "Those who are on bail and facing a probe are abusing Modiji," he said and exhorted people to give the opposition parties a fitting reply by voting in favour of the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls. The RJD has fielded Bharti, a Rajya Sabha MP and the eldest daughter of Prasad, from the Patliputra Lok Sabha seat. BJP general secretary Vinod Tawde, who is also the party's in-charge for Bihar, said Bharti's remarks show the low the opposition is hitting in its fight against the saffron party. "They are making every effort

# Praful lying on Sharad 50 per cent readiness to go with BJP: NCP(SP)

**T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI**

The Opposition Nationalist Congress Party (SP) on Thursday rubbished as "blatant lies" the rival NCP leader Praful Patel's claim that in July last year, its president Sharad Pawar was "50 per cent" ready to go with the ruling BJP after his nephew Ajit Pawar engineered a split in the party and joined the MahaYuti government. A day after Patel claimed in an interview with a news agency that after Ajit Pawar and other MLAs joined the Eknath Shinde-led government on July 2 2023. Sr Pawar had come around "50 per cent" to join the BJP, NCP (SP) Chief Spokesperson Mahesh Tapase dubbed the rival NCP leader's claim as a "deliberate attempt" to "sow seeds of confusion" in the minds of the voters ahead of the Lok Sabha 2024 elections. In a video clip of an interview put out by news agency ANI, Patel had claimed: "On 2nd July 2023, when Ajit Pawar and our ministers took oath with Maharashtra govt. On 15th-16th July, we met



Sharad Pawar and requested him to join us. Later, Ajit Pawar and Sharad Pawar met in Pune. He was also 50% ready...Sharad Pawar always hesitates at the last minute...This happened earlier as well in 1996. At that time, if Pawar sahib was not hesitant but had agreed to H D Deve Gowda's suggestion, Sharad Pawar could have been the country's Prime Minister in 1996". Repeating Patel's claim, NCP (SP) chief spokesperson Tapase said: "Sharad Pawar has firmly rejected any notion of supporting the BJP, both in principle and action, not once but on multiple occasions in public and private. This unequiv-

ocal dismissal stands as a testament to Sharad Pawar Sahab's unwavering commitment to his political convictions". Tapase said that Patel's claim stemmed out of the rival NCP leaders' "frustration" over Sr Pawar's rejection of Ajit Pawar's proposal to him to join hands with the BJP. "Ajit Pawar and other NCP leaders recognise their total dependence on Sharad Pawar Sahab to keep intact their relevance in Maharashtra politics", Tapase said that the recent closure of certain serious cases against Ajit Pawar had exposed the real motives of his group's allegiance to the BJP as against oft-repeated claim he others had joined the MahaYuti gov-

# Security grid across Jammu on high alert ahead of Modi rally

**MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU**

The security grid across the Jammu region has been kept in a state of high alert ahead of the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to address an election rally in Udhampur in support of MoS PMO Dr Jitendra Singh on Friday. The district administration has also declared the area a 'No Fly Zone'. Moreover, tight security arrangements are made in the district, especially along the Jammu-Srinagar national highway to prevent entry of any suspected person towards the venue of the election rally. In Kashmir division, a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist is killed in an encounter with security forces in the Pulwama district on Thursday. This was the first encounter between terrorists and security forces in Jammu and Kashmir in more than three months. The security forces had launched a cordon-and-search operation in Fressipora village in the Rajpora area of the south Kashmir district following inputs about the presence of terrorists there, a police spokesperson said. He said the search operation turned into an encounter after



the terrorists opened fire on the forces, who retaliated. In the ensuing encounter, a terrorist was killed, the police spokesperson said. Meanwhile, Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) leaders in Jammu and Kashmir are facing a tough challenge to mobilize a large number of people ahead of the election rally of the Prime Minister in Udhampur on Friday. Earlier, the party machinery had to cut a sorry figure as they could not manage a large crowd during a maiden election rally of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Kathua on Wednesday. Less than 10,000 people attended the rally in Kathua much to the chagrin of

# Upcoming LS polls about protecting Indian Constitution, democracy: Rahul

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAIPUR**

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi hit out at the BJP-led Centre on Thursday, saying farmers are asking for a minimum support price (MSP) for their crops, youngsters are seeking employment, women want relief from inflation, but no one is listening. The upcoming Lok Sabha polls are about protecting the country's Constitution and democracy, the former Congress chief said. "It is an election of the backwards, Dalits, tribals and poor people in the general category," he said, addressing a rally in Rajasthan's Bikaner. Rahul said the bank accounts of the Congress have been frozen. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the Centre has taken money from big industrialists through electoral bonds, he claimed, adding that the upcoming election is a battle between the country's poor people and 22-25 billionaires. He claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has waived the loans of 15-20 industrialists. "That money could have been used to pay MGNREGA wages for 24 years," Rahul said. He also said farmers are paying taxes for the first time in India's history.



organised in support of Congress candidates Govind Ram Meghwal from Bikaner and Kuldeep Indora from Ganganagar in the Lok Sabha polls. He said the two biggest issues in the country right now are unemployment and inflation, but these are not being raised by the media. Rahul highlighted the promises made by the Congress in its Lok Sabha poll manifesto and said all of those will be honoured as soon as the party comes to power. He claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has waived the loans of 15-20 industrialists. "That money could have been used to pay MGNREGA wages for 24 years," Rahul said. He also said farmers are paying taxes for the first time in India's history.

# BJP, Congress continue to blame CPI(M) for Kannur blast; Left party denies allegations

**PTI ■ KOZHIKODE**

BJP and the Congress in Kerala on Thursday continued to accuse the CPI(M) of being behind the recent blast in Kannur district that claimed one life and injured three others, while the Left party denied any involvement in the incident. BJP state president K Surendran said senior CPI(M) leaders were involved in the incident and there was a conspiracy to attack BJP and RSS leaders in the state during the elections. Youth Congress state president Rahul Mamkootathil, on the other hand, claimed the bombs made in Panur were intended to be used against the UDF as the CPI(M) in Kerala and the BJP are partners. "The tactic of using bombs and killing people to win in elections should be stopped. That is our only concern," he said, adding that no one would have come to know about the bombs being made if one had not exploded accidentally. He also claimed the police FIR clearly states that the bombs were being made to be used during the Lok Sabha polls. CPI(M) state secretary M V Govindan denied the allegations and said the Left party had no role in the blast or the



making of the bombs. "The party has no role in it. We have no need to make bombs. Many of our workers were attacked and killed. We did not retaliate. Instead, we organised public protests against the same. So, we have no need for bombs," he told reporters in Kannur. On being asked by reporters as to whether the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) has any role, Govindan said they should ask DYFI. When reporters asked whether the CPI(M) has any mass (allied) organisations, he said no. "We do not have any mass (allied) organisations...It is the Congress which has mass organisations," Govindan said. According to police, one of the arrested accused in the blast case is a local DYFI leader.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
 Indoor Medical Records of the Patients admitted during period of 01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021 financial year (2020-2021) are scheduled to be disposed of as per hospital policy.  
 Any patient requiring his/her Medical Records may approach the undersigned within 30 days failing which the records will be disposed of without further notice.  
**Medical Record Officer**  
**Kailash Hospital**  
**Plot No. 203, Wazirpur**  
**G.T. Road NH-91, Khurja**

# Candidates compete with each other to claim credit for developments during 2019-24

**KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI**

Though the candidates seeking re-election from Lok Sabha constituencies in Kerala in the upcoming election may be violating the Representation of Peoples Act here and there, there is one area which unites them. All these candidates, irrespective of the party they belong to, claim the kind of achievements they have made during their tenure as member of parliament. The massive infrastructure push they brought to the State, the number of highways commissioned during their period, the container terminal port and many central government establishments which they set up in the State during the last ten years make an impressive list. The Adani Group initiated the measures to build Vizhinjam International Container Terminal at my instance. It was me who explained in detail the potential of such a port to Gautam Adani whom I meet in an airlines queue. The man was so impressed with the information provided me and he issued immediate orders to his company managers to set in motion the process of bidding for the container terminal," said Sasi Tharoor, the three-time MP who is seeking re-election from Thiruvananthapuram as a



Congress candidate. Even the Muslim League MPs, E T Mohammed Basheer and M P Abdussamad Samadani, who have no love lost for the "communal and fascist" Narendra Modi Government wax eloquence when they speak about the development projects initiated by the Centre and how they managed to bring those schemes in their constituencies of Ponnani and Malappuram. One may have to write columns of reports if the details of infrastructure projects of the Central Government which they implemented in their constituencies. All these 20 MPs (19 from the Congress-led UDF and the lone CPI(M)) are unanimous in their claims that the constituencies they represent have never seen

Government led by Pinarayi Vijayan failed on all counts. The way the State government handled the Covid-19 pandemic was proof of how ill-equipped the administration was in taking on the situation," Leader of Opposition V D Satheshan had said many times in the past. Their ire towards the Centre arises out of the denial of IIT, AIIMS and more international airports to the State. But the MPs from the State have failed to convince the central governments in the past about the significance of IITs and AIIMS in Kerala. Even Tamil Nadu, ruled by BJP's eternal enemies DMK have managed to get what they asked for," said P Rajan, author and veteran scribe. Other than the tags of communalists and fascists, the Kerala political parties do not have much to say against the Narendra Modi Government. But Binoy Viswam, the intellectual face of global Communist movements who is also rated as a political astrologer, said on Thursday that 2024 election will see the defeat of Narendra Modi Government. "There is no possibility of Narendra Modi winning the 2024 election. The MPs from the CPI(M) and the CPI would decide who should be the Prime Minister after this election," said Viswam.

# Odisha: BJD fields 33 per cent women candidates, 38 per cent turncoats in LS polls

**PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has fielded 33 per cent women candidates for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in the state. The nomination process for the 21 parliamentary seats concluded on Thursday with BJD chief and Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announcing Lekhasri Samantsinghar as the party's candidate for Balasore Lok Sabha seat. Previously, Patnaik had named six other women as nominees for the LS polls. In 2019, five out of the seven women candidates Patnaik had fielded had won. This time around, Patnaik made changes to the roster by dropping two sitting women MPs, Chandrani Murmu from Keonjhar and Pramila Bisoi from Aska, while opting to re-nominate Kausalya Hikaka for Koraput Lok Sabha seat. The seven women candidates are - Lekhasri Samantsinghar (Balasore), Sarmistha Sethi (Jajpur), Manjula Mandal (Bhadrachang), Rajashree Mallik (Jagatsinghpur), Parineeta Mishra (Bargarh), Kausalya Hikaka (Koraput) and Ranjita Sahu (Aska). Patnaik's Lok Sabha candidates also include eight turncoats (38 per cent). They are Lekhasri Samantsinghar

(Balasore), Bhrgu Baxipatra (Berhampur), Pradeep Majhi (Nabarangpur), Surendra Singh Bhoi (Bolangir), Parineeta Mishra (Bargarh), Dhanarjay Sidu (Keonjhar), Anusum Mohanty (Kendrapara) and Manmoth Routray (Bhubaneswar). Samantsinghar had recently switched allegiance from the BJP's Odisha unit. Notably, she is the second former BJP vice-president, following Bhrgu Baxipatra, to receive BJD's nomination for the Lok Sabha elections. She will contest against BJP's sitting MP and former Union Minister Pratap Jena. Out of the nine assembly candidates announced on Thursday, two sitting MLAs - Sambit Routaray (Paradip) and Bhupinder Singh (Narla) - have been denied re-nomination. Madhab Sardar, who was defeated in Keonjhar assembly seat in 2019 elections, will replace Premanada Nayak in Telkoi. Nayak had earlier resigned from the BJD and joined the BJP and got nomination from the saffron party. Sarpanna Acharya, the party's senior vice-president, has been nominated as the candidate for Sambalpur assembly seat. He will take on leader of opposition Jaynarayan Mishra of the BJP.

