



CITY 3 MODI ACCUSES INDIA BLOC, CONG OF SYSTEMATIC PLUNDER

OPINION 6 THE MARGINALISATION OF DISABLED IN POLITICS

WORLD 10 TRUMP TO ATTEND HUSH MONEY TRIAL IN NY

LUCKNOW, FRIDAY APRIL 26, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

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KKR BOWLING WOES UNDER SPOTLIGHT 12 SPORTS

EC notice to BJP Chief on complaint against PM

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Taking cognisance for the first time of a model code conduct violation complaint against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Election Commission has issued notice to BJP national president JP Nadda and sought his response by April 29. The commission has also served a notice to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, asking him to respond to the complaints filed by the BJP against him and the main Opposition party's senior leader Rahul Gandhi regarding their remarks. Both the BJP and the Congress had raised allegations of causing hatred and division based on religion, caste, community, or language. This is the first time that notices were issued to party presidents for violation of model code of conduct by star campaigners, this election. Notably, this marks a departure from the past, where notices of alleged MCC violations were served directly to the candidate or star campaigner concerned. Even during the ongoing campaign for the Lok Sabha election 2024, all MCC notices served by the EC have been issued directly to party leaders, including Dilip Ghosh of the BJP, Congress leaders Randeep Surjewala and Supriya Shinate, and AAP leader Atishi. The EC notices to the two-party presidents did not directly name either Modi,



BJP supporters during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election campaign rally for Lok Sabha polls, in Agra, on Thursday. PTI

Rahul or Kharge, but the representations received by it were attached to the respective letters and they contained details of allegations against the three leaders. In the notice sent to Nadda, the EC sought his response by Monday to the complaints filed by the Congress, CPI, CPI (ML) and civil society groups regarding the remarks made by Modi on April 21 in Banswara 21 where he dubbed Muslims as infiltrators and alleged that the party will redistribute country's resources among the community.

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Stage set for phase II LS polls

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid heat waves in most parts of the country, voters will have to brave the searing heat when they step out to exercise their franchise in the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections on Friday. Second phase of Lok Sabha polls will be a litmus test of sorts for the Narendra Modi Government as over 8.08 crore people are set to cast their vote. The key issues facing the BJP are whether it will be able to end its electoral drought in Kerala. Will a spike in political temperature following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's sharp attack on the Congress boost turnout? Will controversy over heritance bill work in favour of BJP? Will controversy over Muslim being given reservation in SCs, STs and OBCs quota help BJP's voters? Will voting in Manipur violence free? Will the consecration of Ram Temple have an impact on voting trends on BJP's southern sojourn? These are some of the questions weighing on people's minds as 88 Lok Sabha seats go to the polls on Friday. After Friday's phase, polling will be over in Kerala, Rajasthan, and Tripura. As many as 1,202 candidates, including prominent faces such as Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from Wayanad, Shashi Tharoor and Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar from Thiruvanthapuram, Ramayan serial actor Arun Govil from Meerut, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's brother DK Suresh (Cong) from Bengaluru Rural Lok Sabha constituency, former Karnataka chief minister HD Kumaraswamy (JDS)



STARS IN FRAY

CONSTITUENCY	CANDIDATES	PARTY
Wayanad	Rahul Gandhi	Congress
	K Surendran	BJP
	Annie Raja	CPI
Thiruvanthapuram	Sashi Tharoor	Congress
	Rajeev Chandrasekhar	BJP
Banglore Rural	DK Suresh	Congress
	Dr C N Manjunath	BJP
Jodhpur	Karan Singh Uchiyada	Congress
	Gajendra Singh Sekhawat	BJP
Meerut	Arun Govil	BJP
	Sunita Verma	SP
	Devvrat Kumar Tyagi	BSP
Gautam Budh Nagar	Dr Mahesh Sharma	BJP
	Mahendra Nagar	SP
Mathura	Rajendra Singh Solanki	BSP
	Hema Malini	BJP
Purnia	Mukesh Dhangar	Congress
	Beema Bharti	RJD
	Santosh Kumar Kushwaha	NDA
	Pappu Yadav	Independent

from Mandya will try their electoral luck in the second phase while BJP's OM Birla from Kota, Hema Malini from Mathura, and Gajendra Singh Sekhawat from Jodhpur seeking a hat-trick of wins from their respective constituencies.

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All eyes on North East

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

After observing less enthusiasm in the first phase of polls in some of the North East constituencies, the Election Commission, local administration and political parties in the fray have coordinated for an encouraging second phase of Lok Sabha elections on Friday. Several constituencies in the sensitive areas including Manipur and Tripura will witness polling. Parts of Manipur saw violence in the first phase of polling on April 19 as miscreants fired at a polling booth in the state causing panic and disturbances. Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) were vandalised and coercion and intimidation allegations were leveled. The state has witnessed unrest for the last few months. A key bridge on National Highway 2 connecting the state capital Imphal and cities in neighbouring Assam and Nagaland was damaged in multiple bomb attacks by insurgents on Wednesday. The sabotage has stranded over 150 trucks on the highway. The security forces carried out a combing operation in villages near the damaged bridge in the Kuki-Zo-dominated district. In the

foothills of neighbouring Sekmai, some 22 km from Kangpokpi, gunfights had been going on between armed groups for the past two days. The attack on the bridge also comes two days before voting in the remaining seats of Outer Manipur reserved Lok Sabha constituency, amid the nearly one-year-old ethnic violence between the Kuki-Zo tribes and the valley-dominant Meiteis. Moreover, arms and ammunition were recovered on Wednesday in a joint operation of the Indian Army and Manipur Police in the violence-hit state's Imphal East district. In Manipur, tensions between the Kuki-Zo tribes and Meiteis have been lingering for 11 months since clashes broke out between the two communities over cataclysmic disagreements on land, resources, political representation, and affirmative action policies. Meanwhile, all necessary measures have been taken to ensure free, fair and peaceful elections in the Tripura East parliamentary constituency that will go to polls in the second and final phase on Friday.

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Kerala ready for election battle

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

As the countdown for Friday's polling for Lok Sabha election from Kerala is in full progress, candidates and party managers spent the penultimate day devising new strategies to ensure maximum votes in their kitties and to embarrass the rivals. Though the day was peaceful as no untoward incidents getting reported from anywhere in the State, the inspection wing of

the Election Commission seized deadly weapons like iron rods, machetes, knives and swords from the campaign vehicle of K Radhakrishnan, the CPI(M) candidate contesting from Alathur early Thursday morning. But Radhakrishnan, a Minister in Pinarayi Vijayan's government, claimed that they were gadgets for removing the flex boards and posters which have been put up as part of campaigning.

Muraleedharan, the Congress candidate at Thrissur said that his party could organize public meetings in support of Hamas soldiers fighting against Israel. "We do not have a military of our own and whatever military is there is under the command of Prime Minister Modi. Had we been ruling India, situation

would have been different," said Muraleedharan who has taken a vow that he would not allow the BJP candidates anywhere in the State to come to the third place. Shobha Surendran, the BJP candidate at Alappuzha, made a startling disclosure on Thursday that a prominent CPI(M) leader was in touch with BJP leadership to crossover to the Hindutva party

but he called off the move following death threats from the Marxists. Though she refused to divulge the name of the "leader", K Sudhakaran, the Congress candidate contesting from Kannur declared that E P Jayarajan, the LDF convenor, who is cut up with CPI(M) leadership was the one who was about to jump fence. Jayarajan was upset over the CPI(M) leadership ignoring his claims to the post of Kerala secretary

and electing M V Govindan, a lower primary school drill master for the post. Elsewhere in the State, pollsters and observers took stock of the intensity of the campaign and most of them were unanimous in their view of a UDF sweep. P Rajan, author and former senior editor of Mathrubhumi said that the Congress-led UDF has a discernible advantage.

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Electoral showdown in North Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The fates of 47 candidates, including two sitting BJP MPs — Sukanta Majumdar the State BJP president, his Darjeeling counterpart Raju Bishta — will be decided even as three North Bengal constituencies of Darjeeling, Balurghat and Raiganj go to second phase polling on Friday. In order to conduct free, fair and peaceful polling the Election Commission of India has deployed 272 companies of Central forces out of which 111 would be posted at Raiganj, once a Congress stronghold sending the then Union Minister PR Dasmunshi to Parliament. Usually considered to be a violence-prone district, Raiganj has 418 sensitive booths most of which are around Goalpokhar, Chakulia and Dalkhola bordering Bihar. The area witnessed massive violence in last year's panchayat elections when two persons were killed in political clashes. BJP has fielded Kartick Paul replacing former Union Minister and sitting MP Debashree



Chowdhury — who has been shifted to Kolkata South seat — from Raiganj. Paul is facing Trinamool Congress' Krishna Kalyani — who has a dubious record of shutting between the TMC and the BJP — and comparatively stronger Congress candidate Ali Imran Ramz backed by the Left. A former MLA Ramz joined the Congress from his old party Forward Bloc. There are twenty candidates including one woman in Raiganj.

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Congress, BJP clash in Karnataka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress and BJP will lock horns on the electoral battleground again for the 14 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka that go to polls on Friday. It's going to be a straight fight between the ruling Congress and the BJP-JD(S) combine unlike the Assembly elections in May last year which witnessed a triangular contest among the three parties. The State has a total of 28 Lok Sabha constituencies. The second phase of polling in the remaining 14 seats is on May seven. A total of 247 candidates — 226 men and 21 women — are in the fray for the first phase in most of the southern and coastal districts. More than 2.88 crore voters

are eligible to exercise their franchise in 30,602 polling stations where polling will take place between 7 am to 6 pm. While the Congress is contesting in all 14 seats, BJP has fielded nominees in 11 and its alliance partner JD(S), which joined the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in three — Hassan, Mandya and Kolar. Besides the three, the segments where elections will be held on Friday are: Udupi-Chikmagalur, Dakshina Kannada, Chitradurga, Tumkur, Mysore, Chamarajanagar, Bangalore Rural, Bangalore North, Bangalore Central, Bangalore

South and Chikballapur. Having scored a thumping victory in the Assembly elections, the Congress now appears determined to put up a strong show.

Karnataka is the most important State for the BJP in south India as it's only here that it had held power in the past. In fact, out of the total 30,602 polling stations in the first phase, 19,701 will be webcast, and 1,370 covered via C C T V s . Chikballapur has a maximum number of 29 candidates, followed by 24 in Bangalore Central, and Dakshina Kannada has the least number — nine.