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Loan No	Customer Name	Date of Loan	Overdue Amount ₹	Branch Name
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27253547	Himanshu Kaushik	08-09-2022	67208	Delhi-Bhajanpura
22042130	Himanshu Gupta	28-02-2022	20146	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
25561335	Sunil Kumar	06-07-2022	14733	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
26083803	Shikhar Ramakant	25-07-2022	19345	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
30270491	Lucky So Buddhan	27-12-2022	10484	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
30404792	Mohd Zakir Idrishi	31-12-2022	27790	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
32149373	Mohit Sharma	04-03-2023	14696	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
32851934	Akshay Kumar	27-03-2023	12512	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
34039914	Shikhar So Ramakant	02-05-2023	13341	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
41678473	Sunil So Tapan	17-11-2023	15871	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
41109307	Ritesh Do Saldul	06-11-2023	11590	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
39528920	Juber Javed	28-09-2023	21952	Delhi-Gandhi Nagar
21414783	Ghan Shyam	25-01-2022	5276	Delhi-Kashmiri Gate
31132555	Bajrang Mahender	27-01-2023	13962	Delhi-Kashmiri Gate
31081826	Vinay Ram Achal	25-01-2023	8959	Delhi-Kashmiri Gate
35914633	Mohammad Naushad Alam	28-06-2023	8842	Delhi-Kashmiri Gate
29909318	Raju Peeru	13-12-2022	32118	Delhi-Madipur
24818305	Aakash Deep	09-06-2022	9513	Delhi-Malviya Nagar
38262113	Noor Alam	25-08-2023	24367	Delhi-Malviya Nagar
34425193	Prem Chand	15-05-2023	11040	Delhi-Nandoli
35502813	Ritesh Gupta	17-06-2023	16448	Delhi-Sadaf
39075286	Rakesh Kumar Maheswari	16-09-2023	8892	Delhi-Shahdara Relationship
38907834	Sofyan So Abdulmajid	11-09-2023	11598	Delhi-Tilak Nagar
35970259	Raghu Kataria	30-06-2023	86199	Delhi-Uttam Nagar
38201390	Kishan Kumar	22-08-2023	19864	Delhi-Uttam Nagar

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Place: DELHI  
 Date: 12-04-2024

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Southern comfort

The BJP must win seats in south India to reach the desired strength in the Lok Sabha

The ever-evolving politics often demands course correction and compels politicians to test uncharted waters for building on their electoral successes. In recent times, the BJP has been intensifying efforts to expand its footprint beyond traditional strongholds in the Hindi heartland. As political pundits advise the BJP to register wins in the northeast and down south, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's southern push is becoming increasingly pronounced, with keen focus on States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala, where the party has never won. The BJP's southern foray is not an impulse but a calculated strategy. Traditionally, the southern States have been dominated by regional parties with strong linguistic and cultural identities, presenting a formidable challenge to national parties like the BJP. However, the BJP has been prudent enough to adapt its approach to resonate with the aspirations of the southern electorate. One of the key battlegrounds is Tamil Nadu, known for its vibrant political culture and fierce regionalism. Historically, Tamil Nadu has been dominated by the Dravidian parties, primarily the AIADMK and the DMK. However, recent years have seen a shift in the political dynamics, with the BJP making inroads and hoping to enhance its vote tally. Modi's proactive approach has been instrumental in bolstering the BJP's prospects in Tamil Nadu. Inaugurating infrastructure projects to addressing public rallies, Modi has been actively engaging with the people of Tamil Nadu. The party has an alliance with the AIADMK, strengthening its position in the State.



Kerala is another significant opportunity for the BJP to expand its presence down south. Though it is traditionally dominated by the LDF and the UDF, the BJP has been steadily making inroads in certain pockets. Modi's increased focus on Kerala is indicative of the BJP's long-term strategy to emerge as a credible alternative there. The BJP has been actively highlighting its vision for inclusive development and good governance in Kerala. This southern push, however, is not without challenges. The party faces formidable opponents entrenched in the political landscape of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Moreover, the diverse linguistic and cultural fabric of the region necessitates a nuanced approach that respects local sensibilities and identities. However, by aligning its agenda with the aspirations of local people and leveraging Modi's leadership, the BJP aims to emerge as a formidable force in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. But that is easier said than done. The BJP, with a marginal presence in the south, will take time and effort to change that. Modi's forays into the southern parts of the country may bear some fruits but it would be naive to think that the results will be immediately delivered; it will happen perhaps only sometime in future. Indeed, the BJP has managed to break ice in the northeast and southern India but that has taken considerable time and effort. Of course, efforts done now in the south would not go in vain and will pave the way for success in future elections.

### PICTALK



Children at the Jama Masjid on the occasion of the Eid ul-Fitr festival, in New Delhi

# Education's cultural impact is profound



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Knowledge, behaviour and spirituality are pillars of personal development. Yet, crucial aspects of learning often lack sustained attention in educational systems

The entire Greek tradition, going through Aristotle, Socrates and more, has subscribed to the theory that 'man is a learning animal'. This belief has been carefully nurtured and left a deep impact on the Greek-Roman tradition. As the Greek-Roman tradition spread through North Africa, Asia and different parts of Europe, it left its mark on human thinking and learning. That 'man is a learning animal' graduated to the level of a belief and paradigm. Deep thought makes it necessary to take a closer look at this statement.

Palpably, this is a compact thought. There is some recognition and some empirical evidence to the effect that different phases of the life cycle have different intensities and content of learning. One learns comprehensively in youth and adulthood and as one grows and mellow, some of the earlier vestiges of the learning remain. What does not remain is a similar impact of that learning on behaviour or a continuance of learning in thought and deed. Thus, like all total statements, they need to be modified, adapted and fitted into the context.

What type of learning remains in sequence and continuance and why does, some of it it remain neither in sequence nor in continuance? Indeed, what kind of learning remains in patches needs to be realised with the content itself getting lost. This kind of exploration should be one of the central contexts of human growth. It is worth pondering why this kind of approach has not received the kind of attention, for learning, as other domains of scholasticism have earned.

At the end of it, knowledge, behaviour and spirituality are the three basic elements that go into a man's personality. There is a general need to create awareness of these elements amongst the general literate community that matters in this land. That will be an essential element in India becoming a 'Jagat Guru' and leading the



world through to a better future.

That may be a matter of emphasis at an operational level. To an extent that has not been sufficiently aligned with the skills that should arise out of educated knowledge and behaviour. Thus there is a need to take a yet deeper look at the foundations of Indian education and reflect it in processes of observed learning. It is also obvious that the human being has to be taught over and over again. As it happens, learning fades away and needs continuing renewal, to prevent it from slipping off. This needs intervention in many ways, including how the curriculum is designed, how it is imparted in any classroom and how it becomes a useful input to face the challenges of life and the profession.

Learning has many manifestations and begins with automotive behaviour, such as learning how to eat, how to use one's fingers and how to maintain hygiene and other values. This has to be a life-long process. However, as said earlier, there are certain



UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS THE CORE OF A SUCCESSFUL INTERNALISATION OF SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS AND INFORMATION THAT COMES OUT OF LEARNING A SUBJECT WILL MAKE TEACHING FAR MORE EFFECTIVE

aspects of life where repeated attempts at internalising learning have to be made. In certain areas of life, one cannot afford to make mistakes over and over again. This situation must be addressed and collectively corrected in the life cycle of the individual. It is about time 'learning' as art was made an integral part of all disciplines. To understand this proposition clearly, one needs to recognise that learning mathematics requires certain unique methods and abilities. Those methods and abilities are not the same for learning English or Hindi as a language. There are other transformations and angularities in the requirements and characteristics of the learning process, itself. Illustratively the method of learning when it comes to learning history or geography, may require its uniqueness. It is therefore plausible to argue that for each subject matter, there needs to be an orientation to the learning method of that subject. In other words, a teacher of

mathematics needs to be very clear and explain to the students how to learn mathematics. The orientation of a teacher while teaching a language, as mentioned above, would be different and the teacher needs to explain to the students the learning methods of a language. The examples can be multiplied. Understanding what is the core of a successful internalisation of skills, behaviours and information that comes out of learning a subject will make teaching far more effective. It will also give the approach of 'man is a learning animal' far greater reach. Like much else, learning theory needs to be made a part of the teaching plan. Somewhere it will mark the beginning of a more realistic practical orientation. It would be useful to remind ourselves that all learning affects all of us and remains a part of the life of the land we live in. (The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### STUDENT DEATHS OVERSEAS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "One more Indian student dies in US; 11th so far," published on April 10, this is my response. Indian student Mohd Abdul Arfath is not a one-off incident given that ten more Indian students have already met with the same fate in the not-too-distant past in the United States. Ironically, they go there to gain education and knowledge but are sent back dead in the coffins. This state of affairs underscores the abysmal plight of law and order over there, having a toll on the US's international image and causing thereby the corrosion of public confidence in the US administration. New aspirants will think twice before dreaming of getting an education in the US now. Thankfully, the Indian Consulate is, reportedly, in touch and working with the US law-enforcing authorities. As per reports, Mohammed Abdul Arfath from Hyderabad reached the US in May last year to pursue an M-Tech(IT) from Cleveland University but, for some time, was not responding to his parents' calls. Amid the search operation, Arfath was found dead to the shock of life to his frantic parents. However, the Consulate General of India in New York while offering 'deepest condolences' to the empty family, has promised a thorough probe into Arfath's death, besides extending all possible assistance!

Azhar A Khan | Kotwala

### MODI OPENS UP ON MANIPUR

Madam — Apropos the editorial, "Lost Chance," published on April 10, this is my response. The edit points out the PM's sphinx-like silence when the violence in Manipur was at its peak, even afterwards. Eventually, he was forced to break his silence by the combined efforts of the Opposition parties. Even then, he did not elaborate on the issue as was expected but made a rather brief reference to it. It was a huge surprise to hear him speak about Manipur and that too of his own volition. It was almost as if the PM had broken his vow of silence on Manipur.

### International court steps in



Apropos the news article, "Germany rejects allegations that it's facilitating acts of genocide in Gaza at UN court," published on April 10, this is my response. There is so much to be learned from the internal policy of the United States of America and Germany. But their policy of giving utmost respect to human rights has unfortunately been confined only within their territories. In a recent development, Germany reiterated its sensitivity against even a faint trace of racism when it stopped the sale of German jerseys with the

number 44 because of a resemblance to the logo of the Nazi Party's notorious SS paramilitary units. Unfortunately, just like America, Germany leaves its commendable sensitivity against human rights violations far behind in their foreign policy. Nicaragua has recently brought a case against Germany at the International Court of Justice. In the case file, Nicaragua said, "Germany is facilitating the commission of genocide" in Gaza and violating the Genocide Convention by providing Israel with military and financial aid. The International Court of Justice has already asked Israel to take steps to prevent genocidal acts in the Gaza Strip. The Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip said that over 33,000 Palestinians including many children and women had been killed in Gaza. It has laid bare the contrast between the internal and the foreign policy of Germany.

Sujit De | Kolkata

However, what he said had to be taken with more than the proverbial pinch of salt. PM Modi claimed that "timely intervention" of the Centre and the state government helped diffuse the situation. Sad to say, but this "timely intervention" miserably failed to prevent the loss of nearly 300 lives and left many others wounded and displaced. Above all, the state had to bear the brunt of deep and dangerous ethnic scars, which may never heal. Because it is not customary for anyone to challenge the PM on facts, I will only quote Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a US politician and diplomat, who had said "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his facts."

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

### HUM DO, HAMARE EK YA DO

Madam — Inflation has been rising recently. Apart from this, the parents have to spend a lot of money on the education and upbringing of their children. Apart from this, recently both the husband and wife are working, so various problems of child rearing are arising. Take the exam-

ple of Pune city alone. Pune is the home of education and citizens from many parts of the country come here for various types of jobs. According to a survey, there are 4 lakh 46 thousand fertile couples in Pune. Interestingly, 37 percent of the couples are satisfied with 2 children and 27 percent of the couples are satisfied with only one child.

This means that 64 couples have made the slogan "Hum Do, Hamare Ek Ya Do" a reality. About four to five decades ago, every couple had four to five sons and daughters. Recently, various issues have arisen and couples are trying to keep the population under control, but now one thing has come to light the children will have to see the relationship of aunt, uncle and uncle in the book. Now the survey for 2024-2025 will be started soon in Pune and it will be completed in the next two months. More information will follow.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Elevate higher education with philosophy's power

The National Education Policy 2020 acknowledges philosophy's importance but falls short in its implementation

Have you ever stared up at the night sky and wondered if we were alone? Or maybe you've pondered what it truly means to be "good" or "bad"? Or why do millions of birds fly in perfect unison across the sky? Philosophy isn't some stuffy subject locked away in a library. It's like gazing at a breathtaking sunset and questioning everything you thought you knew. Is that fiery orange glow "real" or just a trick of light? Does the beauty of a sunset exist even when no one is around to witness it? These are the kinds of questions that philosophers love to ask. Throughout history, philosophers from all corners of the globe have wrestled with these big questions. They've debated the nature of existence, the power of our minds and the best way to live a fulfilling life.



The scope of philosophy is vast, encompassing various subfields such as metaphysics (the study of the nature of reality), epistemology (the study of knowledge and belief), ethics (the study of moral principles), logic (the study of valid reasoning), aesthetics (the study of beauty and art), political philosophy (the study of governance and justice) and many others. Philosophy also engages in interdisciplinary dialogue with other fields, enriching both philosophy and these other disciplines. The importance of philosophy in higher education is immense. The decline in the quality of higher education that we always ponder on in higher education is due to a lack of imparting philosophy in our curriculum. Students and teachers of the present generation lack an understanding of learning and teaching philosophy. Though the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 is constructed with philosophy as the background, it fails to infiltrate the minds of students or teachers. Teaching philosophy is essential for fostering intellectual growth, ethical awareness and critical engagement with the

world, ultimately enriching both individuals and society as a whole. Even in the PhD programme, though the degree is Doctor of Philosophy, most universities do not teach philosophy. Philosophy equips doctoral students with the intellectual toolkit needed to excel as independent researchers. Exposure to diverse philosophical perspectives cultivates open-mindedness. Doctoral students learn to consider different viewpoints, fostering intellectual curiosity and a willingness to learn from others.

This is crucial for collaboration and navigating the ever-evolving world of academic research. For instance, a science student might explore the philosophical underpinnings of the scientific method, while a literature student might delve into the concept of truth and interpretation. Philosophy hones critical thinking skills essential for doctoral research. Students learn to analyse arguments, identify biases and evaluate evidence. They develop the ability to ask probing questions, deconstruct assumptions and construct sound

arguments supporting their research. Many doctoral programs involve research with ethical considerations. Philosophy provides a framework for ethical decision-making. Students grapple with ethical dilemmas in research design, data analysis and publication, preparing them to navigate the ethical complexities of their chosen field. Students learn to articulate their research questions, defend their findings and engage in scholarly debate with colleagues. The absence of philosophy education in higher education centres could result in a less intellectually engaged, ethically informed and critically minded society, potentially hindering progress in academia, governance and societal development. Even when new branches of science emerge over the years, one subject that stays relevant in every society, even in a space colony, will be philosophy. It is high time we include Philosophy as a compulsory subject in our higher education.



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)

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## FIRST COLUMN

## US-CHINA TRADE TALKS HEAT UP

US Treasury Secretary Yellen raises concerns over China's trade practices



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

China is back on the Western radar with several high-profile visits to and from the Asian country. This week US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, rounded up her second trip to China, in less than a year, where she was firm and polite with Chinese government officials regarding the deep concerns the US has with the nation on several trade issues. One of the biggest concerns highlighted by Yellen is the disruptive trade practices of China, harming US interests and impacting the productivity of its factories, especially in electric vehicles, solar power equipment and lithium-ion batteries to name a few. Speaking at a press conference in Beijing, Janet Yellen said "There are features of the Chinese economy that have growing negative spillovers on the U.S. and the globe. I am particularly worried about how China's enduring macroeconomic imbalances, namely its weak household consumption and business over-investment, aggravated by large-scale government support in specific industrial sectors-will lead to significant risk to workers and businesses in the United States and the rest of the world."

What she intended to highlight was the huge supply glut created by the gigantic manufacturing complexes in China. She said that huge quantities of cheap Chinese products flooding the global markets were threatening domestic manufacturing not just in the US but all around the world. Chinese government's industrial policy push was unduly influencing the prices of several items around the world. She mentioned that nearly a decade ago the PRC government support led to cheap steel prices, which decimated several industries in the US and the world and a repeat of the same would not be tolerated.



The tricky issue of national security also came during Janet Yellen's China visit. She carefully worded the US's concerns regarding Chinese support to Russia and said "We also had difficult conversations about national security. President Biden and I are determined to do all that we can to stem the flow of material that is supporting Russia's defence industrial base and helping it to wage war against Ukraine. We continue to be concerned about the role that any firms, including those in the PRC, are playing in Russia's military procurement. I stressed that companies, including those in the PRC, must not provide material support for Russia's war and that they will face significant consequences if they do." Even as Janet Yellen was winding up her China tour, the Chinese commerce minister had reached Europe, to convince European lawmakers that the excess electric vehicle capacity/supply was a myth and was merely, the result of efficient factories in China. Wang Betao, Chinese commerce minister during an interaction in Paris, issued a statement later that stated "China's electric vehicle companies rely on continuous technological innovation, perfect production and supply chain system and full market competition for rapid development, not relying on subsidies to gain competitive advantage." India is scaling up its electric vehicle production rapidly although it faces several supply-side constraints, primarily on components whose major exporter is China. India will have nearly a decade of catch-up to match Chinese electric vehicle capacity and would need huge investments from US and European companies to shift to a greener fuel. The next Indian government is likely to tweak the existing electric vehicle policy in its first 100-day agenda. The pending Europe India Technology and Trade Council meeting is not likely to be scheduled before the end of the year. Similarly, any significant US-India trade policy forum conversations would have to wait for early next year. However, a clear policy outlook and out-of-the-box thinking by the Indian government could still win the day for India for cleaner vehicle fuel.

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

## RBI maintains status quo despite inflation optimism



UTTAM GUPTA

RBI's commitment to 'last-mile disinflation' has prompted a continued tight monetary policy stance, raising questions about its impact on economic growth

On April 5, 2024, announcing the decisions taken by the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in its first bi-monthly meeting of the current financial year (FY), Governor Shaktikanta Das observed "The elephant has now gone out for a walk and appears to be returning to the forest. We would like the elephant to return to the forest and remain there on a durable basis." Das was using the elephant analogy to characterise the trajectory of retail inflation as represented by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Having scaled to a high of 7.8 per cent in April 2022, CPI has declined to 5.7 per cent in December 2023 and further down to 5.1 per cent during January/February 2024. He wishes that the downward movement in the CPI will continue and that it will stabilise at the 'target' level on a sustainable basis. To put things in perspective, let us look at some basics.

In 2016, the Union Government put in place an institutionalised framework to enable the MPC to formulate monetary policy and determine the key interest rates for inflation targeting. It mandated the RBI to fix the policy rate (the interest rate at which the RBI lends to banks) in such a manner as to maintain CPI within the target range of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent) for five years ending March 31, 2021. The mandate has since been extended till March 31, 2026.

The RBI uses the two prime monetary policy instruments namely the policy rate and liquidity (a jargon for the quantum of credit available in the banking system) for management of inflation. It is also committed to maintaining high and inclusive economic growth. But, in practice, it gives disproportionate attention to inflation targeting. Yet, when it comes to the outcome of inflation, it doesn't get much success. Let us look at some facts. In December 2018 when Das took charge, the economy was on the downswing even as GDP growth during the third quarter of FY 2018-19 onwards, was dipping. Then, the policy rate reached a peak of 6.5 per cent, courtesy of a tight stance taken by his predecessor Urjit Patel. Beginning in February 2019, Das went for an aggressive cut in the policy rate which had plummeted to 4 per cent by May 2020. Despite the cuts, growth didn't revive. During 2019-20, GDP growth reached a historic low of 4 per cent. During 2020-21, it was negative at 6.6 per cent, courtesy of the overpowering effect of the Corona pandemic. During 2021-22, GDP growth rebounded to 8.9 per cent. Though one might argue, low-interest rates helped revival, the fact remains that it was primarily the resumption of economic activities — following the lifting of Corona-related restrictions — that made it possible. Pertinently, inflation remained within the target range during the first three-quarters of that FY despite a low-interest rate.

From January 2022 onward, there was a spurt in inflation that continued through most of FY 2022-23. The spurt prompted the RBI to invoke its pet theme of 'inflation targeting'. Beginning May 2022, it delivered a cumulative hike of 1.4 per cent in the policy rate during the first half of the FY (in three lots i.e. May/June/August). It continued to deliver more hikes during the second half adding to 1.1 percent (October/December



THE RBI USES THE TWO PRIME MONETARY POLICY INSTRUMENTS, NAMELY THE POLICY RATE AND LIQUIDITY (A JARGON FOR THE QUANTUM OF CREDIT AVAILABLE IN THE BANKING SYSTEM), FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF INFLATION. IT IS ALSO COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING HIGH AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

2022 and February 2023). A total hike of 2.5 per cent thus restored the rate to its earlier peak of 6.5 per cent by February 2023. Yet, inflation remained stubborn almost throughout 2022-23. This was tacitly admitted by Das in his April 2023 policy statement: "When we started the rate cut cycle in February 2019 to provide support to growth, the CPI inflation was around 2 per cent and the policy repo rate was 6.50 per cent. Now, the policy rate is 6.50 per cent but inflation is 6.4 percent."

In other words, he accepted that the RBI was unable to bring down inflation even after increasing the policy rate to 6.4 per cent. After February 2023, during the six policy reviews in a row April/June/August/October/December 2023 and February 2024, the RBI kept the policy rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent.

This was despite the CPI inflation decreasing from a high of 7.4 per cent in July 2023 to 5 per cent in September 2023, 4.8 per cent in October 2023 and 5.1 per cent during January/February 2024. For the whole of FY 2023-24, at 5.4 per cent, it was lower than the outer (albeit target) limit of 6 per cent.

In its April 2024 review, yet again the RBI has kept the policy rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent. This is despite its assessment that the CPI inflation will be 4.5 per cent during FY 2024-25 which is well within the target range of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent). Yet, the decision is driven by the central bank's commitment to what Das describes as 'ensuring last-mile disinflation', saying there is no need to start reducing interest rates until inflation reaches the target of 4 per cent. If, that indeed was the intent then why keep (+/- 2 per cent)?

The RBI has also retained a policy stance focused on "withdrawal of accommodation".

The terminology was coined by Das way back in June 2019 when he talked of an 'accommodative' stance pointing towards a cut in policy rate and an increase in credit availability. Since, June 2022 the RBI has reversed this stance and has stuck to the withdrawal of accommodation to date. Das has coined a new terminology in the December 2023 bi-monthly policy review and now calls it "actively disinflationary". Why doesn't the RBI want to give up its tight policy stance? Even as Core inflation (CPI excluding fuel and food) at 3.4 per cent continues to be below RBI's 4 per cent target and fuel prices have remained unchanged throughout the year, its main worry is food inflation. After declining from a high of 11.8 per cent in July 2023 to 6.6 per cent in October 2023, in recent months, it has gone up the most recent reading being 8 per cent.

Too much focus on food inflation is misplaced. First, the current CPI basket gives a weight of around 39 per cent to food. But, that is based on the Consumption Expenditure Survey (CES) of 2011-12. Summary statistics from the 2022-23 CES show that this has fallen significantly. With this correction, the impact of food inflation on CPI will significantly weaken. Second, the spurt in prices of food items has a lot to do with disruption in supplies caused primarily by seasonal factors.

During the last two years, wheat output was affected by unusually high temperatures during 2021-22 and rains accompanied by hailstorms in 2022-23. The high inflation in July 2023 was due to a spike in the prices of vegetables - again caused by seasonal factors. Third,

RBI can achieve little by increasing the policy rate or restricting credit availability as these measures work primarily on the demand side whereas the problem lies at the supply end.

Meanwhile, continuing with a tight monetary policy stance could pose a serious risk to growth due to a rise in lending rates, an increase in EMIs of millions of borrowers and higher cost loans to industries, especially MSMEs. While, everyone — like the governor — would wish that the elephant returns to the forest and stays there permanently, the RBI doing it alone could boomerang. "Wheat harvesting is by and large over... wheat availability will not be affected as much as it did 2 years ago when heatwave conditions were starting from March. So, in wheat, there is not so much concern.

But vegetable prices will have to be watched and any other impact that heat wave conditions may produce," Das said at a post-policy press briefing. "As compared to the previous three years, the INR exhibited the lowest volatility in 2023-24. The relative stability of the INR reflects India's sound macroeconomic fundamentals, financial stability and improvements in the external position," he said.

The headwinds from protracted geopolitical tensions and increasing disruptions in trade routes, however, pose risks to the outlook, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das said. Governor Das added that the outlook for agriculture and rural activity appears bright. "The outlook for agriculture and rural activity appears bright.

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

## Ignored at home, legendary football coach gets global honour

Rufus D'Souza, a 90-year-old coach from Fort Kochi, Kerala, has been honoured by Borussia Dortmund for his lifelong commitment to the sport

Whenever the Indian national football team gets thrashed by its rivals in international hustings, the national coach Igor Stimac has a readymade answer. "This result is on expected lines. There is nothing unusual in this result," Stimac tells the media. He has been the chief coach of the country since 2019 and according to FIFA, the world body that controls the game, India's ranking is 121. At a time when India is on an all out war to emerge as the third largest economy in the world, out national football side reminds one of a rudderless ship getting battered and bruised in the high seas.