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Akhilesh Yadav enters LS poll arena

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

After a prolonged period of speculation and internal discord, Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav has taken a decisive step by filing his nomination from the Kannauj parliamentary constituency. This move signifies a concerted effort to reclaim the political stronghold lost to the BJP in the previous election, driven primarily by intense pressure from party workers and local leaders dissatisfied with the initial candidate, Tej Pratap Yadav, due to his perceived lack of grassroots connectivity. The decision to field Akhilesh



Yadav himself was prompted by a series of events that underscored the growing unrest within the party regarding the choice of candidate for the pivotal Kannauj constituency. Initially, Tej Pratap Yadav, scion of the SP legacy as the grandson of Mulayam Singh Yadav and nephew of Akhilesh

Yadav, was nominated for the seat on April 22. However, his scheduled visit to Kannauj on April 23 was abruptly canceled amidst internal opposition, signaling discord within the party ranks. Concerns were raised over Tej Pratap's lack of familiarity with the local populace, which could potentially weaken the party's position in the region. The workers then requested Akhilesh to contest the election. Local journalist Sateyendra Yadav, highlight the deep-rooted connection between the workers in Kannauj and Akhilesh Yadav, viewing him as their natural leader.

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Delhi LG in the dock

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/NEW DELHI

Ahead of the second phase of voting on Friday, the Congress on Thursday asked the Election Commission to take action against Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena for visiting various Church leaders in Kerala ahead of the Lok Sabha election, in what the party called a "blatant violation of the Model Code of Conduct". Saxtheesan claimed that Saxena, who is on a two-day visit to Kerala, requested an audience with the heads of the Syro Malabar Church,

Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Cardinal George Alencherry and others. He also met bishops of the Believers' Church. The Believers' Church, which is a Pentecostal church, has come out in support of the BJP. Leader of Opposition in the Assembly VD Satheesan on Thursday urged the Election Commission to take action against the LG for allegedly visiting heads of churches in the southern State to "lure" them to take a stand in favour of BJP in the Lok Sabha elections on April 26.

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CBI files first FIR in Sandeshkhali case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered the first case in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali related to the land grab and sexual assault allegations against five influential people there, officials said on Thursday. The case pertains to a land dispute where women of the victim's family had to allegedly face sexual assault from influential people in the area, they said. The Calcutta High Court on April 10 had ordered a court-monitored CBI investigation into allegations of crimes



the five accused and the victims. The Calcutta High Court on April 10 had ordered a court-monitored CBI investigation into allegations of crimes

against women and land grabbing in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali, saying an "impartial inquiry" was required in the interest of justice and fair play. The CBI had circulated an email ID for people to make complaints in such cases in which a large number of complaints were received. The agency had dispatched a team to Sandeshkhali to ascertain allegations and proceed with the registration of cases where allegations could be prima facie verified.

Continued on Page 8

Nominations for Lko seat begin today



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Preparations are underway for the nomination of candidates for the Lok Sabha elections and the Lucknow East bypoll on Friday. District Magistrate and District Election Officer Surya Pal Gangwar said on Thursday that nominations would commence from April 26 and continue until May 3. "All necessary preparations, including the issuance of nomination forms and other arrangements, have been completed. Police and security arrangements are also in place, along with traffic diversions to facilitate public movement," he mentioned. Gangwar clarified that nomination activities would not take place on Sundays. He outlined the barricading plan, indicating that vehicles would be restricted beyond the Health Directorate, situated a hundred metres from the collectorate.

"Candidates, along with ten proposers, will have to proceed on foot from the barricading point to the collectorate," he elaborated. Three rooms within the collectorate have been designated for the nomination process: Room number 19 for the Lucknow Lok Sabha constituency, room number 2 for the Mohanlalganj Lok Sabha constituency, and Room number 21 for the Lucknow East

Assembly by-election. Additional waiting rooms have been arranged for candidates and their proposers. The premises will be under surveillance with 34 cameras, with live feeds transmitted to the control room set up in room number 18. Gangwar emphasised the strict security measures in place, with CCTV monitoring covering the entire collectorate complex. In addition, Gangwar urged voters to verify their names in the voter list ahead of the polling scheduled for May 20 in the city. "Voters can check their names on the Election Commission's portal (voters.eci.gov.in), where they can also find their booth details and contact information of officials. Additionally, a Voter Helpline app is available for download from the play store for registration and data correction," he added. He addressed concerns about missing names in the voter list, emphasising the importance of referring to the Election Commission's list for Lok Sabha elections. "It's crucial for voters to verify their names in the list to avoid discrepancies," he said. Meanwhile, the BJP candidate for the Lucknow East assembly constituency, OP Srivastava, will file his nominations on April 26. BJP city president Anand Dwivedi stated that the formalities for filing nomination papers are being finalised, with party workers mobilising to ensure a historic nomination procession. "Workers at divisional, ward, and booth levels are being contacted to participate in the BJP candidates' nomination procession," he added. Dwivedi and BJP candidate OP Srivastava strategised for a grand nomination programme at Srivastava's Mahanagar office. The Lucknow BJP team has assigned various responsibilities to its members for the day of filing nomination papers.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

It is informed that Sudhir Kumar Tiwari and Meenakshi Naik whose allotment letter of Plot No. 193 Pocket 2 Sector - O in Sushant Golf City Lucknow which was issued by Ansal Property and Infrastructure Limited is lost in Alambagh area. Whose information has been given to the police through LAR No - 2024 00003707093

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have changed my daughter's name from NANDINI TO NANDINI GUPTA and henceforth my daughter shall be known as NANDINI GUPTA for all purposes, Ashish Gupta R/o E-306, Ratan Orbit Apartment, Indira Nagar Kanpur

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Ruzda Haseeb to Ruzda Haseeb W/o Late Haseeb Ahmad R/o- 327/304-A, Ehsan Enclave, Near Ganga Bridge, Jajmau, Kanpur. In future I would be known & recognize by this name only.

NOTICE

DUE TO MISTAKE IN SOME DOCUMENTS OF MY SON SYED MOHD. ALI NAQI RIZVI MY (FATHER) NAME WRITTEN AS SYED SHARIB HUSAIN RIZVI, WHEREAS CORRECT NAME OF FATHER IS SHARIB HUSAIN. PLEASE CORRECT ACCORDINGLY. SHARIB HUSAIN R/O MITTHAN PUR HADI ALI, POST NIZAMABAD DISTT. AZAMGARH. PRESENT ADDRESS 546/457 HARDOI ROAD, NEAR-ERA MEDICAL COLLEGE, SARFARAZGANJ LUCKNOW.

NOTICE

Be it known to all that earlier my name was SYED MOHAMMAD ABBAS RIZVI which I have changed to SYED MOHD ABBAS RIZVI. Now I should be known and regarded as SYED MOHD ABBAS RIZVI for all future purposes. Syed Mohd Abbas Rizvi S/O Syed Zargham Husain Rizvi R/O W-4 Rahmat Nagar Karamat ki Chowki, Prayagraj.

NOTICE

It is informed to the general public that I, Siddhi Devi, wife of Jagan Babu Rastogi, resident of Moh. Shiv Colony, is a permanent resident. On 22/12/2023, I had gone to Tehsil Sadar for some important work, where the original documents of my house (registry/deed) fell somewhere. Whose FIR Has also been done. Which comes in handy at the right time.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Shikha to Shikha Sachan. In future I would be known as Shikha Sachan only. Shikha Sachan W/o Dilip Kumar Sachan, R/o B-59, HAL colony, Indira Nagar, Lucknow.

NOTICE

My daughter Swati Singh's date of birth is erroneously mentioned as 31.12.2008 in my husband's army records whereas in other records her date of birth is 20.02.2007 which is correct. Madhulika Singh wife Late. Santosh Singh resident of village West Duara, police station Munshiganj, tehsil and district Amethi.

NOTICE

I Ekta Sarkar who Arup Sarkar r/o 20 A Naraian Nagar near palna creche ayodhya road lucknow hereby declares that, I had lost page 7, 8, 9 of plot registry, registered on 6 June 2023 mentioned in book no 6 volume no 14 page no 15 to 34 on serial no 62 in Deputy Registrar 2 office of Lucknow Sadar for 1000 sq feet plot of khasra no 151A Naubasta kala district lucknow Any sort of use of these paper will be illegal Ekta Sarkar

Solving previous years' papers did the trick for achievers

JEE MAIN RESULTS DECLARED

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

City achievers were elated after scoring high percentages in the JEE-2024 (Main), results of which were announced late on Wednesday night. Anshumaan Mishra from DPS School, Gomti Nagar, secured the highest percentile of 99.99 and the All-India Rank (AIR) of 227 in his first attempt at the examination. Son of an audit officer, he credited his success to solving previous years' question papers. "This really helped. Solving the papers should be accompanied by a proper analysis, including identifying mistakes, forming strategies for question order, and knowing when to skip questions," he explained. Planning to join either IIT-

Mumbai or IIT-Delhi, Anshumaan aims for the Computer Science branch. "I plan to become a software engineer and develop something useful for others," he added, expressing his desire for entrepreneurship once achieving financial stability. He highlighted the support of his parents in managing stress and admitted to using social media selectively for result updates. Kushagra Yadav from St Xavier's Convent, Gomti Nagar, who scored 99.6 percentile, emphasised the importance of practising mock tests in the last month before exams. Studying ten hours daily, he attributed his success to rigorous mock test practice. "I used to study ten hours a day and take mock tests. It was my second attempt at the examina-



tion. I want to join any of the top six IITs in either electrical or electronics branch. My bigger plan is to join a big MNC abroad," he said. Shreyansh Chaturvedi from a city school, who achieving 99.889 percentile, stressed the need for a relaxed mindset and avoiding self-imposed pressure. He emphasised the importance of innovative

approaches alongside standard study materials and expressed interest in artificial intelligence (AI) for social communication. Krish Bhagat from Kendriya Vidyalaya, Bakshi-Ka-Talab, with 99.6 percentile, highlighted self-study and consistent hours as his strategy. He aims for electronics and communication, envisioning a startup in the energy sector for societal

impact. "The strategy was to put out a consistent number of hours continuously throughout the week. I did not aim at a daily average but went in for a weekly average of 42 hours which made it manageable. Breaking your big targets into smaller targets helps and doing this over a longer period of time helps," he said.

Amok Anand, who scored 99.5 percentile, emphasised perseverance despite hurdles and the importance of conceptual clarity, especially for Advance examinations. Interested in AI, space, and aeronautics, he advocated for a balanced approach to theory and problem-solving. Mrudu, who achieved 97.5 percentile, expressed desire to improve and noted the gender gap in STEM fields, attributing it partly to fewer girls opting for mathematics. She emphasised rigorous practice as crucial for success. Akshita Singh, who secured a 99.6 percentile in her first attempt, emphasised following teacher guidance and solving assignments. Expressing a preference for IIT-Mumbai's computer science branch, she echoed the sentiment of leveraging past years' papers for preparation.