There is nothing surprising about the performance of the Indian football team in the



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

international arena as since the late 1960s, the quality of the national side is always on a downward journey from which it has not improved. The introduction of Indian Super League and arrival of players from foreign countries gave some hope to the average football lovers in the country but it has been fizzled out. Most of the players donning the boots in the ISL are those who

had had failed to make it to the national or club teams of their country. Hence ISL became a dumping ground for burnt-out players and discarded coaches. It is not known whether Stimac belongs to the lot of discarded coaches. But the Croatian has failed to make any impact in Indian football. This is being written in the backdrop of a recent development that took place in Fort Kochi, Kerala's football nursery. Rufus D'Souza, the 90-year old football coach based in this picturesque town, was honoured by Borussia Dortmund, the world famous football club in Germany that plays in Bundesliga, the top tier of the country's professional league. The honour was in recognition of the hard work and dedication with which Rufus has

taken up football coaching. Every morning at 5.30 sharp Rufus reaches the colonial era Parade Ground and coaches hundreds of students. It does not matter for Rufus whether it is raining or the blowing of cold wind from the adjacent Arabian Sea. Football Uncle, as he is addressed in reverence by children and their parents, is an uncompromising task matter. Punctuality and discipline are his forte. Rufus does not charge any fees or donation from the players. But the condition is that they should be at the stadium at the stroke of 5.30 without fail. Latecomers have no place in Rufus' classes. He is not an ordinary football coach. For eight decades he has lived only for football and hockey. Coaching is an act of Tapasya



for this former professional footballer who had donned boots for teams like Netaji Sporting and WIMCO of Madras. He is the first Keralaite who has teamed up with Brazilian DaCunha while playing for WIMCO, one of the bigwigs of Indian football in the 1950s. After hanging his boots for good in late 1950s, Rufus took up coaching in a big way. The players moulded

by him resembles the who's who of Indian football. Xavier Pious, Hamilton Bobby, Sebastian Netto, former Kerala captain T. A. Jaffer and the list goes on. Rufus revived and rejuvenated a club Santos in his neighborhood. "The name was my tribute to the all time great of world football, Pele. The great master sent me a letter of appreciation when he came to know that we have a club by name Santos," says Rufus with his childlike enthusiasm. In his hectic schedule of coaching and taking Santos throughout South India to play in tournaments, Rufus forgot his own life. His passion for soccer kept him away from marriage and family. Here is a football guru who breathes, sleeps and lives football. Many reputed coaches

from Europe had come to Fort Kochi after hearing about the football odyssey of Rufus who adores S. A. Rahim, the Hyderabad man with the Mida's Touch. "There were good coaches like Rahim, Manna, Chuni Goswamy, Sukhwinder and Jarnail Singh. Instead of foreign coaches we should opt for foreign managers who know the intricacies of football," says Rufus. Strange as it may seem, this desi guru has never been approached by the football bosses of the country to coach the national side for reasons they only know. Rufus, who is walking briskly to the sunset, is sad about the state of affairs of Indian football. He describes Indian Soccer League as a major fraud committed on the country. The period from

March to May was the football season of India. Each of the 14 districts in the State had an all-India football tournament. All teams including the Big Three of Calcutta (Mohun Bagan, East Bengal and Mohammedan Sporting) were regular features in these tournaments and the players were household names. "The tournaments and the teams died a natural death for lack of sponsors. When there are no tournaments and teams, there would not be players anywhere. The ISL does not offer any chance to upcoming players," says Rufus who is getting ready to fly away to Dortmund as the guest of the football giant.

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



# Israeli airstrike in Gaza kills three sons of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh



## US, Japan, Philippine hold first trilateral summit to counter China in Indo-Pacific

WASHINGTON, APR 11 (AP)

President Joe Biden is bringing together Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the White House on Thursday as the three nations use their first-ever trilateral summit to try to show they are in lockstep about countering China's military assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific. The leaders are expected to announce that their coast guards will hold a joint patrol in the Indo-Pacific this year, a follow-up on law enforcement drills carried out last year by the allies in waters near the disputed South China Sea. The US Coast Guard will also welcome Filipino and Japanese coast guard members onto a US Coast Guard vessel during the patrol for training, according to senior Biden administration officials who insisted on anonymity to preview the talks. The summit comes a day after Biden held one-on-one talks with Kishida and feted the Japanese premier with a glitzy state dinner at the White House, a diplomatic honour meant to recognize Tokyo's growing clout on the global stage. It was also designed to send a clear signal that the Democratic administration remains determined to build what it calls a "latticework" of alliances in the Indo-Pacific even as it grapples with the Israel-Hamas war and Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Biden on Wednesday reflected on the fact that Japan, once a fierce US enemy, has become one of the closest American partners and an indispensable ally in a shared push for peace, security and prosperity in the Pacific and beyond. "Just a few generations ago, our two nations were locked in a devastating conflict," Biden said with Kishida by his side for a pomp-filled arrival ceremony at the White House. "It would have been easy to say we remain adversaries. Instead, we made a far better choice: We became the closest of friends." Thursday's three-way summit will also have a large economic component with several major US-based companies — including Meta, UPS and Greenbrier Energy — announcing investments in the Philippines, administration officials said. The new deals come after Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo visited Manila last month to announce more than USD 1 billion in new investment by American companies in the Philippines. The United States, the United Kingdom and Japan on Wednesday announced joint military exercises in the Indo-Pacific in 2025. That followed the Pentagon revealing earlier this week that the US, the UK and Australia were considering including Japan in the AUKUS partnership, a grouping launched in 2021 that aims to equip Australia with nuclear-powered and conventionally armed submarines. Kishida is headed to Capitol Hill on Thursday for an address to US lawmakers that is expected to focus on the need to strengthen the partnership between the US and Japan at a time of tension in the Asia-Pacific and skepticism in Congress about US involvement abroad. Administration officials have acknowledged growing concern about provocative Chinese action in the Pacific, which will be a large focus of the leaders' talks. The White House sees the summit as countering China's attempts at "intimidation" and sending a message that China is "the outlier in the neighbourhood," according to an administration official. Relations between China and the Philippines have been repeatedly tested by skirmishes involving the two nations' coast guard vessels in the disputed South China Sea. Chinese coast guard ships also regularly approached disputed Japanese-controlled East China Sea islands near Taiwan. The so-called "gray-zone" harassment by China has included shining military-grade lasers at the Philippine Coast Guard, firing water cannons at vessels and ramming into Philippine ships near the Second Thomas Shoal, which both Manila and Beijing claim. In 1999, Manila intentionally ran the World War II-era ship aground on the shoal, establishing a permanent military presence there. Biden, in a wide-ranging phone call with Chinese President Xi Jinping last week, raised concerns about China's operations in the South China Sea, including efforts to impede the Philippines, which the US is treaty-obligated to defend, from resupplying its forces on the Second Thomas Shoal.



JERUSALEM, APR 11 (AP)

An Israeli airstrike in Gaza killed three sons of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, according to Israel's army and the militant group's official media, with Haniyeh accusing Israel of acting in "the spirit of revenge and murder." The Israeli military confirmed it carried out the attack Wednesday, saying the men conducted militant activity in central Gaza, without elaborating. Hamas said four of the leader's grandchildren were also killed. In an interview with the Al Jazeera satellite channel, Haniyeh said the killings would not pressure Hamas into softening its positions amid ongoing cease-fire negotiations with Israel, brokered by international mediators. Haniyeh left Gaza in 2019 and lives in exile in Qatar. The top Hamas leader in Gaza is Yehya Sinwar, who masterminded the October 7 attack on Israel that sparked the war. Some 1,200 people were killed in the attack, mostly civilians, and Palestinian militants took around 250 people hostage. Israel's six-month war against Hamas has devastated the Gaza Strip and pushed the tiny Palestinian territory into a humanitarian crisis, leaving more than 1 million people on the brink of starvation. Israeli bombardments and ground offensives have killed at least 33,360 Palestinians and wounded 74,993, Gaza's Health Ministry says. The ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its tally, but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead.

Lufthansa, which usually has five flights per week from Frankfurt to Tehran, suspended its flights on Saturday, initially until Thursday. In an emailed response to a query about the flights on Thursday, the company didn't elaborate on its concerns about the situation. Iran has vowed to retaliate against Israel over an attack on its consulate in Damascus earlier this month. Lufthansa said that flights by its Austrian Airlines subsidiary to Tehran continue because, due to the shorter flight time from Vienna, it can run the flights as "daylight operations," with the plane returning immediately after arrival in Tehran. It said that flights to and from Frankfurt had to be cancelled "as Lufthansa has decided not to let the crew disembark in Tehran." Biden vows 'ironclad' support for Israel as Iran threatens to strike. WASHINGTON - US President Joe Biden emphasised his country's "ironclad" support for Israel on Wednesday as Iran vows to retaliate for this month's deadly strike on the Iranian Consulate in Syria. The US military believes Israel carried out the airstrike on Iran's diplomatic station, which killed two top generals and others. Israel has not commented on the attack, however Tehran says it holds Israel responsible. The White House says it had no prior knowledge of the operation, but has repeatedly promised to back Israel in the face of Iranian threats. Biden spoke Wednesday alongside Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who is in Washington for an official visit. "We also want to address the Iranian threat — to launch a significant attack on Israel," Biden said during a joint news conference. "Our commitment to Israel's security against these threats from Iran and its proxies is ironclad. We say it again, ironclad, and we're going to do all we can to protect

Israel's security," Biden said. Earlier Wednesday, Iran's supreme leader repeated a promise to retaliate against Israel. And Israel's foreign minister threatened Wednesday that his country's forces would strike Iran directly if the Islamic Republic launched an attack from its territory against Israel. Since the Israel's war in Gaza against Hamas began six months ago, there have been near-daily exchanges of fire along the Israel-Lebanon border between Israeli forces and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran. Tehran also backs an umbrella group of Iraqi militias that have attacked US military bases and positions in Syria and Iraq. Food aid charity says Israeli strike wounded Palestinian staffer on same day as deadly convoy attacks. JERUSALEM — A off-duty Palestinian staff member with the food aid charity World Central Kitchen was badly wounded by an Israeli airstrike in Gaza on April 1, the same day seven other staffers were killed in a separate Israeli attack. The staffer, identified only as Amro, was pulled from the rubble of a residence after an Israeli strike hit a nearby mosque, in the vicinity of a WCK warehouse and kitchen, the charity said Wednesday. He spent time in a coma, and WCK said is still recovering in a hospital from head and hand injuries. Amro had joined WCK at the start of the year, the charity said in a statement, and before the war had owned a sweet shop that was destroyed by Israeli bombardments. The statement said Amro turned down chances to leave Gaza several times. "He always says, I am here serving people hot food every day. I will not leave my job and let them suffer." On April 1, Israeli airstrikes on an aid convoy killed seven WCK workers — six foreigners and one

Palestinian. Israel says the deaths were a tragic error. WCK laid the blame squarely on Israel's military, saying the army had coordinated over the movement of the cars carrying the workers as they left northern Gaza. Nearly every day, strikes level buildings with Palestinian families inside, killing men, women and children, with no explanation of the target or independent accountability over the proportionality of the strike. Israel blames the large number of civilian casualties on militants, saying they operate among the population. Israel plans to open a new entry point for aid into northern Gaza instead of the damaged Erez crossing. TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel will soon open a new crossing to deliver humanitarian aid into the hard-hit northern Gaza Strip, Israel's Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said Wednesday. Gallant's announcement comes at a time of heavy US pressure to increase the flow of desperately needed aid into Gaza. Earlier Wednesday, US President Joe Biden said Israel's efforts are still "not enough." Israeli officials say the new crossing will be built instead of using the damaged Erez crossing, which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged last week to open. Erez was destroyed by Hamas militants during their October 7 attack and was designed for pedestrians, not cargo, according to COGAT, the Israeli military body in charge of Palestinian civilian affairs. An official from COGAT said the new crossing would be close to the beachfront on Gaza's northern tip. It was not clear exactly when the crossing will be opened. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to talk to the media. At a briefing with reporters, Gallant said Israel plans a number of

additional steps to improve the humanitarian situation — including using its port in the southern Israeli city of Ashdod to accept aid shipments for the Palestinians. It was not clear when the port would open. He also says Israel will allow Jordan to deliver more aid to Gaza, and that Israel is working with the US on infrastructure projects such as new water lines. Israel faces pressure from the US to increase aid into Gaza, where its offensive has wreaked an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. Aid groups say supplies are not reaching people quickly enough, blaming Israeli restrictions and noting that thousands of trucks are waiting to enter Gaza. Biden says Israel still not doing enough to get aid into Gaza. WASHINGTON — US President Joe Biden said Wednesday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not doing enough to increase humanitarian aid into Gaza. "We'll see what he does in terms of meeting the commitments that he made to me," Biden said at the White House. Biden has warned Netanyahu that future US support for the war depends on swift implementation of new steps to protect civilians and aid workers. Although the flow of trucks has increased since Biden spoke with Netanyahu last week, the US president said Israel should open another access point in Gaza's north. Israel halted aid deliveries to Gaza in the early days of the war, but under US pressure has slowly increased the number of trucks allowed to enter the territory. Still, aid groups say supplies are not reaching desperate people quickly enough, blaming Israeli restrictions and noting that thousands of trucks are waiting to enter Gaza. Countries have attempted less efficient ways to deliver aid, including airdrops and by sea. Iran's supreme leader again pledges retaliation against Israel over killings of Iranian generals. JERUSALEM — Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei again promised to retaliate against Israel over the killings of Iranian generals in a strike on its consulate in Syria. He said last week's attack on Iran's consulate in Damascus, widely blamed on Israel, was akin to an attack on Iranian territory. "The evil regime must be punished, and it will be punished," he added. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz appeared to respond, posting on social platform X in both Farsi and Hebrew: "If Iran attacks from its territory, Israel will respond and attack in Iran." The strike on April 1 killed 12 people, including seven Iranian Revolutionary Guard members, four Syrians and a Hezbollah militia member. Rahul Datta

# China acts tough against two US defence companies

BEIJING, APR 11 (AP)

China on Thursday announced rare sanctions against two US defence companies over what it said is their support for arms sales to Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy Beijing claims as its own territory to be recovered by force if necessary. The announcement freezes the assets of General Atomics Aeronautical Systems and General Dynamics Land Systems held within China. It also bars the companies' management from entering the country. Filings show General Dynamics operates a half-dozen Gulfstream and jet aviation services operations in China, which remains heavily reliant on foreign aerospace technology even as it attempts to build its own presence in the field. The company helps make the Abrams tank being purchased by Taiwan to replace outdated armour intended to deter or resist an



invasion from China. General Atomics produces the Predator and Reaper drones used by the US military. Chinese authorities did not go into details on the company's alleged involvement with supplying arms to Taiwan. Beijing has long threatened such sanctions, but has rarely issued them as its economy reels from the COVID-19 pandemic, high unemployment and a sharp decline in foreign investment. "The continued US arms sales

Sanctions were leveled under Beijing's recently enacted Law of the People's Republic of China on Countering Foreign Sanctions. General Dynamics fully owned entities are registered in Hong Kong, the southern Chinese semi-autonomous city over which Beijing has steadily been increasing its political and economic control to the point that it faces no vocal opposition and has seen its critics silenced, imprisoned or forced into exile. Despite their lack of formal diplomatic ties — a concession Washington made to Beijing when they established relations in 1979 — the US remains Taiwan's most important source of diplomatic support and supplier of military hardware from fighter jets to air defense systems. Taiwan has also been investing heavily in its own defense industry, producing sophisticated missiles and submarines.

# Instagram deploys new tools to guard young people from nudity

LONDON, APR 11 (AP)

Instagram said it's deploying new new tools to protect young people and combat sexual extortion, including a feature that will automatically blur nudity in direct messages. The social media platform said in a blog post Thursday that it's testing out the features as part of its campaign to fight sexual scams and other forms of "image abuse," and to make it tougher for criminals to contact teens. Sexual extortion, or sextortion, involves persuading a person to send explicit photos online and then threatening to make the images public unless the victim pays money or engages in sexual favours. Recent high-profile cases include two Nigerian brothers who pleaded guilty to sexually extorting teen boys and young men in Michigan, including one who took his own life, and a Virginia



sheriff's deputy who sexually extorted and kidnapped a 15-year-old girl. Instagram and other social media companies have faced growing criticism for not doing enough to protect young people. Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Instagram's owner Meta Platforms, apologised to the parents of victims of such abuse during a Senate hearing earlier this year. Meta also owns Facebook and WhatsApp but the nudity blur feature won't be added to messages sent on those

platforms. Instagram said scammers often use direct messages to ask for "intimate images." To counter this, it will soon start testing out a nudity protection feature for direct messages that blurs any images with nudity "and encourages people to think twice before sending nude images." "The feature is designed not only to protect people from seeing unwanted nudity in their DMs, but also to protect them from scammers who may send nude images to trick people into sending their own images in return," Instagram said. The feature will be turned on by default globally for teens under 18. Adult users will get a notification encouraging them to activate it. Images with nudity will be blurred with a warning, giving users the option to view it. They'll also get an option to block the sender and report the chat. For people sending direct messages with nudity, they will get a message reminding them to be cautious when sending "sensitive photos." They'll also be informed that they can unsend the photos if they change their mind, but that there's a chance others may have already seen them. Instagram said it's working on technology to help identify accounts that could be potentially engaging in sexual extortion scams, "based on a range of signals that could indicate sextortion behaviour."



# After Modi's remarks China says "sound and stable ties" serve the common interests of China and India



PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Thursday said that "sound and stable ties" serve the common interests of China and India as it reacted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks that for New Delhi, ties with Beijing are important and the "prolonged situation" at the borders should be addressed urgently. In an interview with Newsweek

magazine, which described India's rise as "unstoppable", Prime Minister Modi expressed hope that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, the two countries will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquillity at their borders. "China has noted the remarks by the prime minister," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing

here when asked for her reaction to Modi's statement. "We believe that sound and stable China, India relations serve the common interests of both sides and are conducive to peace and development of the region and beyond," she said. In his interview, which is the first to be given to a US magazine in the recent past, Modi said that for India, the relationship with China is important and significant.

"It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us. Stable and peaceful relations between India and China are important for not just our two countries but the entire region and world," he said. Foreign ministry spokesperson Mao said the boundary question "does not represent the entirety of the India-China relations. It

should be placed appropriately in the bilateral relations and managed properly". The two sides are in close communication through diplomatic and military channels, she said. "We hope India will work in the same direction with China, handle the bilateral relations from the strategic heights and long-term perspective, enhance mutual trust, stick to dialogue and cooperation, handle differences properly and put the bilateral relations forward on sound and stable track," she said. The relations between India and China have been frozen except for trade ties ever since the eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Tso (lake) area. The two sides have so far held 21 rounds of corps commander-level talks to resolve the standoff. According to the Chinese military, the two sides so far agreed to disengage from four points, namely the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Jianan Daban (Gogra). India is pressing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas, maintaining that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal.

# Vietnam sentences real estate tycoon Truong My Lan to death in its largest ever fraud case

AP ■ HANOI

Real estate tycoon Truong My Lan was sentenced on Thursday to death by a court in Ho Chi Minh city in southern Vietnam in the country's largest financial fraud case ever, state media Thanh Nien said. The 67-year-old chair of the real estate company Van Thinh Phat was formally charged with fraud amounting to USD 12.5 billion - nearly 3 per cent of the country's 2022 GDP. Lan illegally controlled Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank between 2012 and 2022 to allow 2,500 loans that resulted in losses of USD 27 billion to the bank, reported state media VnExpress. The court asked her to compensate the bank USD 26.9 million. Despite mitigating circumstances - this was a first-time offence and Lan participated in charity activities - the court attributed its harsh sentence to the seriousness of the case, saying Lan was at the helm of an orchestrated and sophisticated criminal enterprise that had serious consequences with no possibility of the money being recovered, VnExpress said. Her actions "not only violate the property management rights of individuals and organizations but also push SCB (Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank) into a state of special control; eroding people's trust in the leadership of the Party and State," VnExpress quoted the judgement as saying. The 2011 merger of a beleaguered SCB bank involved two other lenders. The banks have since become one of Vietnam's largest commercial banks by assets.



Former central bank official Do Thi Nhan was also sentenced Thursday to life in prison for accepting USD 5.2 million in bribes. Lan's arrest in October 2022 was among the most high-profile in an ongoing anti-corruption drive in Vietnam that has intensified since 2022. The so-called Blazing Furnace campaign has touched the highest echelons of Vietnamese politics. Former President Vo Van Thuong resigned in March after being implicated in the campaign. But it's the scale of Lan's trial has shocked the nation. VTP was among Vietnam's richest real estate firms, with projects including luxury residential buildings, offices, hotels and shopping centres. Analysts said the scale of the scam raised questions about whether other banks or businesses had similarly erred, dampening Vietnam's economic outlook and making foreign investors jittery at a time when Vietnam has been trying to position itself as the ideal home for businesses trying to pivot their supply chains away from China.

# Imran Khan warns Pakistan may suffer economic collapse

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan drew a parallel between the political developments in Pakistan now and the circumstances leading to the 1971 Dhaka tragedy, warning that the present situation in the cash-strapped country could result in economic collapse. The Dawn newspaper reported that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman in a message from Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail reminded the current dispensation that "countries and institutions could not survive without a stable economy". PTI Central Information Secretary Raouf Hasan relayed Khan's message to the media during a press conference after the party's legal team met the 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician in jail on Wednesday, the day Eid was celebrated in Pakistan. Barrister Raja told the media that Khan looked determined, though worried for the country and its people. Raja, who narrated Khan's message, said, "When you don't give rights to the people, you cannot say the economy will grow". "In 1970, army chief Yahya Khan wanted a hung Parliament, but when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's party got a clear majority, the army held a fraud by-election in which 80 seats of Awami League were snatched as



Yahya Khan wanted to become president," he said, referring to the political developments in the then East Pakistan. "I want to remind the Hamoodur Rahman Commission report that we are again going to repeat the same blunders which we made in the past. In 1970, there was the London Plan and today again a government has been imposed through the London Plan," Raja quoted Khan as saying. Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party have repeatedly said that the outcome of the February 8 general elections was rigged and that the powerful Pakistan Army favoured the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) to assume power. Though PTI-backed independent candidates won more seats in the National Assembly, a post-poll alliance between PML-N and the Pakistan Peoples Party allowed them to form a government under the leadership of PML-N party president Shehbaz Sharif.

# Ukraine passes law to recruit soldiers

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's parliament passed a law on Thursday that will govern how the country recruits new conscripts, following months of delay and after thousands of amendments were submitted to water down the initial draft. Lawmakers dragged their feet for months over the law, which is expected to be unpopular. The law was spurred by a request from Ukraine's military, which wanted to mobilize up to 500,000 more troops, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in December. Exhausted soldiers, on the front lines since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, had no means to rotate out for rest, while many thousands of Ukrainian men evade the draft. The law was passed to the backdrop of an escalating Russian campaign that has devastated Ukraine's energy infrastructure in

recent weeks. Authorities said Russian overnight missile and drone attacks again struck infrastructure and power facilities across several regions and completely destroyed the Trypilska thermal power plant, the largest power generating facility in Kyiv region. The law brings into effect a host of changes to the current system by expanding the powers of Ukrainian authorities to issue draft notices using an electronic system. Incumbent army chief Oleksandr Syrskyy and Zelenskyy have since revised that figure after conducting an audit, saying the number needed was not as high because soldiers can be rotated from the rear. Former army commander Valerii Zaluzhnyi's dismissal from his post was reportedly over the mobilization issue. The vote came after parliament's



defence committee removed a key provision from the draft Tuesday that would ensure the rotation of servicemen after 36 months of combat, a move that surprised some lawmakers as it had been a promise of the Ukrainian leadership. Lawmaker Oleksii Honcharenko

said in a Telegram post that he was shocked by the move to remove the provision. It was likely taken out because, considering the scale and intensity of the war against Russia, it would prove difficult to implement. Ukraine already suffers from a lack of trained recruits capable of fighting, and demobilizing soldiers on the front lines now would deprive Ukrainian forces of their most capable fighters. On Wednesday, the parliamentary defence committee instructed the Defence Ministry to draft a comprehensive bill on demobilization of military personnel within the next eight months, news reports cited ministry spokesperson Dmytro Lazutkin as saying. In nighttime missile and drone attacks, at least 10 of the strikes damaged energy infrastructure in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city.

# India sees phenomenal growth in the last 10 years, says Indian-American venture entrepreneur

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

India has seen phenomenal economic growth in the last 10 years, a top Indian-American venture capitalist and entrepreneur said, attributing it to steps taken by the country to reform rules and regulations and its focus on infrastructure. Silicon Valley-based M R Rangaswami, the founder of Indiaspora, also noted that the "metrics are trending" in the right direction for India-US relationship. "The 10-year journey is something to be looked at. When the prime minister (Narendra Modi) came on board (in 2014), you could see



where the economy was to where the economy is now. You'll see a leap in GDP growth. A leap in income and so on and so forth," he told PTI in an interview. The same thing can be said of the relationship between India and the US, he said and added that trade has more than doubled in the same time-frame. "You see all the metrics are trending

in the right direction for India and for the US-India relationship as well. I think it's been on the right trajectory, right course, which I think will be appreciated," he said. Rangaswami said a lot of focus in the last 10 years has been on infrastructure, which, he described, as a differentiating factor. "The number of roads being built, the number of railways being built, new rail coaches and engines. You look across the board, you see so much investment in infrastructure and ports, airports, the latest being the T2 terminal in Bengaluru, which is world class and is getting so much attention," he said. The right focus has been on infrastructure, and this will result in

jobs, more communities being built, and India moving up, Rangaswami said. "You can see the maturing of both the prime minister's thinking and the vision over the 10 years. These have increased and improved in so many ways," the venture capitalist said. "With (US) President Joe Biden coming on board and the bilateral relationship becoming so important, almost every two, three months there's a minister from India coming here or there's a cabinet secretary from here going to India. It's just happening so often. It's almost like there's a direct flight, literally, from every city in the US to India and back. That's actually a reality," he said

# US trade delegation to visit India to explore opportunities in agribusiness sector

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A high-powered US trade delegation will visit India later this month to explore opportunities in the country's huge agribusiness sector and further promote American products among India's rising middle class. "India represents a growth economy for the US agribusinesses seeking to capture an increasing share of the household food purchases in the fifth-largest economy in the world," said Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs Alexis Taylor. From April 22 to 25, Taylor will lead a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) agribusiness trade mission to Delhi. "India's rising middle-class consumers' familiarity with American food products and increased purchasing power is a real opportunity for US producers," Taylor said. "This, along with the Indian consumers' trusted view of American food and agricultural products as high-quality has contributed to an 11 per cent growth in the US agricultural-related exports to India over the past two years," she said. While on the trade mission, participants will engage in targeted business-to-business meetings and site visits to build new trade linkages, strengthen existing partnerships, observe US products in the marketplace, and discover the latest Indian consumer food trends. Participants will also receive in-depth market briefings from USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service and industry trade experts. In a statement, the USDA said that last year, India reduced tariff requirements for US poultry products, vegetables, fruits, pulses, and tree nuts, strengthening the agribusiness trade relationship between the US and India. The trade mission will follow up on those wins and secure an expanding number of new purchase agreements for American farmers, ranchers and producers, it said.