2 killed as tractor's wheel detaches

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a tragic incident, two persons lost their lives, and their colleague sustained grievous injuries when one of the front wheels of the tractor they were riding dislodged, causing the vehicle to veer into a trench at the roadside in Rahimabad police station area on Thursday. Due to the remote location of the area, police reached the scene late, even after being informed. Villagers rescued the victims and rushed them to a hospital, where two of them were pronounced dead. The deceased were identified as Rajesh (32) and Sharif (35)

from Mawaikalan village in the area, while the injured was identified as Asif, also known as Bakai (25), from the same village. Asif is currently receiving treatment at the hospital. According to reports, the tractor-trolley, loaded with iron poles and tarpaulin for a tent house, was en route to Mehboobkala village in the area. Around 11 am, one of the front wheels suddenly detached, causing the driver to lose control. Before any preventive measures could be taken, the vehicle careened into the roadside trench, trapping the three occupants beneath it. Villagers

recounted that two of the victims succumbed to injuries upon extraction from beneath the tractor, while one sustained critical injuries. All the victims were promptly transported to the Malihabad CHC. The tractor had a total of five passengers, with two, Vishal and Mahesh from Rahimabad, leaping off the vehicle upon witnessing the accident. The victims were employed with the tent house and were transporting goods to a location in the village. In response, ACP Virendra Vikram, along with Rahimabad SO Anubhav Singh and a police team, reached the scene to conduct the rescue

operation. In another incident in Chinhat, a labourer lost his life after being crushed under the wheels of a tractor he was riding, while four others, including the driver, sustained injuries on Wednesday. The driver, Pradeep, was transporting bricks from Barabanki to Laulai village when he encountered a crowd on the road. In an attempt to avoid the crowd, the tractor veered, and one of its wheels hit a pothole, causing the vehicle to overturn. While Pradeep, Dilp, Anand, and Pintu escaped with injuries, labourer Ram Khelwan was fatally injured.

Judge's 17-year-old son found hanging

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a tragic incident, the son of a judge was found hanging at his residence in Butler Palace Colony, Hazratganj, on Thursday morning. According to the Hazratganj police, the youth, identified as Ajitesh Tripathi (17), took his life some time between Wednesday night and Thursday morning. "He was found hanging from the ceiling with a bedsheet tied around his neck. No suicide note was recovered, and the police handed over the body to the family, who took it to their native house in Ayodhya for the last rites," the police said. The Hazratganj police refrained from disclosing further details of the incident. However, it was revealed that the distressing turn of events took place late on Wednesday night after the results of the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Main were announced, and Ajitesh did not find his name on the list. Shortly thereafter, he was found hanging in a room at the accommodation assigned to his father, who is an additional district and sessions court judge. Police sources indicated that Ajitesh was dedicated to his studies and was confident of his success. "It appeared that upon learning of his failure in the JEE Main 2024, he felt unable to

face the disappointment of not clearing the exam," one source said. The JEE Main results were announced around 11:30 pm on April 24, and Ajitesh's body was found around 2 am on April 25. Upon discovering the tragic scene, family members immediately alerted the authorities. Although the police recommended a post-mortem examination, the family declined, choosing to transport the body to Ayodhya for the final rites. A police officer said that no members of the deceased family were present at the Butler Palace accommodation, except for household staff and their children. Meanwhile, the Central Bar Association expressed deep sorrow over the incident. President Arvind Kushwaha extended condolences to the bereaved family and announced that many association members would attend the final rites in Ayodhya to offer support during this difficult time.

NOTICE
This is to inform that Original sale deed (chain deed) which was duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar Luckhimpur bearing doc. no. 8480, dated 21/08/1989, regarding the property plot nos. 38 & 39 situated at Village Naurangabad, Mohalla Krishna Nagar Colony Near Mohalla Mohan Nagar, Luckhimpur Kheri was lost with my client namely Sri Ashok Awasthi S/O Late Sri Lalita Prasad Awasthi R/O Village & Post Lagucha, P.S. Kheri Town, Pargana & District Kheri on 24.04.2024. If any person has any claim or objection over it, kindly inform to Mr. B.N. Tripathi Adv Res: C-15, Nehru Vihar, Kalyanpur, Lucknow Mob- 9336127853

50 manholes covered

Lucknow (PNS): On the second day of the exercise on Thursday, 50 manholes were covered with concrete covers, and open drainage at seven different locations in Gomti Nagar and Gomti Nagar Extension were cemented to ensure evenness and prevent mishaps. Vice-Chairman of the Lucknow Development Authority Indramani Tripathi stated that all roads, lanes, housing schemes, commercial estates, and apartments within its jurisdiction would be repaired within 10 days. The development authority initiated this repair exercise following an accident in the Jankipuram area on the preceding Tuesday, where a boy fell into an uncovered manhole and suffocated. The assigned team conducted repairs at the Kanpur Road housing scheme and the premises of Riverside, Smriti, and Sutlej apartments on Thursday to ensure they can withstand traffic. The VC, along with the secretary, visited the Kanpur Road scheme in the evening to assess the repair progress firsthand. The team may encounter challenges while repairing Ashiyana, as the roads and lanes are in poor condition, often turning into pools of water during the monsoon season. Engineers are expected to visit the area on Friday for repairs, which may take approximately three days to complete. Notably, the development authority is not seeking assistance from any government or private agencies. This initiative was launched independently to ensure the safety of residents and visitors. The VC emphasized that LDA is dedicated to safety and maintaining clean and hygienic localities.

India head of Mahadev betting app held

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A team of the Special Task Force nabbed the India head of the Mahadev Book and other betting/gaming app scam and his associate from Vibhuti Khand in Lucknow on Thursday. The scam had kicked off a political storm in Chhattisgarh and police teams were after those involved in the scam. Those arrested were identified as Abhay Singh and Sanjeev Singh, both of Deoria district. The STF team recovered 276 pre-activated SIM cards of different companies, four mobile phones, two PAN cards, two Aadhaar cards, a gold bracelet, a gold chain and other documents besides a luxury car from the accused. They were arrested near a private hospital opposite the Summit Building in the area. The Mahadev Book online betting platform offered card games like 'Teen Patti', poker, 'Dragon Tiger' and virtual cricket games, among others. The platform has been accused of match-fixing, money laundering through cryptocurrency, and rigging games to ensure profits for panel owners and heavy losses for players. During interrogation by STF,

the arrested miscreants disclosed that they had earned huge money through duping by getting 32 corporate SIM cards ported in the name of different fake companies and had sent 4,000 SIM cards to their men in Dubai for operating the scam. In his disclosures, Abhay said his cousin Abhishek who lives in Dubai asked him to purchase new SIM cards in the name of poor and illiterate persons and he was promised Rs 25,000 per month as salary and Rs 500 per SIM. Abhay disclosed that he started purchasing SIM cards in the name of poor people of his district and then got them ported to another company. According to the disclosures made by Abhay, he was provided the UPC code by one Chetan Joshi of Chhattisgarh who also worked with Abhishek in Dubai. Abhay started sending 30-35 SIM cards per month to Dubai for Shubham Soni aka Pintu of Chhattisgarh who also worked with Abhishek. In 2023, Abhay's salary was increased to Rs 75,000 per month and he was given the task of corporate SIM porting in the name of a fake company with its address. Chetan also sent some of the prepaid SIMs to Abhay during this time. Abhay got Rs 2,000

as commission per SIM for activation and he worked under Shubham's supervision. He sent 150-200 activated SIMs to Dubai. He used to procure 5-6 SIMs in the name of a person and the SIM he sent to Dubai were used for opening WhatsApp and Telegram accounts. Abhay disclosed that he procured the SIM cards from Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Jaipur, Pune, Mumbai and Odisha. With these SIM cards, WhatsApp and Telegram accounts were opened and then groups were formed to trap unsuspecting people. Abhay confessed that after the Enforcement Directorate action against the Mahadev Book, the gang was running Reddy Anna Book, Fairplay, Lotus 365, and several other gaming apps. He also confessed that 80 per cent of the money obtained by defrauding people was given to Saurabh Chandrakar and Shubham Soni aka Pintu who were promoters of Mahadev Book App. The police said different agencies were conducting a probe into the scam and 10,000-12,000 men from India were working in Dubai at present. Abhay's aide also confessed to his crime.

Fire breaks out in four-storey building

Lucknow (PNS): A fire broke out in a four-storey building in Vibhuti Khand on Thursday morning, resulting in significant property damage. Lucknow's Chief Fire Officer Mangesh Kumar reported that items worth lakhs were consumed by the flames, and a firefighter sustained injuries while battling the blaze. "The fire erupted around

9:30 am on the first floor of a commercial complex, generating thick smoke that spread throughout the building. Leading firefighter Laxmi Narayan Yadav sustained injuries after falling from a ladder while extinguishing the fire," stated Kumar. There were no casualties reported as occupants had evacuated prior to the fire's escalation. The Lucknow

fire department despatched four vehicles to the scene, and while the exact cause of the fire remains unknown, authorities intend to investigate further. Residents noted the absence of an electrical audit in the building, suggesting a potential electrical short-circuit as the cause. They also expressed concerns over the delayed response of firefighters.

LESA cashier accused of embezzlement

Lucknow (PNS): In a case of revenue embezzlement, a cashier employed at the Lucknow Electric Supply Authority (LESA) sub-divisional office in Mahanagar has allegedly misappropriated over Rs 52.5 lakh in revenue collected from various customers before going into hiding. Following a wait of over a week, an official from the executive engineer's office, located at DM Shah Park in Aliganj, filed a complaint with the Aliganj police. The issue gained attention within LESA when the accused cashier, Ajay Kumar Verma from Indranagar (Sector C) under Ghazipur police station, failed to report for duty or inform his immediate supervisor of his absence. According to reports, the accused cashier was responsible

for collecting electricity bill payments on behalf of the department. Verma had been on leave since April 18 without notifying any of his colleagues. On April 22, a colleague from the cash section informed the executive engineer's office, Madhyanchal Vidhyut Vitran Nigam, Kapoorthala (Aliganj), about the sudden disappearance of the accused. It was further revealed that Verma had collected Rs 97.24 lakh in cash from the counter he operated between April 1 and 18. The complaint stated that Verma had deposited Rs 44.69 lakh in the bank, while the remaining amount (Rs 52.5 lakh) remained unaccounted for. Following Verma's disappearance on April 18, his colleagues attempted to contact him for two days but found his phone switched off.

CITYBRIEFS

ABIVYAKTI-2K24
Fun-filled events continued on the second day of the annual three-day cultural fest, 'Abivyakti-2K24', of Shri Ramswaroop Memorial College of Engineering and Management on Thursday. The major on-stage events including an open mic, nakkad natak, street rhythm, drama and frisk.

SBI CARD MILES
SBI Card has launched three variants of its first travel-focused core credit card, 'SBI Card MILES', on Thursday. The card is aimed at bringing holistic travel benefits to travellers of all kinds. It offers compelling features that include conversion of travel credits to air miles and hotel points, accelerated rewards on every travel booking, and airport lounge access among others.

Indian Bank
Zonal Office Lucknow, New Building, 2nd Floor, Hazratganj, Lucknow-226001, Ph. 0522-2286272, 2287283, Fax: 0522-2288033, E-mail id: zolucknow@indianbank.co.in

DEMAND NOTICE
NOTICE U/S 13 (2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorized officer of Indian Bank (erstwhile Allahabad Bank) Issued Demand Notices under Section 13 (2) of SARFAESI ACT 2002 to the Borrower's/Guarantor's herein below mentioned, Consequently upon the dispatch of such Notices through Post And returned Bank undelivered from the Borrower's/Guarantor's addresses. Through this Publication they are hereby called upon to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of publication of said notice failing which the bank will take the possession of the immovable and movable property will sell it through the process in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 8 & 9 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Sl. No	Name & Address of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/Date of Demand Notice	Outstanding Amount/ Date of NPA	Description of the Property
1.	M/s Om Enterprises (Borrower) Prop: Mr. Ajay Kumar Kannojiya, Address: LGF-53 Ansal City Center, Behind Tulsi Theater, Hazratganj, Lucknow-226001	Rs. 33,32,106/- as on 18.04.2024 + interest & other charges	All the part and parcel of the property Shop No: 53 LGF, Admeasuring area 3.438 sq. mt. on Lower Ground Floor situated in China Bazar-City Center, Ward Jagdish Chandra Bose Road, Lucknow Belonging to Mr. Ajay Kumar Kannojiya, Bounded By: East: Corridor, West: Shop No 38 on Lower Ground Floor, North: Shop No 52 on Lower Ground Floor, South: Shop No 54 on Lower Ground Floor
2.	Mr. Ajay Kumar Kannojiya S/o Shri Babu Lal (Proprietor & Mortgagee), Address: 1/371, SEC-K Jankipuram, Lucknow-226016	Date of NPA: 01.05.2018	Sale Deed in favour of Mr. Ajay Kumar Kannojiya S/o Babu Lal Kannojiya dated 09.09.2015 registered at Bahi No: 1 Zild No 17262 from page 129 to 156 at serial No: 14051 Registered at SRO-2 Lucknow

Hypothecated assets: All the hypothecated assets mentioned in agreements.

Date: 26.04.2024 Place: Lucknow Authorised Officer Indian Bank (erstwhile Allahabad Bank)

Modi accuses INDIA bloc, Cong of systematic plunder

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a scathing verbal attack, Prime Minister Narendra Modi lambasted the Congress and the Indi Alliance during an election rally held in the Kothi Meena Bazaar of Agra on Thursday, accusing them of systematic plunder.

"Looting is their modus operandi - both in the present life and the afterlife ('Zindagi ke saath bhi, zindagi ke baad bhi')," Modi asserted. Addressing the crowd, Modi directly targeted Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, referring to his recent rhetoric about using an "X-ray machine" to scrutinise the belongings of ordinary citizens, including their cupboards and lockers. Modi quipped, "The shahzade's X-ray machine now seeks to scrutinise the wardrobes of mothers and sisters."

The prime minister highlighted concerns regarding Congress and its allies' alleged conspiracy to deprive Other Backward Classes (OBCs) of their reservation rights. He also criticised the Samajwadi Party for purportedly colluding with the Congress in this endeavour, which he claimed betrayed the Yadavs and the OBCs. Modi further cautioned against the intentions of Congress to expropriate people's ancestral properties, reiterating his commitment to a prosperous India and seeking the blessings of the electorate for progress and development. Discussing the Defence Industrial Corridor in Agra, Modi remarked on the unease among individuals accustomed to amassing wealth through ties with international arms dealers,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and others during an election rally in Agra on Thursday

suggesting that the initiative unsettled such vested interests. He attributed their apprehension to his government's emphasis on domestic weapon production and self-sufficiency in defence, noting their opposition to these initiatives. Turning his attention to the Indi Alliance, Modi accused them of prioritising their electoral base over the nation's welfare. He contrasted this with his government's commitment to delivering public welfare schemes without bias, framing it as a manifestation of genuine social justice. Modi reiterated his pledge to ensure equitable access to essential amenities for all citizens, applauding Chief

Minister Yogi Adityanath's efforts to implement these initiatives at the grassroots level. Accusing the Indi Alliance of engaging in blatant appeasement tactics, Modi pointed to what he described as glaring evidence of such behaviour, including the alleged alignment of Congress with Muslim League's electoral interests. He criticised the Congress for purportedly seeking to introduce religious-based reservations, which he argued would undermine existing OBC reservation quotas. Modi cited examples of the Congress government in Karnataka, accusing them of reclassifying Muslim castes as OBCs to the detriment of genuine OBCs.

The prime minister cautioned against the alleged conspiracy of Congress to replicate these tactics in Uttar Pradesh, urging OBCs, Dalits and marginalised communities to discern the perils of this collusion. He condemned what he deemed as the SP's betrayal of Yadavs and backward classes for political gain, warning against its agenda to redirect reservation privileges. Modi praised the Yogi government's crackdown on land encroachers, highlighting a departure from previous leniency towards such offenders. He cautioned against the potential ramifications of a Congress-SP government, suggesting they would seize even

cherished possessions like 'mangalsutras' and jewellery from women. Modi pledged to protect people's inheritance against excessive taxation and vowed to stand as their watchman against the alleged machinations of the opposition. The public meeting was attended by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath along with several ministers and Bharatiya Janata Party candidates, including SP Singh Baghel and Rajkumar Chahar. Addressing a rally in Shahjahanpur in support of the BJP candidates for the Lok Sabha constituencies, Modi hit out at the alliance of Samajwadi

Party and Congress in Uttar Pradesh and alleged that "do shehzade" (two princes) have come together for the politics of appeasement. Without taking any names but in an apparent attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, Modi said, "Can you expect development from the flop pair of 'Do ladkon ki jodi' (a pair of boys)?" "Politics of appeasement is the

Yogi: Those against secure India conspiring against country again

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Mounting a blistering attack on the opposition, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday stated that those against welfare, development initiatives and a secure India are conspiring against the country once again. Speaking at a public meeting in Agra that was graced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Yogi said, "The result of your trust in the leadership of Prime Minister Modi in 2014 is that India's respect has increased in the world. Our borders are now secure, and India has been freed from terrorism and Naxalism. Besides, significant development has taken place." He added, "The public is benefiting from welfare schemes without any bias. India seems to be emerging as the world's largest economic power."

Chief Minister Yogi urged the voters at Kothi Meena Bazaar to re-elect sitting Agra MP and Bharatiya Janata Party Lok Sabha candidate SP Singh Baghel, as well as Fatehpur Sikri MP and BJP candidate Rajkumar Chahar, to Lok Sabha. Yogi highlighted that during the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had urged the nation to embrace Panch Pran (five pledges), which include ending the traces of slavery in India, respecting the heritage, and working together with every Indian to carry forward the concept of a self-reliant and developed India. He remarked, "In contrast, Congress and Samajwadi Party harbour negative sentiments towards India. Members of the Indi Alliance have a track record of betraying the nation and dividing society on the basis of caste, region and language. After coming to power, they have made deliberate

efforts to deprive Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and the economically disadvantaged of their rights." The chief minister stressed the power of vote, pointing out that it has significantly transformed the country's destiny and image in the last 10 years of the National Democratic Alliance government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Within a decade, we are witnessing the emergence of a new India. Prime Minister Modi is committed to realising a self-reliant and prosperous India," he stated. Yogi government's ministers Baby Rani Maurya, Yogendra Upadhyaya, Dharamveer Prajapati, Agra MP and BJP candidate SP Singh Baghel, Fatehpur Sikri MP and BJP candidate Rajkumar Chahar, and others attended the public meeting.

biggest reason for the 'do shehzade' to come together," he said. Accusing the Congress of indulging in vote bank politics, Modi said the party plans to implement the Karnataka model of reservation across the country where quota was given to the Muslim community after reducing the share of the OBC communities. Addressing a rally at Aonla in Bareilly district, he claimed the Congress not only wanted to conduct an economic survey

but also survey institutions and offices. "If two people in a backward or Dalit family work, they will take away the job of one and give it to those whom they say have the first right on the country's resources," Modi said. He was referring to former prime minister Manmohan Singh's 2006 remark that minorities, particularly Muslims, have the "first claim" on the country's resources.

Congress wants to rob poor, OBC and SC/ST of their rights: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a scathing attack on the Congress party, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, said that the grand old party was contemplating inheritance tax in order to be able to forcefully seize properties of common people and then give it to infiltrators from across borders who have no connection with India. Lashing out at the Congress during an interaction with the media, Chief Minister Yogi said that the party, which had looted the country's resources for 60-65 years, wanted to rob the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, the Other Backward Classes and the poor of their rights. The chief minister further said, "The mentality of Congress towards the country and the general public during the United Progressive Alliance government was once

again exposed yesterday. There were indications of all this in the Congress manifesto as well. What Sam Pitroda said yesterday had been repeatedly advocated by the then minister P Chidambaram in 2011, 2012 and 2013." Chief Minister Yogi held Congress' vote bank politics responsible for the large-scale infiltrations into the North East, Assam and other parts of the country. He remarked: "They have always politicised at the expense of the nation. Inheritance tax is also part of the same agenda." The chief minister said that it was good that people bade farewell to the Congress in 2014, otherwise it would have implemented the inheritance tax long back, robbing people of their properties. In response to a question, Chief Minister Yogi said that Congress' statement was very unfortunate and that it was

part of its agenda to push the country towards Islamisation and division. He said that after the UPA government came to power, Congress made such vile attempts at that time too. "Previously, during the UPA government, a committee headed by Justice Ranganath Mishra was formed. The Ranganath Committee in its report recommended that 6 per cent out of the 27 per cent reservation meant for the OBC category should be given to Muslims." "Additionally, the committee's report proposed that a specific segment of Muslims, those who have converted, should be included in the Dalit category and provided with the same benefits as Dalits," Yogi added. Chief Minister Yogi pointed out that the Bharatiya Janata Party had launched a massive movement against the move at

that time. "The reports of the Justice Ranganath Mishra Committee or Sachar Committee smack of the evil intention of the Congress to encroach on the rights of OBCs, SCs and STs," he quipped. Yogi remarked further: "The Karnataka government has said that they will provide 32 per cent reservation to Muslims. These things reveal the truth. Even the Congress candidates are supporting Sam Pitroda's statements. These things show that their intentions are not good towards the country. They want to deprive people of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Backward Classes of their constitutional rights." He urged the people to be vigilant towards them. "Judicious use of democratic rights is needed to foil the conspiracies of the Congress and Indi Alliance," he asserted.

Akhilesh files papers from Kannauj

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a significant move, Samajwadi Party national president Akhilesh Yadav filed his papers for the Kannauj Lok Sabha seat on the last day of nomination. Accompanied by party leaders, including Prof Ram Gopal Yadav, SP district president Kalim Khan, former MLA Kalyan Singh Dohra, and party's state secretary Akash Shukla, Akhilesh Yadav filed his nomination papers in four sets.