# Poland's parliament holds a long-awaited debate on easing strict abortion law

PTI ■ WARSAW

Poland's parliament is finally holding a long-awaited debate on liberalising the country's strict abortion law. The traditionally Catholic nation has one of the most restrictive laws in Europe - but the reality is that many women terminate pregnancies at home with pills mailed from abroad. Lawmakers in the lower house of parliament will consider four different proposals on Thursday. Currently abortion is regulated by a 1993 law, which was heavily influenced by the Catholic church, and further restricted following a 2020 constitutional court ruling preventing abortion in case of fetal abnormalities. Prime Minister Donald Tusk, who came to power in December after eight years of a conservative

government, has vowed to legalise abortion until the 12th week of pregnancy. He has said the decision is a woman's to make, not that of "a priest, a prosecutor or a party official." Many Tusk voters hoped lawmakers would have taken up the matter sooner. But conservatives in Tusk's three-party governing coalition pushed to keep the hot-button issue off the agenda until last weekend's local elections were over. Either way, an uncertain path awaits those who would like to liberalise the law. Surveys show public support for a more liberal law, but those fighting for the status quo have also mobilised, with an anti-abortion group planning a march through downtown Warsaw on Thursday afternoon as the debate is underway. Crucially, conservative politicians



hold key political positions with the power to block change. The other is the speaker of parliament, Szymon Holownia, who had once considered becoming a Dominican friar. Abortion rights advocates accuse him of violating the will of the voters by keeping the issue off the agenda for months. "He is a Christian fundamentalist abusing his power as the speaker of

parliament," said Marta Lempart, head of the Women's Strike, a group that organised mass protests in recent years while the previous right-wing government pushed to restrict abortion rights. Recalling the record high voter turnout last fall, when nearly 75 per cent of voters cast ballots, she accused the speaker of "spitting in the face" of all those who turned out to vote. After what is expected to be a heated debate, lawmakers are to vote Friday on whether to move forward with the proposals by sending them to a special commission for further work. Under the current law, doctors in Poland can only provide abortions if a woman's health or life is at risk or if the pregnancy results from a crime. However, doctors often will not perform abortion even when

they are permissible under the law. There have been cases in recent years of women with troubled pregnancies who died after doctors prioritised keeping the fetuses alive. In the case of rape, women have a legal right to abortion if they report the crime to the prosecutor's office. In practice, no woman has done so for the past 10 years due to the double stigma of acknowledging the rape publicly and seeking an abortion, said Natalia Broniarczyk, an activist with Abortion Dream Team, one of several groups that helps Polish women obtain abortion pills from abroad or travel abroad for the procedure. "There is no trust in the official system," she said. Broniarczyk estimates that there about 120,000 abortions per year among women in Poland - some 50,000 provided by her group alone.

By contrast, 161 legal abortions were performed in hospitals in Poland in 2022, according to Health Ministry statistics. Broniarczyk said half of them were performed by a single female gynaecologist who was willing to perform legal abortions when other doctors and hospitals turned women away. Another Polish activist who helps provide abortions is activist Kinga Jelinska, in Warsaw this week for the debate, said the network of groups helping women have abortions at home are the only ones in Poland who follow World Health Organization guidelines on abortion care, which stress the use of pills as the safest abortion method.



# Apple warns of Pegasus-like spyware attacks on select individuals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

iPhone maker Apple has warned its users about ongoing Pegasus-like sophisticated spyware attacks that target a very small number of individuals often journalists, activists, politicians and diplomats. Though deployed against a small number of individuals and often involve exceptional costs, mercenary spyware attacks are "ongoing and global", according to an Apple threat notification. Apple in the threat notification issued on April 10 indicated that such attacks have historically been associated with state actors as per past research and reports. "Apple threat notifications are designed to inform and assist users who may have been individually targeted by mercenary spyware attacks, likely because of who they are or what they do. Such attacks are vastly more complex than regular cybercriminal activity and consumer malware, as mercenary spyware attackers apply exceptional resources to target a very small number of specific individuals and their devices," the



notification said. The notification has come at a time when around 60 countries, including India, are going for elections this year. The Cupertino-based firm said

that mercenary spyware attacks cost millions of dollars and often have a short shelf life, making them much harder to detect and prevent. Besides, the vast majority of users

will never be targeted by such attacks. "According to public reporting and research by civil society organisations, technology firms and journalists, individually

targeted attacks of such exceptional cost and complexity have historically been associated with state actors, including private companies developing mercenary spyware on their behalf, such as Pegasus from the NSO Group," the notification said. The Pegasus spyware took control of mobile phones just by giving a miss call on WhatsApp. "Though deployed against a very small number of individuals 'often journalists, activists, politicians and diplomats' mercenary spyware attacks are ongoing and global," the notification said. Apple said that the extreme cost, sophistication and worldwide nature of mercenary spyware attacks makes them some of the most advanced digital threats in existence today. The iPhone maker has recommended notified users to protect their device by enabling lockdown mode. "Mercenary spyware attacks are exceptionally well funded and they evolve over time. Apple relies solely on internal threat-intelligence information and investigations to detect such

attacks. Although our investigations can never achieve absolute certainty, Apple threat notifications are high-confidence alerts that a user has been individually targeted by a mercenary spyware attack and should be taken very seriously," the notification said. A survey carried out in the last year revealed that almost half (49%) of organizations worldwide are unable to detect an attack or breach on employee-owned devices. At a time when workforces across the world are increasingly distributed, there's a genuine risk that the mobile arena could soon become the new corporate cybersecurity battleground. A survey carried out by cyber security firm Check Point in the last year revealed that almost half (49 per cent) of organizations worldwide are unable to detect an attack or breach on employee-owned devices. According to Check Point's Threat Intelligence report, in India, the average weekly impacted organizations by mobile malware stood at 4.3 percent as compared to the APAC average of 2.6 percent in the last 6 months.



## Digi Yatra likely to be rolled at 14 more airports in April

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Digi Yatra is likely to be rolled out at 14 more airports by the end of this month and efforts are on to make the facility more user friendly with certain changes in the architecture, according to a top executive. Based on Facial Recognition Technology (FRT), Digi Yatra provides for contactless, seamless movement of passengers at various check points at airports and currently, there are nearly 5 million users. The facility is now there at 14 airports for domestic passengers and discussions are ongoing with various stakeholders concerned to make it available for international travellers as well. Digi Yatra Foundation CEO Suresh Khadakbhavi told PTI that Digi Yatra is expected to be available at 14 more airports by the end of April. A not-for-profit entity, the foundation is the nodal agency for Digi Yatra, which was introduced in December 2022. The 14 new airports where the facility is to be rolled out soon are Bagdogra, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Coimbatore, Dabolim, Indore, Mangalore, Patna, Raipur, Ranchi, Srinagar, Trivandrum and Vishakhapatnam. While Digi Yatra is slowly gaining traction, there have been concerns expressed in various quarters about privacy of data of the passengers. Seeking to assuage the concerns, Khadakbhavi said Digi Yatra does not have any passengers' data. "It is only in the phone (of the user) that the data is residing and it is in the control of the passenger himself or herself," he told PTI in an interview. The data shared by a passenger for Digi Yatra is stored in an encrypted format. For availing the service, a passenger has to register his or her details on the Digi Yatra app using Aadhaar-based validation and a self image capture. In the next step, the boarding pass has to be scanned and the credentials are shared with the airport. At the airport e-gate, the passenger has to first scan the bar-coded boarding pass and the facial recognition system installed at the e-gate will validate the passenger's identity and travel document. Once this process is done, the passenger can enter the airport through the e-gate. The passenger will have to follow the normal procedure to clear the security and board the aircraft. Personnel at the airports have been directed to enrol passengers only with their informed consent. Khadakbhavi said work is going to ensure a more user-friendly experience for Digi Yatra users and changes are being looked at in the overall architecture. On making the facility available for international travel, he said discussions are going on with the external affairs ministry and other agencies. The shareholders of the foundation are Airport Authority of India (AAI), Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL), Bangalore International Airport Ltd (BIAL), Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL), Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (HIAL) and Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL).

## Young women FICCI has new chairperson

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Young FICCI Ladies Organisation (YFLO), Delhi, the women's wing of FICCI, has appointed Dr. Payal Kanodia as the new Chairperson for the year 2024-25. Dr. Payal Kanodia is a Chairperson & Trustee of M3M Foundation, and a Promoter in M3M Group. Popularly known as a 'change-maker' for her contribution to the society, Dr. Kanodia believes in aligning with the government vision to achieve better reach and impact towards women empowerment. On her appointment as Chairperson of YFLO, she said she was delighted to be elected as the Chairperson of YFLO - Delhi chapter and looking forward to working with the best of minds at YFLO.

"I have always said that India is a country that has high potential to utilize and mobilize women force to achieve the distinction of a USD 10 trillion economy. There are about 16 million businesses owned by women that provide employment to about 30 million people. Over 10 million working women in India have set their priorities in excelling into corporate world at leadership roles. About 15-17000 Startups out of 90,000 Startups in India are led by women. In the Indian MSME sector, women-led businesses are more than 20% and contribute around about 25% of the labour force. Even the IMF estimates that equal participation of women in the workforce can increase India's GDP by about 30%. Even globally, women control about \$20 trillion in annual consumer spending, and that figure could climb as high as \$28 trillion in the next five years. Women produce about 60 percent of the world's goods and services and are also the largest buyers and investors. YFLO would play its role to align and develop as much women entrepreneurs from not just cities but also from rural India" Dr. Kanodia said in a statement.



## Govt's focus on infra development to nurture sustained revival in investment cycle: RBI report



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The government's focus on infrastructure development, coupled with buoyant business optimism, could nurture a sustained revival in the investment cycle, according to a Reserve Bank report. According to the RBI's Monetary Policy Report- April 2024, domestic economic activity, backed by strong fundamentals, remained robust in the first half of 2023-24, weathering challenges from muted global demand. The report further said that while the fixed investment and the lower drag from net external demand propelled real GDP growth, private consumption received support from steady urban demand. On the supply side, it added, manufacturing activity strengthened further, benefiting from lower input costs and the improvement in global supply chains. Construction activity remained firm on the back of buoyant housing demand and the government's thrust on infrastructure.

"Going ahead, private consumption will get support from improved prospects for rural demand and rising consumer confidence. "The government's continued emphasis on infrastructure creation, coupled with an uptick in private corporate investment and buoyant business optimism, could nurture a sustained revival in the investment cycle, which augurs well for boosting productivity and growth in the economy," the RBI report said. It further said that the impact of a lower fiscal impulse on growth could be offset by higher growth-inducing capital expenditure. The economy's medium and long-term growth potential "is rising, propelled by structural drivers like improving physical infrastructure; development of world class digital and payments technology; ease of doing business; enhanced labour force participation; and improved quality of fiscal spending," the report said. The government has announced an 11 per cent growth in capital expenditure (capex) to Rs 11.1 lakh crore for the current financial year as private investment picks up. The government hiked capex by 37.5 per cent to Rs 10 lakh crore in 2023-24. As per a RBI survey, consumer confidence one year ahead reached a new high. The survey reflected that the prospects of investment activity remain bright owing to an upturn in the private capex cycle becoming steadily broad-based; persisting and robust government capital expenditure; healthy balance sheets of banks and corporates; rising capacity utilisation; and strengthening business.



## Vistara CEO says 'worst is behind us'; operations have stabilised

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After facing significant flight disruptions recently, Vistara CEO Vinod Kannan on Thursday told the airline staff that the "worst is behind us" and operations have already stabilised. Pilot woes have forced the Tata Group airline to temporarily cut down capacity by 10 per cent or 25-30 flights daily. While acknowledging that things should have been planned better, Kannan said it has been a "learning experience". He also said it has been a challenging start to the new financial year and the airline faced significant operational disruption from March 31 to April 2. "The anxiety and frustration felt by our customers was matched in even measure to the pain that all of us felt in seeing our much-loved brand drawing negative commentary from various quarters... I assure you that the worst is behind us, and we have already stabilised our operations, with our on-time performance (OTP) increasing to 89 per cent on 9 April 2024 (second highest among all Indian airlines)," he said in a message to the staff. The full-service carrier has around 6,500 people, including about 1,000 pilots. In the wake of the disruptions, the top

management of the airline had held a virtual meeting with the pilots. One of the reasons for the disruptions was also that some section of pilots reporting sick to protest against the new contract that will result in pay revision. According to Kannan, there were a multitude of reasons for the disruptions, including ATC delays, bird hits, and maintenance activities early last month. "We were stretched in our pilot rosters and there was not enough resilience to withstand injects that we would otherwise have weathered. We could and should have planned better, and this has been a learning experience for us which we will review thoroughly," the Vistara chief said. Most of the cancellations were in the domestic network and the carrier is working on plans for May and beyond. "While the events of the last week may seem like a setback, the hallmark of our organisation has always been that we have bounced back from tough situations 'and emerged stronger. "... I trust each of you to continue to put in all efforts to ensure that we do not let our brand, and our customer, down," Kannan said. As we emerge from this difficult phase, he said it is this commitment to being a customer-oriented airline that will help it bounce back stronger.