The presence of Ram Gopal and senior party leaders reflects the robust support within the party for Akhilesh's candidature from Kannauj, with party workers exhibiting tremendous enthusiasm regarding his nomination. However, there was suspense about SP's candidature for the Kannauj Lok Sabha election. Just two days ago, Tej Pratap Yadav was declared the SP candidate for Kannauj, triggering dissatisfaction among party workers. By Tuesday evening,



it became evident that Akhilesh Yadav would be the preferred candidate and on Wednesday it was officially announced that Akhilesh Yadav would be the SP candidate for the seat. Meanwhile, Subrata Pathak, the Bharatiya Janata Party's MP from Kannauj, likened the electoral contest between himself and Akhilesh Yadav to an India-Pakistan cricket match. In a statement, Pathak emphasised the importance of elec-

tions as a festival in democracy and expressed his anticipation for an engaging contest. Pathak had earlier said that his contest with Tej Pratap Yadav was akin to an 'India vs Japan' cricket match. But now it will

be like a match between India and Pakistan. In the 2019 general elections, BJP's Subrata Pathak secured victory over Akhilesh Yadav's wife, Dimple Yadav, in the Kannauj constituency.

Eight LS seats in UP go to polls today



EVMs and other material at a distribution centre on the eve of the second phase of General Elections, in Ajmer on Thursday

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the second phase polling on Friday, Uttar Pradesh braces for triangular contests across eight Lok Sabha constituencies. Amroha, Meerut, Baghpat, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Bulandshahr, Aligarh and Mathura Lok Sabha constituencies are set to witness a flurry of electoral activity on Friday. A total of 91 candidates are vying for victory in eight Lok Sabha constituencies of Uttar Pradesh in this phase of parliamentary elections. The prominent contenders include Hema Malini of the Bharatiya Janata Party who is seeking her third term from Mathura, and Arun Govil, famed for his portrayal of Lord Rama in the TV serial Ramayana. He is contesting from his native Meerut on a BJP ticket. Danish Ali represents the Congress in Amroha, while Atul Garg carries the BJP's banner in Ghaziabad.

Incumbent MP Mahesh Sharma, representing the BJP, seeks re-election from Gautam Buddha Nagar, which borders Delhi. The campaigning for the second phase election concluded on Wednesday evening, marked by a flurry of activity as leaders from major political parties traversed the constituencies. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath spearheaded the BJP's campaign. Meanwhile, the Samajwadi Party rallied under the leadership of its president, Akhilesh Yadav. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati and Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Jayant Singh were also actively engaged in canvassing across these constituencies in the final days leading up to the polls.

Maya attacks Cong over inheritance tax

Names candidate for Rae Bareilly

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Hitting out at Congress for allegedly advocating inheritance tax in the country, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati said on Thursday that it was difficult for the grand old party to free itself from its tainted legacy. In a statement on social media X, the former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh said the idea and advocacy of inheritance tax on personal property like in America under the guise of distribution of wealth by senior Congress leaders was less for the welfare of the poor and more politically motivated. "This seems to be an attempt to divert people's attention from

the failure of the party's Garibi Hatao slogan. As far as justice for the Dalits and the underprivileged related to property and government land distribution in India is concerned, poverty, backwardness, compulsion of migration etc. have not been eradicated here due to the lack of right intentions of the governments," she said. Meanwhile, the BSP on Thursday released another list of three candidates which included the name of its candidate from the prestigious Rae Bareilly constituency. The party has named Thakur Prasad Yadav as its candidate from Rae Bareilly, Brijesh Kumar Sonkar from Bahraich and Qamar Hayat Ansari from Ambedkar Nagar. So far no party, including Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress, has declared a can-

didate from Rae Bareilly. Samajwadi Party has left the Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha seat for its alliance partner Congress. By fielding a Yadav candidate from Rae Bareilly, Mayawati has tried to take advantage of absence of SP candidate in the constituency and attract the party's core Yadav vote bank to dent the prospect of INDIA bloc candidate, probably Priyanka Gandhi, who will contest on Congress ticket as her mother and sitting MP Sonia Gandhi has already retired from active politics. The BSP on Wednesday also announced its fresh list for three Lok Sabha constituencies of Uttar Pradesh, fielding former state union chief of the party, Bhim Rajbhar, from Salempur constituency. Rajbhar was earlier given BSP ticket from Azamgarh but Mayawati

has now decided to field him from Salempur. According to the list, Irfan Ahmed will be the BSP candidate from Bhadohi Lok Sabha constituency and Nirdosh Kumar Dixit from Hamirpur. With this, the Mayawati-led party has declared its candidates for 68 constituencies out of total 80 Lok Sabha seats in the state. The party also declared its candidate for the Dadraul assembly bypoll, fielding Sarvesh Chandra Mishra 'Dhandhu' from there.

'Cong will get extinct like dinosaurs'

Lakhimpur Kheri/ Kanpur: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday slammed the Congress saying the way the party is going, it will soon get extinct like dinosaurs. "The BJP is the only party which did what it promised to the people," Singh said, while addressing an election rally here in support of party candidates (Union minister) Ajay Kumar Mishra from Kheri and Rekha Verma from Dhaurahra constituencies. He also addressed an election rally in Kanpur in support of BJP candidate Ram Shankar Katheria.

In his over half-an-hour long address in Lakhimpur Kheri, Singh highlighted how India has moved forward in terms of defence, internal security, economy and development since 2014 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the reins of the country. Attacking the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Congress, the defence minister said the days are near when these parties will become a thing of the past. "The way Congress is going, it will get extinct like dinosaurs," he remarked. Reminding the people of the recent remark of Indian

Overseas Congress (IOC) chairman Sam Pitroda about inheritance tax, he cautioned them saying that "no Indian will allow parting with 55% of his property after the death of the head of the family". Urging the people to vote the BJP government to power again, the Union minister said the BJP is the only party which acts on what it promises and mentioned some of the steps like the abrogation of Article 370, the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya, banning instant triple talaq and legislating the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

FORM No. - 5
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
(Area of Jurisdiction Part of Uttar Pradesh)
600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Temple, Lucknow

SUMMONS FOR FILING REPLY & APPEARANCE

O.A. No. 881/2023 BY PUBLICATION Date 09.04.2024
(Summons to defendants under Section 19 (4) of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rule, 1993).)

ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 881/2023

BANK OF INDIAAPPLICANT
VERSUS
M/s. M.D.R. D.J. BOX MANUFACTURE & ANOTHERDEFENDANTS

To,

- M/s. M.D.R. D.J. Box Manufacture (Proprietorship Firm) Through its Proprietor Mrs. Madhu Soni, Situated at 1st Floor, 288/141, Arya Nagar, Naka Hindola, Lucknow-226018 (U.P.).
- Mrs. Madhu Soni aged about 35 years (Proprietor), W/o Shri Dileep Kumar Rastogi R/o C-3616, C-Block, Sapna Colony, Rajajipuram, Lucknow-226017 (U.P.).

DEFENDANTS
In the above noted application, you are required to file reply in Paper Book form in two sets along with documents, (if any), personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel/duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal on **14.10.2024 at 10:30 A.M.** failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.

Registrar
Debts Recovery Tribunal,
Lucknow

इंडियन बैंक (भारत सरकार का उपक्रम) **Indian Bank** (A Govt. of India Undertaking)
इलाहाबाद **ALLAHABAD**

POSSESSION NOTICE (for Immovable Property)
[Under Rule-8 (1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002]

Whereas, the undersigned being the authorised officer of the Indian Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002, (Act 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3, 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice as detailed here in below calling upon the borrower to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrowers/Guarantors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/ Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him/ her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 and 9 of the said Rules.

The Borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charges of the Indian Bank.

The Borrower's / Guarantor's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

This Possession Notice is being served to the Borrower (s), Guarantor (s) & Mortgagor (s) to deposit the said dues. Details as under:

S. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower (s)/ Guarantor (s) / Proprietor / Mortgagors	Description of the Immovable Property	Dt. of Demand Notice Dt. of Possession Outstanding Amount
Branch: Indira Nagar			
1.	1. Smt. Usha Choudhary (Borrower) W/o Mohd. Meraj, Address: 479/19, Ward- Qadam Rasool Iradat Nagar, Nirala Nagar, Lucknow, UP Address 2: H No. 3/33 Sec-B Priyadashini Colony, Sitapur Road, Lucknow	All the part and parcel of the property H No-479/19 Mohalla-Iradat Nagar, ward Kadam Rasool, Lucknow, area 78.066 sq. mt. (840.0 Sq. Ft.) Belonging to Smt. Usha choudhary (Borrower/Mortgagor) W/o Mohd Meraj, Sale Deed registered with SRO-IV Lucknow at Bahi No. 1 Zild No. 12060 pages 81 to 110 Sr No. 16749 dated 17.10.2014. Bounded By: East: Road 8 ft, West: House of Kallian Khan, North: House of Lala Ram, South: House of Basant Lal	02.02.2024 23.04.2024 Rs. 13,55,506.00 and interest thereon
2.	Mohd. Meraj S/o Chhanna Choudhary (Co-Borrower), Address: 479/19, Ward-Qadam Rasool Iradat Nagar, Nirala Nagar, Lucknow, UP Address 2: H No.3/33 Sec-B Priyadashini Colony, Sitapur Road, Lucknow		

Date : 26.04.2024 Authorised Officer Indian Bank

Rai launches scathing attack on Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Congress president and INDIA Bloc candidate for Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency Ajay Rai launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying that the local people had seen 10 years of trouble and injustice. Talking to reporters at his Lahurabi residence here on Thursday, he also released the Congress poll manifesto and his own promises, if he wins the election.

The leaders of different alliance partners, including district Congress chief Rajeshwar Patel, city president Congress Raghavendra Choubey, district Samajwadi Party (SP) president Sujit Yadav 'Lakkar Pehalwan', city chief Dilip Dey 'Dada', district Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) president Ramshankar Patel, and many other senior Congress leaders



Uttar Pradesh Congress president Ajay Rai during a press conference in Varanasi on Thursday.

Prof Satish Rai, Fasahat Hussain Babu, Shailendra Singh, former city SP president and many others were also present.

"If the story of the last 10 years of Modi government is written, it will start with injustice and end with injustice

because the people have only suffered misery," he said, alleging that the 'dictatorial' Modi government has crossed all limits of injustice and oppression and has given birth to such a cruel and ruthless system, where the poor of the country are forced to struggle for two

meals a day with self-respect. He further said that in the last 10 years, the Modi government has not only made the life of the common man difficult but has also left no stone unturned in strangling democracy. "While on one hand rampant unemployment is shattering the dreams of the youth, on the other hand back-breaking inflation is making the life of the poor and middle class extremely difficult," he said, adding that today in the country, where the farmers are not getting the value of their hard work, the labourers are not able to feed their families even after putting in their blood and sweat.