# Silicon Valley super excited about India: TiE president Anita Manwani

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Silicon Valley is super excited about India, whose leadership has shown a commitment towards entrepreneurship, Anita Manwani, TiE president has said. The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE) Silicon Valley is a nonprofit organisation in the US devoted to entrepreneurs in various industries. "I am super excited and I think Silicon Valley is super excited because we have at the helm of India's leadership a clear commitment to one entrepreneurship to open business with initiatives like the GIFT city, with initiatives that are making investments and repatriation of funds back to the United States, I would say a little easier than what it was before," Manwani told PTI in an interview. "So, these are all initiatives that are truly going to enhance the increasing activity in the corridor with India. This is India's decade, and it's India's decade to lose because India is poised for

winning innings here. We are all rooting for the leadership," Manwani said in response to a question. A seasoned corporate executive and entrepreneur, Manwani is one of 80 women recognised in the US for their technology leadership, and top 100 Women of influence in Silicon Valley. She is also the founder and CEO of Carobar Business Solutions, reLIMS. Manwani said she was very impressed listening to the leaders speak at the India Conclave in New Delhi recently. "It is really heartwarming to also see that the leaders are not just concerned about education and funding and entrepreneurship and technology, but they're also making their mark globally, both in terms of helping wherever help is needed," she said. During international crises, whether it is floods or other kinds of activities, India is stepping up and truly behaving like a world leader, she said.



"As a US citizen of Indian-origin, it brings a smile. I know that many of the Indian diaspora share that," Manwani said. "We think that TiE and TiE Silicon Valley can play a very big role and are continuing to do that. We see that role only enhancing in this corridor

with India," Manwani said. She said that the upcoming TiEcon, the world's largest tech conference for entrepreneurs, corporate executives, and investors, will focus on the challenges posed by artificial intelligence and its opportunities in tech sectors.

The flagship event of TiE Silicon Valley, being billed as the groundbreaking event showcasing AI's profound and pervasive influence in the world, will also focus this year on "exponential" India, in recognition of the big role that the country is playing in AI's talent pool.

The event will bring the top leaders from the industry to the Santa Clara Convention Centre in Silicon Valley, California, from May 1 to 3. "We are very excited about TiEcon. This is going to be one of the best lineups of industry leaders," she said. "Our theme this year is AI Ubiquity, which means looking at AI challenges and opportunities in each of the tech sectors, including healthcare from a provider perspective, healthcare from a life sciences perspective," Manwani told PTI. "We're also going to be having tracks on manufacturing and supply chain, as well as ESG (environmental, social, and governance), which is focused on the race to net zero," she said. "We will have, this year, a special track on exponential India. India plays a very big role in the AI talent pool that they have, (Prime Minister) Modi's many, many programmes on increasing the number of AI startups," Manwani said ahead of the

three-day event in Silicon Valley beginning May 1. "We will also have conversations on how we have the renaissance of semiconductors with the need for more compute power and GPUs, how this is impacting the growth in semiconductors, the research in semiconductors," she said. There will be conversations around security, which has become so important with the cloud and the whole ability to have more AI-generated data, she said. Ethics and how AI is impacting education is going to be a conversation led by thought leaders, both from the academic world as well as from the world of robotics, she said. The conference will be set off by the founder and CEO of NVIDIA, Jensen Huang, who will be followed by others like Warner Thomas, the CEO of Sutter Health, one of the largest healthcare providers in the US. Nikesh Arora from Palo Alto Networks, a transformational leader who has made many

moves in the world of cyber security and Jay Choudhury from Zscaler are among the other prominent speakers, according to Manwani. "We have senior executives from Micron who will also be sharing their vision and how they are going to be implementing and accelerating the growth of AI," she said. Describing it as one of the best and the largest conferences for TiEcon so far, Manwani said she expects a lot of young aspiring entrepreneurs, technologists, and students to attend it. Over the years, TiE has grown to 57 chapters and 14 countries. TiE Silicon Valley is the founding chapter. "My vision would be that the I in TiE, which stands for Indus, becomes I as in international. So that's where the change is in TiE," Manwani said, adding that TiE has several initiatives in this regard including having tie-ups with similar counterpart organizations in the Asian community.





# SPARTAN DÉCOR REGAL FARE

With a menu that has seen minimal changes over decades, eschewing cutlery in favour of a hands-on dining experience, Bukhara at ITC Maurya boasts a cult following among both foreign tourists and local patrons, says **PAWAN SONI**



**FOOD FREAK**  
**PAWAN SONI**  
Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards

**B**ukhara, the iconic restaurant at ITC Maurya New Delhi, recently celebrated 45 years of success, and I had the pleasure of joining the festivities. As I immersed myself in the celebration, one question lingered on my mind: Is Bukhara truly the most iconic restaurant in India? Bukhara undoubtedly claims this title when considering factors like its illustrious list of state head visitors and its perpetually bustling ambiance that doesn't even entertain reservations. With a menu that has seen minimal changes over four and a half decades, eschewing cutlery in favor of a hands-on dining experience, Bukhara boasts a cult following among both foreign tourists and local patrons. What truly astonishes me is Bukhara's enduring success despite unconventionalities. Despite its somewhat Spartan seating and amidst a sea of North Indian and North West Frontier eateries in the city, Bukhara maintains its allure with a limited menu. Despite high pricing at par with other five-star establishments, Bukhara continues to thrive, with my assumption of a revenue of over Rs10 crore monthly — a remarkable feat for a 130-seat restaurant focusing primarily on *tandoori kebabs* and *Dal Makhani*. Perhaps the secret lies in its simplicity — a limited menu and unwavering consistency. In an era where maintaining consistent taste across shifts is a challenge, Bukhara has maintained the same quality of flavors for 45 years, a remarkable achievement. Servers here even recognise regulars by name, offering a personalised touch. Dishes like the Naan Bukhara, a massive *naan* meant for sharing, epitomize this timeless appeal and is the original OG even before 'instagramable' became a term. The fame of Dal Bukhara, in particular, has reached such heights that many smaller establishments now dub their own dal makhani as "Dal Bukhara." But what sets Bukhara's version apart? Chef JP Singh, who has dedicated 32 years to Bukhara, explains that their Dal Bukhara stands out for its low fat content — just six per cent. The slow, overnight cooking over



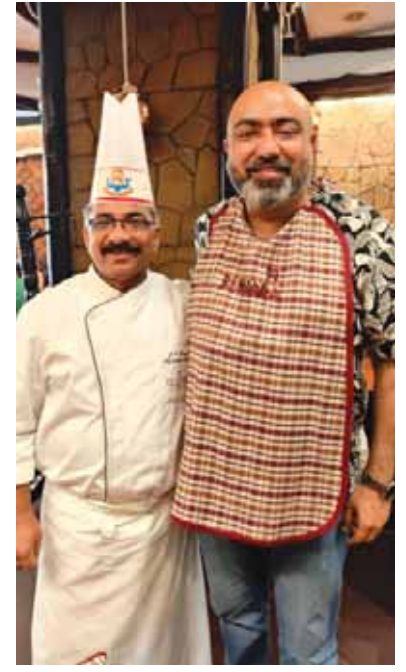
**ANIL CHADHA**  
Chief Executive, ITC hotels

charcoal with minimal ingredients is the secret behind its magic. I can attest to this; despite indulging in a generous portion of Dal Bukhara with my wife, we felt no heaviness, only a craving for more of its simple yet enticing flavors. And it is not only Chef JP Singh who has spent as many years with the hotel. Anil Chadha, Chief Executive of ITC hotels, started as a management trainee and apart from his various roles including in the banquet or as the GM of ITC Maurya, he has been personally witnessing Bukhara's evolution for the last 20 years. Reflecting on a conversation with Chef Manjit Gill, former corporate chef of ITC, about Bukhara's signature dishes, he remarked that for a menu as concise as theirs, each dish

is a signature in its own right, crafted with utmost care and consistency. Taste may be subjective for a few patrons but one can be assured of same flavours whenever they return. I couldn't agree more with Chef Gill. While I enjoy exploring new restaurants and their offerings, Bukhara remains a place of comfort and nostalgia, beckoning me back time and again for its unparalleled culinary experience.

(Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com)

**DESPITE ITS SOMEWHAT SPARTAN SEATING, BUKHARA MAINTAINS ITS ALLURE WITH A LIMITED MENU**



## CELEBRITIES AT BUKHARA



Australian Cricket Team | Colin Powell | Malaysian Prime Minister | Arnold Schwarzenegger | Ronn Moss | Victoria Clinton | President Anibal Antonio Cavaco Silva - PORTUGAL | US President Bill Clinton | PM John P Key | Russian Deputy PM | Sachin Tendulkar | UK Prime Minister Tony Blair

# Gurugram's ever stretching frontiers

Stand alone restaurants in the the Delhi NCR region are carving out a unique niche for themselves, says **KARAN PURI**

**G**urugram, a bustling metropolis located in the north of India, has been witnessing a remarkable growth and transformation in recent years. Of late, a plethora of options from commercial hubs to malls have mushroomed in the Golf Course Road Extension area which is fast becoming the heart of Gurugram's foodies. M3M 65th Avenue, AIPL Joy street, Worldmark Gurugram, Airia mall are some of the newest malls in this area. The one place that is buzzing with a plethora of food outlets options is M3M IFC which is a commercial project developed by M3M India. Located in the heart of the city, this project is a testament to modern architecture and urban planning. It aims to redefine the way businesses operate in the city.

The project features a stunning glass façade, state-of-the-art infrastructure, and a wide range of facilities that cater to the diverse needs of businesses. M3M IFC Gurgaon is strategically positioned on Golf Course Extension Road, making it easily accessible from various parts of the city and its surrounding areas. It boasts of having leading restaurants like Molecule Air Bar, Reflex brewery, Soul Barcelona, Social offline, One 8 Commune, Mamagoto, Anardana, China Garden and several more. However, on the marketing front there is hardly any effort being

put in by the project developers that could increase footfalls. This puts the onus on standalone restaurants in the area to do something out of the ordinary in order to get noticed. A few new well-established, branded restaurants have come up recently and some more are in the pipeline. One that really stands out is Grillardin, a unique concept restaurant offering a range of grilled Mediterranean cuisine. Brainchild of Mr Hitesh Varma, this is the group's first initiative in fine dining. The chance to customise flavours right at the guest's table adds an exciting interactive element to the meal. Grillardin is



a culinary journey ranging across the flavours of India and Italy, with the focus primarily on expertly grilled dishes that showcase the richness and diversity of both cuisines. The thoughtfully curated bar menu adds an extra layer of delight, offering refreshing options to complement your dining experience. You can feel the heat and flavour come alive as you personally grill your meal on a hot lava stone at the restaurant. Each sizzle is a unique tale of taste, turning your dining experience into a fiery, delicious adventure. It's indeed a world of culinary delight. This Do it yourself (DIY) twist adds an element of excitement to the experience. Fusion meets flavour here and there are many healthy options in the elaborate

menu with multiple options. One must try the ghee roast chicken, *Desi khumb* Brochettes and Caribbean chicken *tangri*. For those with a sweet tooth the Kunafa and Tiramisu are must-try desserts. The place has a captivating ambience that blends sophistication with warmth. The contemporary décor and inviting atmosphere create a perfect backdrop for memorable moments shared with friends and family. The service is highly professional as the server explains the whole process of grilling and fusion to create a unique menu. Grillardin is certainly a hidden gem in the commercial hub that has a huge potential in the future.

(The author is a Digital Consultant and food critic)





# BUMRAH TAKES FIVE-FOR BUT RCB FIGHT BACK TO POST 196/8 IN IPL

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Jasprit Bumrah weaved his magic enroute to a five-wicket haul before Dinesh Karthik played a blinder in the death overs to take Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a challenging 196/8 against Mumbai Indians in the IPL here on Thursday. Faf du Plessis (61) and Rajat Patidar (50) also played an important role in ensuring RCB get close to the 200-run mark. Karthik (53 not out off 23 balls) produced just the kind of knock RCB needed towards the end of the innings. In a contest where his fellow pacers erred consistently, Bumrah's accuracy and mastery over variation helped him rule the roost once again. Mixing up his fiery yorkers perfectly with sharp bouncers, Bumrah snaffled the in-form Virat Kohli (3) early on to extend his



ordinary run at the Wankhede Stadium while playing the IPL. Du Plessis and Patidar banished their poor run with their respective half-centuries while putting on 82 runs for the third wicket, but Bumrah, who bowled three overs post the halfway mark, seemed to have broken the back of RCB's resistance with a terrific spell. But Karthik, who took a liking for Akash Madhwal (1/57) to collect 38 runs off his two overs, finished with five fours and four sixes. Kohli perished in Bumrah's first over when he got an inside edge off a wild swipe with Ishan Kishan taking a fine diving catch. Will Jacks (8) began promisingly on debut but played one straight to Tim David at mid-on off Madhwal as RCB slipped early on but du Plessis took them to 44/2 in the powerplay.

A little tentative at start, Patidar grew in confidence for his first fifty of the season. Patidar also had the bragging rights of playing the shot of the innings when he picked the length of a Pandya delivery early to send the ball flying into the second tier, wide of long-on. He did not relent when Gerald Coetzee (1/42) came on for his second over, hitting the Proteas bowler for two consecutive sixes but fell immediately after. Glenn Maxwell's (0) role was crucial since RCB needed the Australian to go big in their bid to get a big total, but he became Shreyas Gopal's (1/32) 50th IPL victim, pinned leg-before while playing across the line. Du Plessis continued to farm the strike and eventually brought up his first fifty of the season, but he too perished when the push came to shove in the death overs.

## Rashid commitment makes him favourite in T20 leagues: Gavaskar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rashid Khan's commitment towards all aspects of the game, including the willingness to put his body on the line, makes him one of the most sought-after players in T20 leagues across the globe, feels the legendary Sunil Gavaskar. Needing 15 in the final over and two off the last ball, Gujarat Titans scripted a sensational last-ball win with the Afghan leg-spinner hitting an unbeaten 24 off 11 deliveries. He also took one wicket, giving away just 18 runs in his four overs. "Yeah, he didn't hit the wickets like he usually does, but when he was needed with the bat he came and delivered," Gavaskar said on 'Star Sports Cricket Live'. "This is the reason he's such a wanted player by franchises all around the world. They want him because they can see his commitment, batting, bowling and fielding," he said. Apart from his batting and bowling, Rashid is an agile fielder who never shies away from attempting a risky dive. "Look at the way he gives



everything while he's fielding. Bowlers sometimes can be a little concerned about diving on their bowling shoulder, because if they dislocate their shoulder careers are in threat. "Not with Rashid Khan, he just wants to give 100 per cent." Gavaskar compared Rashid to England Test skipper Ben Stokes, who has given this season's IPL a miss. "There's another cricketer who is not playing in this IPL but who's again similar, is Ben Stokes. Anytime you see Ben Stokes batting, bowling or fielding he's a 100 per cent, he gives it everything. "And those are the cricketers that coaches and captains want, they might not always

deliver but you know the percentage is not going to be anything less than a 100 per cent," added Gavaskar. The batting legend was also impressed by young skipper Shubman Gill, who fought a lonely battle for the most part of GT's innings before Rashid and Rahul Tewatia's cameos. "I am very impressed with Shubman Gill because, again, he was not getting the kind of support that he would have wanted at the other end. You want somebody to be there to build a partnership. At the start of the innings, if you have a bit of a partnership, it eases quite a bit of your problems. "He hasn't quite had that. That's why, having learned from the previous game, where he was trying to move around and lost his wicket, and then they weren't able to chase even 160, I think he knew that he had to stick around as much as possible, and that's what he did, till Chahal got him out with a very clever delivery. "Anticipating that he was going to come down to the crease, he pulled it a little bit wide. But what a terrific innings from a young

## Delhi eyes on redevelopment; LSG aims to extend their hot streak

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Delhi Capitals' bowling unit will have to punch above its weight against an in-form Lucknow Super Giants, who will start as overwhelming favourites in an Indian Premier League match here on Friday. LSG, who sit on the third spot on the points table, seem to have all their bases covered even though rookie pacer Mayank Yadav, who bowls thunderbolts in excess of 150 kmph, is likely to miss the match because of an abdominal niggle. The 21-year-old bowled just one over against Gujarat Titans before walking off the field, complaining of soreness last week. In Yadav's absence, another rookie pacer, Yash Thakur starred with a five-wicket haul against GT. He will have the company of Naveen-ul-Haq, Krunal Pandya and leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi among others. LSG boasts of a strong opening pair of Quinton de Kock and KL Rahul. The South African



has scored two half-centuries but the captain is yet to convert his starts into something meaningful. The flamboyant Nicholas Pooran has been in sensational form, adding meat to LSG's total at the fag end of the innings. The major concern for the Lucknow outfit, however, remains Devdutt Padikkal who is yet to reach double digits. The visitors, on the other hand, are looking like an outfit bereft of a Plan B as it became apparent in their 106-run hammering by Kolkata Knight Riders. The latest loss to a struggling Mumbai Indians

has left them languishing at the bottom of the points table with the worst net run rate of -1.370. The primary worry is the composition of the Indian pace attack, which just lacks spunk. The onus will be on Khaleel Ahmed and old warhorse Ishant Sharma once again but the duo hasn't been able to deliver consistently. Mukesh Kumar is expected to be back from injury but he has also not set the stage ablaze with his performance. And, medium pacers Sumit Kumar and Rasikh Dar could well be lambs for slaughter against the likes of de Kock, Stoinis and

Pooran. To add to their woes, pace spearhead Anrich Nortje has been unable to shrug off the rust since coming off his injury, leaking runs at an economy of 13.43 in four outings. DC has struggled to find the silver lining in their 2024 campaign barring skipper Rishabh Pant and Tristan Stubbs' form. The main issue is the team's lack of depth in Indian talent on the bench. This deficiency does not instil confidence in the team. Prithvi Shaw got some much-needed runs but he needs to do more at the top. But, save Abhishek Porel, none of the

uncapped Indian players have measured up, which has led to over-reliance on their overseas recruits who have also been stuttering.

**TEAMS (FROM)**  
**Delhi Capitals:** Rishabh Pant (c&wk), David Warner, Prithvi Shaw, Yash Dhull, Abhishek Porel, Axar Patel, Lalit Yadav, Mitchell Marsh, Pravin Dube, Vicky Ostwal, Anrich Nortje, Kuldeep Yadav, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Khaleel Ahmed, Ishant Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Tristan Stubbs, Ricky Bhui, Kumar Kushagra, Rasikh Dar, Jhye Richardson, Sumit Kumar, Swastik Chikara, Shai Hope.  
**Lucknow Super Giants:** KL Rahul (c), Quinton de Kock, Nicholas Pooran, Ayush Badoni, Kyle Mayers, Marcus Stoinis, Deepak Hooda, Devdutt Padikkal, Ravi Bishnoi, Naveen-ul-Haq, Krunal Pandya, Yuvraj Singh, Prerak Mankad, Yash Thakur, Amit Mishra, Shamir Joseph, Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan, K. Gowtham, Arshin Kulkarni, M. Siddharth, Ashton Turner, Matt Henry, Mohd Arshad Khan.

### OTHER SPORTS

## Golden arm Neeraj Chopra eyes on 90M before Olympics



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic gold-medallist javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra is aiming to breach the 90m mark before the Paris Olympics and says the way his preparations are going, it could happen anytime soon. Chopra's best throw in competition came during the 2022 Stockholm Diamond League, where he hurled the spear to a distance of 89.94m. While he has breached 90m in training, he has yet to match it in competition. The 26-year-old, who will be aiming to retain his Olympic gold in Paris, said on Thursday, "I will try to breach the 90m mark before that (Paris Olympics). Hopefully, it happens before Paris, everything is going on smoothly, so (people) might not have to wait till the

Olympics, it might happen before that. The preparation is good." The reigning world champion's confidence stems from the fact that he has had a good off season, where he focused on fitness and strength, coupled with the success he has achieved after winning gold in 2020 Tokyo. "During the start of the season, the focus was on fitness and strength and no specific javelin training. I think I got a lot of improvement in technique because of that. Besides, the strength and conditioning training in South Africa and Turkey has also gone well," said Chopra during a virtual interaction from Turkey. Chopra added that following the Tokyo Olympics success his "self-confidence" had really gone up, which will help him tremendously going into Paris. "After Tokyo, the self-confidence has definitely gone up. Besides, I have also played quite a few events... Two world championships, a silver and a gold there, won the Diamond League trophy, made some good throws, then retained the Asian Games gold (in Hangzhou) as well.

## Messi's Miami ousted by Monterrey in Concacaf Semifinals

AP ■ MONTERREY (MEXICO)



Lionel Messi's first trip to Mexico did not end well. Brandon Vazquez, Germán Berterame and Jesus Gallardo scored goals and Monterrey beat Inter Miami 3-1 on Wednesday night in the second leg of the two-game, total-goals series to secure a spot in the CONCACAF Champions Cup semifinals. Vazquez opened the scoring in the 31st minute, Berterame added a goal in 58th and Gallardo sealed the win in the 64th as Monterrey advanced to the next round with a 5-2

aggregate score. Diego Gomez scored Miami's goal in the 85th minute. Messi started the match, but he had just one scoring chance in the first half. "As a coach, I'm happy to eliminate a great team. Gerardo (Martino) and Leo are

a great coach and player who are recognized worldwide," Rayados coach Fernando Ortiz said. "We have the satisfaction to win the series, but we are thinking of Tigres," Monterrey's next opponent in the Mexican Clausura. Before the series, Ortiz said that he was confident of his team's talents, but was afraid that the referees could be influenced by Messi's presence. "I said that we were going to beat them, not for a lack of respect for Miami, just because I thought that my players would understand what needed to be done," Ortiz said. "To me, Leo is the greatest

player of all time, I did not mean to offend anyone, I just gave an honest opinion." Messi, who played two exhibition matches in Mexico in 2011 and one in 2006, missed the chance to lead Miami to its first semifinals in this tournament. "Today's defeat takes away the illusion that we have to keep moving forward in this competition," said Miami coach Gerardo Martino. Messi, the 36-year-old Argentinian, won the Leagues Cup last summer and was trying to win his second tournament since he signed with Miami a year ago.

## Raphinha double does the double damage in champions league clash in quarter final

AP ■ PARIS

With his team trailing 2-1 and Paris Saint-Germain pushing hard for another goal, Barcelona coach Xavi Hernández's substitutions paid off immediately. Midfielder Pedri set up the equalizer for Raphinha within a minute of coming on at Parc des Princes stadium. Then, two minutes after his introduction, central defender Andreas Christensen headed home from a corner to give Barcelona a 3-2 win in the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal on Wednesday.

"Pedri came on and helped us a lot. I'm very proud of the team. Christensen also came on and helped," Xavi said. "Tactically we did really well." Raphinha was the pick of Barcelona's players on the night, and the Brazil forward had scored twice before Christensen's 77th-minute goal. The imposing Christensen headed Ilkay Gundogan's corner from the left past Gianluigi Donnarumma from close range as the PSG goalkeeper stood rooted to his line instead of challenging for the ball.

## Indian chess aces score dominant wins at candidates tournament

PTI ■ TORONTO

Grandmaster Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi scored crushing victories, while D Gukesh held on to the joint top spot with a draw in the Indian men's team at the Candidates Chess Tournament here. Praggnanandhaa prevailed over Nijat Abasov of Azerbaijan, while Gujrathi got the better of Frenchman Alireza. Gukesh's draw came against American

Hikaru Nakamura. With eight rounds still remaining, the 17-year-old Gukesh and Ian Nepomniachtchi continue to share the lead in the men's section with four points each in their kitty. Russian Nepomniachtchi, who is playing under the FIDE flag, played out a draw with top seeded American Fabiano Caruana. There was disappointment for India in the women's competition as R Vaishali suffered a reversal, losing to



Kateryna Lagno of Russia. Vaishali, who is the elder sister of Praggnanandhaa, now has a lot of ground to cover if she has to come back in the tournament. Koneru Humpy also lost, to Tingjie Lei of China, while Nurgul Salimova of Bulgaria found her nemesis in Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia. Praggnanandhaa shares the third spot with Caruana on 3.5 points and Gujrathi is not far behind on the joint fifth spot alongside Nakamura with three

points. It was the end of the road for Alireza and Abasov who both are reeling with just 1.5 points close to the half-way stage in the biggest event of the year. In the women's section, Zhongyi Tan of China made another stride forward and scored a win over Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine. With 4.5 points in her bag from six games, Tan seems to be running away in this section and the only threat comes from Goryachkina who is a half

point behind. Lagno stands third on 3.5 points, half a point ahead of Lei. Vaishali and Salimova remained on 2.5 points and surprisingly Humpy is at the bottom of the tables on two points with Muzychuk. Praggnanandhaa started as a huge favourite against Abasov and did not disappoint his fans. The Tarrasch defense has found more than a few takers here in the event but on Thursday Praggnanandhaa was at his technical best.

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