According to Rai, the annual report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reveals an alarming increase in crimes against women in India. "Also, Uttar Pradesh saw a rise in crime against women with

14,247 cases in 2022 and the state was on top," he said. The Congress leader said Modi used to say that as the rupee falls, the credibility of the PM falls. "In 2014, the rupee was 58.86 per dollar, which has reached 83.59 today. According to this, how much the credibility of PM must have fallen," he asked and added that in the 67 years after independence till 2014, the total debt of the country was ₹55 lakh crore. In the last 10 years, the PM increased it to ₹205 lakh crore as Modi government took a loan of ₹150 lakh crore in the last 10 years, he claimed.

According to him, the PM has also 'deceived' the people of Kashi, a vibrant city of faith and culture. In 2014, he said that when Modi had decided to contest elections from here a hope had arisen in the eyes of the people of the city but the prime minister did 'injustice' to Kashi.

Shah offers prayers at Kal Bhairav Temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah offered prayers at Kal Bhairav Temple here on Thursday morning before leaving this holy city for his Lok Sabha election campaign in Telangana and Odisha. Shah was on a two-day visit to this parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is going to seek his third consecutive victory from the Varanasi Lok Sabha seat.

Shah arrived in the city on Wednesday evening and inaugurated the party's central election office of Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency at Tulsi Udyan (Mahmoorganj). Later, a few hundred yards away in the same Mahmoorganj locality, he addressed the BJP workers of the five assembly constituencies



Union Home Minister Amit Shah offering prayers at Kal Bhairav Temple in Varanasi on Thursday.

falling under the Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency in the grounds of Motijheel. Apart from giving tips to party workers, Shah had highlighted how

Kashi has changed during the last 10 years. In view of the visit of Shah to Kal Bhairav Temple, elaborate security arrangements were made.

Woman's body found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The mutilated body of 34-year-old woman was found on Wednesday evening near Jogipur village of Mauauma. She was identified as Rinki Singh, daughter of Harishchandra Yadav Veerbanpur Maniram ka Pura under Baghrat police station area of Prayagraj. Rinki was a nurse in a private hospital in Varanasi. Her in laws' house is in Khuldabad, Prayagraj. She had left their house saying that she was going to her sister's house in Holagarh. However, she did not reach there but her body with her neck severed was found in Mauauma area here. A train ticket from Varanasi to Prayagraj was found in her bag. This has made the matter more

mysterious. The reason behind Rinki Singh's murder is still a mystery. Reports said that the body was found in Jogipur village of Mauauma, Prayagraj on Wednesday evening. The police identified it with great difficulty. It turned out to be of Rinki Singh. She was married to Sanjay Yadav, a resident of Khuldabad Sabji Mandi in Prayagraj. Mauauma SHO Ajay Pal said that Rinki left the house on Tuesday morning saying that she had to go to her younger sister Soni's birthday party. Soni lives in Aravan Mukundpur of Holagarh. When Rinki did not reach her sister's house in Holagarh, the family started searching for her. Rinki's body was found in Mauauma on Wednesday evening. After identification of

the body, the police started investigation and found Rinki's mobile missing. The police believe that after murder the body was thrown in Mauauma. **FIR LODGED:** A youth from here has threatened to kill UP CM Yogi Adityanath. His video has also surfaced. On the basis of the video, social activist Sarvesh Kumar lodged an FIR against Shamim alias Bablu at Nawabganj police station late on Wednesday night. However, Shamim of Imanganj area of Lalgalpanganj town here is absconding. Police Commissioner Ramit Sharma has formed three teams to arrest him. DCP Ganganagar said an FIR has been registered against the accused who is absconding, but will be arrested soon.

Inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) Publication Exhibition was inaugurated here on Thursday at the Central Library of SHU-ATS. The event was inaugurated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Admin) Prof Biswaroop Mehera, as the chief guest. Prof Mehera spoke about the importance of libraries and agricultural research. He commended ICAR for its efforts in disseminating knowledge and promoting innovation in agriculture. The ICAR Publication Exhibition is a valuable opportunity for students, researchers, faculty, to learn about the latest advancements in agricultural research. A large number of students, research scholars and faculty members were present.

Awareness programmes held on Malaria Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

World Malaria Day was celebrated in the district here on Thursday. On the occasion, various public awareness programmes were organised in rural and urban areas. The people of the district were made aware about malaria through activities like seminars, rallies, health camps, discussion etc. In this sequence, an awareness rally and seminar was organised under the leadership of Medical Officer in charge Dr Varun at Primary Health Centre (PHC) Baraogan. The participants were told that the purpose of celebrating this day is to make people aware about this disease. The speakers said earlier the outbreak of mosquitoes was seen only during and after the rains, whereas now

except for two to three months, the mosquitoes are seen throughout the year. Therefore, if necessary, fogging work will continue throughout the year to prevent malaria, they suggested. They said the health team has identified the areas with the highest number of mosquitoes and is taking appropriate action there for effective prevention and control. On the occasion Health Education Officer Diwakar Verma, Senior Lab Technician Rajesh Kumar, Ajay Rai, Anil Srivastava, Rajesh Chandra, Krishna Kumar, Vinod Kumar, Rajkumar and the team of CFAR organisation were present. ANM (Training Centre) and Community Health Officer (CHO) were also present in the seminar. Health camps were organised in the hot spot areas

of Garkhara, Basantpur, Barai villages in Pindra block and Koiran village of Harhua block, where the villagers were made aware about the causes of communicable diseases and their prevention as well as how to avoid heat wave and maintain cleanliness. Besides, symptoms, causes, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of malaria, dengue, filariasis etc were explained. Apart from this, work to destroy waterlogging sources was also done in other hot spot areas, including Sutabalpur of Harhua block. District Malaria Officer Sharad Chand Pandey said that under the currently running special communicable disease control and Dastak campaign, breeding sources of mosquitoes are being destroyed in urban and rural areas. Anti-larva spraying and

fogging is also being done. Urban Development and Panchayati Raj departments are cooperating in this work. He said that if there is water in any water container like cooler, flower pot, tin box, coconut shell, box, defrost tray behind the fridge then it must be emptied once a week as it is always necessary to keep them clean. If timely treatment of a person infected with malaria starts, then the risk of death is reduced, he added.

WORKSHOP: The Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care of Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) will organise a two-day workshop on critical care and mid session mechanical ventilation from April 27 in KN Udapa Auditorium in BHU.

FORM No. - 5
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, LUCKNOW
(Area of Jurisdiction Part of Uttar Pradesh)
600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Temple, Lucknow

Original Application No. 870/2022 Date **05.04.2024**
(Summons to defendant under Section 19 (3) of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules).)

BANK OF INDIA**APPLICANT**
M/s. S.H. TRADERS & OTHER**DEFENDANTS**

1. M/s S.H. TRADERS Through its Proprietor Smt. Shaiba Ilyas Address-517/2 Insaf Nagar, Sector-10 Indira Nagar Near Panigaon Palace, Lucknow-226016.

2. SMT. SHAIBA ILIYAS Daughter of Mohammad Ilyas Singar Nagar Kheri-261506.

3. MOHAMMAD HAMMAD Son of Anwar Ahmad R/o Mahewaganj Nighasan Road, Lakhimpur Near Dakghar Singarpur Kheri Uttar Pradesh-261506.

In the above noted application, you are required to file reply in Paper Book form in two sets along with documents and affidavits (if any), personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel/duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal on **14.10.2024 at 10:30 A.M.** failing which the applicant shall be heard and decided in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 05, April, 2024
Registrar
Debts Recovery Tribunal,
Lucknow

PuVVNL MD inspects power substation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Managing Director (MD) of Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (PuVVNL) Shambhu Kumar inspected the Rajatalab power substation of the district here on Thursday. During his inspection, the MD gave several instructions to the engineers and employees for ensuring uninterrupted power supply in the area. He said that proper monitoring work should be done to ensure uninterrupted power supply. He also gave instructions to the area concerned to increase realisation of power revenue. Later, the PuVVNL MD visited nearby Mirzapur district and held a meeting with power

department officers and engineers at City Club hall. Kumar emphasised on increasing the realisation of power revenue. He said efforts should be made through regular monitoring to reduce the cases of damages of transformers. He asked the officers for making efforts to ensure uninterrupted power supply and distribution of supervised billings to the customers.

CONSTITUTED: A working committee has been constituted by the Vice Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) Prof SK Jain for the Shri Vishwanath Temple located on the BHU campus. Registrar Prof Arun Kumar Singh will be the chairman of this committee.

NSI, Advanta Seeds sign MoU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The National Sugar Institute (NSI) and the Advanta Seeds, Hyderabad, have entered a significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) here on Thursday. The signing of the MoU took place in the presence of Professor D Swain, Director, NSI, Dr Seema Paroha, Prof and Head Biochemistry Division, NSI, and Dr Vilas Tonapi, Technical Consultant, Advanta Seeds, Hyderabad. The occasion was also witnessed by the officers from NSI and the representatives from Advanta Seeds, Hyderabad.

Under the terms of the

MoU, NSI and Advanta Seeds will carry out collaborative study on sweet sorghum and grain sorghum for multi yield alcoholic products. This will include to grow and study the various physicochemical parameters of harvested sweet sorghum sown at NSI farm and to study the potential of sweet sorghum juice and concentrated sorghum syrup for bio-ethanol production. This collaborative research will also take up study on the potential of sorghum grains for beer production. This MoU is a way forward in promising a sustainable bio-fuel for future, which can help in achieving the tar-

get of 20 per cent blending of ethanol in petrol in the country under Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme, a drive of Government of India. Prof Swain extended his best wishes for the joint work between the institute and Advanta Seeds.

SUICIDE: A girl committed suicide by hanging herself in Lalpurwa under Derapur police station area of Kanpur Dehat late Wednesday evening on failing to secure first division in Intermediate exams. Anika of Lalpurwa had passed intermediate exams. She was found hanging in a room. The police rushed to the spot and carried out a probe.

Three hurt as ceiling caves in due blast in cylinder

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Three persons were injured when due to a blast in gas cylinder, the ceiling of their house caved in and it also caught fire in Bichhiya village under Purwa Kotwali police station area of Unnao on Thursday. Fire brigade and police rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control. The injured were admitted to the CHC from where due to their serious condition, doctors referred them to the district hospital. The police have started a probe in the matter. The incident took place when women were cooking in Shyamu's house. By the time the cylinder was separated from the stove and taken out of the kitchen, it exploded. Due to the blast, the ceiling of the house caved in with cracks on walls. The house also caught fire causing injury to Shyamu (45), Sunaina (9) and Rambilas (35). The police admitted them to Purwa CHC from there they were referred to the district hospital. Fire Officer Shivram Yadav also rushed to spot and assisted the firefighters in extinguishing the fire. Kotwali incharge Kunwar Bahadur Singh said the incident took place due to blast in gas cylinder.

EXTENSION OF SUMMER SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of rail passengers, Railways have decided to extend the periodicity of run of following Summer Special Trains as per details given below :-

Train No.	Train Name	Via	Notified upto	Extended upto
05325	Gorakhpur Jn.-Lokmanya Tilak T. Summer Special (Daily)	Barabanki-Lucknow	10.05.2024	25.05.2024 (15 Trips)
05326	Lokmanya Tilak T.-Gorakhpur Jn. Summer Special (Daily)	Lucknow-Barabanki	12.05.2024	27.05.2024 (15 Trips)

Note : Rest Hold Goods.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table of other stations enroute and composition etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

RailMadad Helpline No. 139
Visit RailMadad Website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in
Download RailMadad app.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
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Visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

Seminar held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Director of Indian Vegetable Research Institute (IIVR) Dr Tushar Kanti Behera said there are immense possibilities of vegetable production and export in Purvanchal (eastern UP). He was addressing a vegetable producer-exporter contact seminar at IIVR here on Wednesday. He said that along with vegetable production, there is a need to develop and adopt good agricultural practices for export.

Symposium on 5G antennas concludes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT-K) leading innovation in telecommunications, concluded a highly successful three-day symposium on "5G Antennas: From Fundamentals to Implementation".

The event brought together leading minds from academia, CSIR and DRDO to delve into the intricacies of 5G antenna technology. The symposium facilitated a dynamic environment where renowned scientists, professors and PhD students exchanged knowledge and expertise. Prof Kumar Vaibhav

Srivastava, Head of Electrical Engineering at IIT Kanpur, officially inaugurated the event alongside symposium coordinators Prof AR Harish and Prof Raghendra Chaudhary from the Department of Electrical Engineering, IIT-K.

Over three days, the symposium served as a vibrant platform for insightful discussions, lectures and valuable networking opportunities within the field of antenna engineering. With a focus on the latest advancements in 5G antenna technology, the event facilitated knowledge sharing, idea exchange and exploration of potential collaborative ventures between acad-

emia and industry. Participants actively engaged in thought-provoking discussions, learned from insightful talks delivered by experts and gained exposure to pioneering research findings presented by their peers. IIT Kanpur's dedication to organising this symposium positions them as a leader in innovation and collaboration within the telecommunications and wireless technology sectors. By fostering a conducive environment for knowledge exchange and cross-pollination of ideas, the institute continues to play a pivotal role in advancing research and development endeavours in India.

इंडियन बैंक Indian Bank
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)

e-Auction

Zonal Office: Tindwari Road , Near St. Mary's School , Banda , UP - 210001

Sale notice for sale of immovable properties [See proviso Rule 8 (6)]

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower's and Guarantor's that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank (e-Allahabad Bank), Zonal Office: Tindwari Road , Near St. Mary's School , Banda , Uttar Pradesh- 210001 as Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 31.05.2024 for recovery of Bank's dues from Borrowers and Guarantors to the Secured Creditor. The details are described as below:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower/ Branch/Phone No	Name of Property owner/ Mortgagee	Bank's Dues	Details of Property	Reserve Price Earnest Money
1.	Borrower: M/s Nagendra Infrastructure, Address: Baghava, Kabrai, Mahoba -210421 Proprietor & Mortgagee: Smt. Kiran Tripathi W/o Sanjay Tripathi, R/o Bhagat Singh Nagar, Kabrai, Mahoba	Smt. Kiran Tripathi W/o Sanjay Tripathi, R/o Bhagat Singh Nagar, Kabrai, Mahoba	0/s as on 19.12.2023 Rs. 74,18,747.00 date of realization and costs, charges and expenses from 20.12.2023	All that part and parcel of the property situated at Arazi No. 92, Mauza - Baghva Kabrai, Tehsil & Distt. - Mahoba, Area:10800 Sq. Mtr. in the name of Smt. Kiran Tripathi W/o Sanjay Tripathi Boundaries: East: Gata No. 94, West: Chak Road, North: Chak Road, South: Gata No. 93 Property ID No. IDIB30079100603	Rs. 91,93,000 Lacs Rs. 9,19,500 Lacs

Date & Time of submission of process Compliance form & EMD - 29.05.2024 upto 11 A.M. at and Date & Time of e-auction 31.05.2024 from 10.00 AM - 4.00 P.M. with unlimited extension, with Bid incremental Amount. Rs. 10000/-

For further details and Terms & Conditions Contact: Rajnish Kumar (Auth. Officer) Mo. No. 9097274267 e-mail: zohamirpur@indianbank.co.in

For downloading further details and Terms & Conditions, Please Visit:
1. www.indianbank.co.in
2. <https://www.ibapi.in>
3. <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auktionhome/ibapi>

Bidders are advised to visit the website (www.mstcecommerce.com) of our e-auction service provider MSTC Ltd. to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance Please call MSTC HELPDISK No. 033-22901004 and other help line numbers available in service providers help desk. For Registration status with MSTC Ltd. please contact ibapiop@mstcecommerce.com and for EMD status please contact ibapifm@mstcecommerce.com.

For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and condition please visit: <https://ibapi.in> and for clarification related to this portal, please contact help line number '18001025026' and '011-41106131'

Corporate Office: Avvai Shanmugam Salai Royalpettah, Chennai-600014

Date: 26.04.2024 Place: Mahoba Authorized Officer, Indian Bank

Partnership to drive innovation in fintech solutions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Foundation for Innovation & Research in Science & Technology (FIRST) at Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT-K) & Ericsson India have announced a two-year strategic partnership to drive innovation in Mobile Financial Services (MFS) and fintech solutions. The partnership will identify emerging technologies, trends and market insights to address real customer needs. This collaboration comes at a pivotal moment as the digital wallet market is predicted to surpass \$16 trillion in transactions by 2028. Teaming up with FIRST at IIT-K, known for fostering technological innovation, represents a significant stride for Ericsson's Wallet Platform. By leveraging Ericsson's global experience and the cutting-edge research capabilities of IIT Kanpur, this collaboration aims to drive meaningful advancements in the financial technology sector. Ericsson's Wallet Platform, supporting over 400 million registered mobile wallets and processing 2.8 billion transactions valued at over \$40 billion monthly, rein-

forces Ericsson's leadership in technology and innovation within the financial services space.

Professor-in-Charge, SIIC, IIT Kanpur, Prof Ankush Sharma, remarked, "We are thrilled to embark on this transformative journey alongside Ericsson, leveraging our combined expertise to drive innovation in mobile financial services." He also stated that "This collaboration not only exemplifies our commitment to fostering technological advancements but also underscores our dedication to empowering communities through inclusive solutions." Michael Wallis-Brown, Global Head of Ericsson Mobile Financial Services, highlights, "This collaboration reinforces Ericsson's dedication to innovation and meeting evolving market demands in financial services, payments, and mobile money. We're excited about the possibilities this partnership unlocks for our customers and the broader Fintech ecosystem." Managing Director at Ericsson India, Nitin Bansal, emphasised, "Our collaboration with FIRST at IIT Kanpur represents a significant milestone in Ericsson's com-

mitment to fostering local talent and driving impactful solutions. By combining global expertise with local insights, we aim to lead the way in mobile money solutions, contributing to technological excellence and inclusive growth in India." Through this partnership, both Ericsson and FIRST at IIT Kanpur are poised to make meaningful contributions to the rapidly evolving financial technology landscape, driving economic growth and digital inclusion globally.

VISIT: The Centre for Energy Regulation (CER) and Energy Analytics Lab (EAL) at IIT Kanpur hosted a high-level delegation led by Pankaj Agarwal, Secretary of the Ministry of Power, Government of India. The delegation included senior officials such as Piyush Singh, Joint Secretary, MoP, Hemant Pandey, Chief Engineer, MoP, and Shaswattam, Executive Director, NETRA. During their visit, Prof Anoop Singh, founder and Co-ordinator, CER and EAL, IIT Kanpur extended a warm welcome to the delegation and engaged in comprehensive discussions on various critical topics concerning the Indian

power sector, including sectoral reforms, market development, distribution system operators, carbon offset markets, storage solutions, and regulatory governance. This interaction provided them with insights into the challenges and opportunities within the sector. The delegation had the opportunity to interact with research scholars and the CER-EAL team, fostering a deeper understanding of ongoing research initiatives and the innovative work being done there. Agarwal actively engaged with the current research topics pursued by scholars for their dissertations, demonstrating a keen interest in the academic endeavors of the institution. He also highlighted key initiatives including the sectoral and market reform process as well as the solar rooftop programme. The discussions delved into current and emerging issues in the Indian power sector including retail competition, electricity market design and development, MBED and SCED impacts on energy price, economic aspect of ISTS waiver, green trading, smart metering technologies, circular economy, climate change and incentives within power sector

NCBC to summon Karnataka Chief Secretary over quota to Muslims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) would be summoning the Karnataka chief secretary over the "blanket reservation" given to the Muslim community in the State, chairperson Hansraj Ahir said on Thursday. The NCBC has criticised the Karnataka Government's decision to categorise the entire Muslim community as a backward caste for reservation purposes saying such blanket categorisation undermines the principles of social justice. "All castes/communities of Muslim religion in Karnataka are considered socially and educationally backward classes of citizens and are categorised as Muslim Caste sep-



arately under Category IIB in the State List of Backward Classes," NCBC chairperson Ahir said. "This classification enables them to receive reservation in educational institution admissions and in appointments to posts and vacancies in the services of the State, as per Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution of India," he said. The NCBC has emphasised that while there are indeed underprivileged and histori-

cally marginalised sections within the Muslim community, treating the entire religion as backward overlooks the diversity and complexities within Muslim society. Ahir said the response received from the state government on the matter has not been satisfactory and he would be summoning the Karnataka chief secretary to give an explanation over the move. According to the data submit-

ted by the Karnataka Backward Classes Welfare Department, all castes and communities within the Muslim religion have been enlisted as socially and educationally backward classes under Category IIB in the State List of Backward Classes. The commission, during a field visit last year, examined Karnataka's reservation policy for OBCs in educational institutions and government jobs. While Karnataka provides 32 per cent reservation to backward classes in local body elections, including Muslims, the NCBC stressed the need for a nuanced approach that accounts for the diversity within these communities. According to the 2011 Census, Muslims constitute 12.92 per cent of the population in Karnataka.

US report on rights violations in Manipur deeply biased: MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday described a US State Department report citing alleged incidents of human rights violations including in Manipur as "deeply biased" and said it reflects a poor understanding of India and it attach no value to it.

This reaction by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) came in response to the annual report of the State Department which highlighted instances of human rights abuses in Manipur following the outbreak of ethnic conflict.

"This report is deeply biased and reflects a poor understanding of India," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "We attach no value to it and urge you to do the same," he



said at his weekly media briefing. The report also mentioned the raids by Indian tax authorities on the office of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

The India section of the report said local human rights organisations, minority political parties and affected communities criticised the coun-

minorities, such as Sikhs and Muslims, and the political opposition, sometimes depicting them as security threats. Referring to the tax raids on BBC offices, the report said although tax authorities described the searches as motivated by irregularities in the BBC's tax payments and ownership structure, officials also searched and seized equipment from journalists who were not involved in the organisation's financial processes.

"The government invoked emergency powers to ban screening of the documentary, forced media companies to remove links to the video, and detained student protesters who organised viewing parties," the State Department alleged, referring to a BBC documentary on the 2002 Gujarat riots, the screening of which was banned in India.

Kharge seeks time from Modi to explain him Congress Nyay Patra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and sought time from him to explain in person the party's "Nyay Patra". In his two-page letter, he told the Prime Minister that he is being misinformed by his advisors about things that are not even written in the "Nyay Patra"—the Congress manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections. The letter comes after the prime minister attacked the Congress over its manifesto, alleging that the party aims to "redistribute the wealth" of people and give it away to "infiltrators". Modi also accused the Congress of snatching women's "mangalsutra". In his letter, Kharge said the Congress' 'Nyay Patra' aims at providing 'nyay (justice)' to the youngsters, women, farm-



ers, labourers and marginalised people across all castes and communities. "It has become your habit to seize on a few words taken out of context and create a communal divide. You are lowering the dignity of the chair by speaking in this manner. You are being misinformed by your advisors about things that are not even written in our manifesto. I would be more than happy to meet you in person to explain our 'Nyay Patra' so that, as Prime Minister of the country, you don't make any statements that are false," he added. The Congress chief also said he

is neither shocked nor surprised by the language used by the prime minister in his recent speeches. "It was expected that you and other leaders from your party would start speaking in this manner after you saw the dismal performance of the BJP in the first phase of the elections," Kharge said in the letter.

The Congress has been talking about the deprived poor and their rights ("nyay"), he said and added, "We are aware that you and your government do not have any concern for the poor and dispossessed." "Your 'suit-boot ki sarkar' works for the corporates whose taxes you reduced while the salaried class pays higher taxes. The poor pay GST even on food and salt and the rich corporate claim GST refunds. That is why, when we talk of inequality between the rich and the poor, you are purposely equating it with Hindu and Muslim," Kharge claimed.

Ten Indians working with Russian Army have returned to India: MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Ten Indian nationals working as support staff with the Russian military have been released and have returned to India, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday.

Giving this information here, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said New Delhi has been pressing Russia to ensure the return of all other citizens serving in similar positions in the Russian military.

"Ten such individuals have come back to India and they have been released and they have returned home," Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing. After two Indians, working as support staff with the Russian military lost their lives, India last month called on its nationals to not risk their lives by taking up such jobs. Jaiswal said the Indian side is



very actively pursuing the case of all Indians serving with the Russian military at various levels, including with the foreign ministry, defence ministry and several other organisations in Russia. "We are committed to bring back all the people who so far have got in touch with us and want to be released and repatriated and return back home," he said.

"We have been assured by the Russian side that the other Indians who are there, they'll also be released and will return home. We are working out

those details," he said. On the case of an Indian national from Jammu and Kashmir serving in the Russian military and whose relatives were allegedly asked by Indian officials to get in touch with Russian authorities to ensure his release, Jaiswal said Indian officials are in touch with Russian authorities over it. We remain committed to bring him back as well, he said.

There were reports that said around 200 Indian nationals were recruited since last year to work as support with the Russian military.

Modi knows polls have slipped out of his hands, says Rahul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday claimed the difference between his party's guarantees and 'Modi Ki Guar-

antee' is clear and added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi knows that the elections have "slipped out of his hands". In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said the Congress guarantees a "government of Indians." Listing some promises made by the Congress, Rahul Gandhi said women will get Rs 8,500 per month, youth will get a job that pays Rs 1 lakh per year, recruitment will be carried out for 30 lakh vacancies and legal MSP will be provided to farmers.

"Modi's guarantee: Adani's government - The country's wealth in the pockets of billionaires; donation business



extortion gang; Constitution and democracy are over; farmers facing a paucity of finances; the difference is clear!" the former Congress chief said. "Congress will create crores of millionaires in India and Modi ji knows that the election has slipped out of his hands," he said. Addressing a rally in Amravati, Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday had claimed that ten years of the Modi government saw only 22-25 persons becoming billionaires on the back of a Rs 16 lakh crore loan waiver, but if the INDIA bloc comes to power, it will make crores of people "lakhpatis".

112 AFMC graduates of 58th batch commissioned into Armed forces: Officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 112 medical graduates of the 58th batch of the Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC), Pune, have been commissioned into the armed forces, officials on Thursday said.

Of these 112 cadets commissioned into the Armed Forces Medical Services, 87 are Gentlemen Cadets and 25 are Lady Cadets. 81 of them were commissioned into the Army, 10 commissioned into the Navy and 14 commissioned into the Indian Air Force, the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

"In a spectacular ceremony one hundred and twelve medical graduates of the 58th batch of the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, were commissioned into the Indian Armed Forces on April 25 at Capt Devashish Sharma, Kirti Chakra Parade Ground, AFMC," the ministry said.



The chief guest at the ceremony was Director General, Armed Forces Medical Services (DGAfMS) and Senior Colonel Commandant, Army Medical Corps, Lt General Daljit Singh. The DGAfMS reviewed the Commissioning parade that was commanded by medical cadet (now Lieutenant) Sushil Kumar Singh, the statement said.

Congratulating the newly commissioned officers, Lt Gen Singh exhorted them to serve the country and the armed forces with utmost dedication and wished them a bright and prosperous future.

Modi pays tributes to Parkash Singh Badal on his death anniversary



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday paid tribute to former Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on his first death anniversary, saying his indelible spirit and boundless dedication to service are greatly remembered.

"Remembering the great Parkash Singh Badal Sahab on his first Punya Tihi. His indelible spirit and boundless dedication to service are greatly remembered," Modi said in a post on X, sharing an article he had written on the stalwart Akali Dal leader after his passing last year. Badal, a widely respected leader, died at the age of 95 in 2023.

Project Cheetah poised to expand to Gandhisagar Sanctuary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As cheetah pugmarks eagerly anticipate venturing beyond the boundaries of their first home, Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, attention now shifts to the nearby Gandhisagar Wildlife Sanctuary in the State, where the ambitious Project Cheetah is poised to expand. Plans are afoot to release five to eight felines into a fenced area for breeding and conservation efforts later this year.

This was shared by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), a pivotal statutory body entrusted with overseeing the protection and preservation of big cats in the country, in its recent post on social media X, former known as Twitter. Five to eight cheetahs will be released into a fenced area in the new areas of Gandhisagar Wildlife Sanctuary in the State also known as Healthland of India possibly in the second half of the year with a focus on the breeding of animals, the NTCA posted



on the social media platform. Gandhi Sagar is about a six-hour drive from Kuno. It is spread across 368 square kilometres and has an additional 2,500 sq km area surrounding it. The official informed that a South African delegation reached India on Tuesday to review preparations at Gandhisagar for the introduction of cheetahs and the progress of the project in the Kuno National Park. "Officials from South Africa visited the Gandhisagar

Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh, and were apprised of preparations to receive cheetahs under the ambitious Project Cheetah. Valuable insights were shared while visiting the bomas, control room, and upcoming veterinary facilities," read the post. It further shared that on Wednesday, the South African delegation met Indian officials in New Delhi, and discussions focused on strengthening collaboration between the two countries in species

conservation, especially Project Cheetah which was kicked off in November 2022. According to a document released by the Union Environment Ministry earlier this year, the long-term goal is to establish a metapopulation of cheetahs in the Kuno-Gandhisagar landscape (area around 9,000 square km) of 60-70 individuals after restorative measures, prey availability, and scientific management are ensured. The current action plan, following the broad framework of the earlier action plan for the introduction of cheetahs in India, has been modified and formulated based on the experiences learned from Kuno suited for the site-specific requirements of Gandhisagar in consonance with the overarching guidelines of IUCN on reintroductions and conservation translocations (2013), the document read. Project Cheetah aims to reintroduce the only large carnivore species that went extinct in independent India. The first batch of eight cheetahs was introduced in India in

September 2022, and the second batch of 12 cheetahs was flown in from South Africa last February. The much-vaunted cheetah conservation project initially drew criticism over the animals' deaths. However, with the birth of 12 cubs this year so far, officials claim that the project is on the right track. Namibian cheetah Aasha gave birth to three cubs in January. Jwala, another female cheetah from Namibia, also gave birth to three cubs in the same month. She had delivered four cubs last year but only one of them survived. With South African cheetah Gamini giving birth to six cubs in March, the total number of cheetahs, including cubs, in Kuno is now 26. Since last March, seven adult cheetahs, including Shaurya, have died due to various reasons. The seven adult cheetahs -- three females and four males -- that died include Sasha, Uday, Daksha, Tejas, Suraj, Dhatri, and Shaurya. The first six fatalities occurred in a six-month period between March and August 2023.

Forensic labs need to be augmented for expeditious tests: NHRC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The number of technologically advanced forensic laboratories in India needs to be "augmented for expeditious examination", the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) said on Wednesday.

Chairperson, NHRC, Justice (retd) Arun Kumar Mishra, during a core group meeting here also said that investigation and forensics examination should be part of the process and "not independent" of each other. "The observation followed after a core group meeting of the NHRC on criminal justice system reforms," the rights panel said in a statement.

The focus was on finding ways to address delay in forensic reports, areas of improvement in the prosecution sys-



tem, and simplification of language used in organs of criminal justice system. "During the discussions, it was emphasised that public prosecutors play a very important role at the trial stage and therefore, it is necessary to

create a "cadre-based service" of public prosecutors to ensure transparency and merit in their appointment, the statement said. A training academy should also be set up for them with a research and analysis wing.

They also need to be supported with proper office infrastructure, it said, adding that the witness examination should be the "prerogative of the public prosecutor and not of the judges".

The meeting, in hybrid mode, was chaired by the NHRC chairperson in the presence of core group members, experts, academicians, representatives of civil society organisations and senior officers of the Commission.

Justice Mishra said forensic examination in the criminal justice system plays a critical role. Delay in forensic examination results in delayed justice, he was quoted as saying in the statement.

The number of technologically advanced forensic laboratories needs to be augmented for expeditious examination, he said. The digital forensics also needs to be

strengthened in the wake of "new challenges" of cybercrime to reach the culprit fast, the NHRC chief added.

He emphasised on increased systematic coordination among public prosecutors, forensic teams and the police. For this, their training in the legal provisions, the concept of trial and the importance of forensics is necessary for reforms in the criminal justice system for speedy trial ensuring that any innocent person doesn't suffer, the NHRC chief said.

Justice Mishra also said that public prosecutors need to be given exposure to forensics and the concept of trial. He said language is a barrier for the common man in understanding legalese in judgments as most of these are delivered in English, which is difficult to understand for many people.

IHRC adopts new logo to communicate unique identity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Historical Record Commission (IHRC) has adopted a new logo and motto to visually communicate the "unique identity" and ethos it represents, officials on Thursday said. The new logo has been selected by the government through an online competition hosted on MyGov portal from May 12 to June 12 last year, they said. The entry for logo and motto submitted by Shaurya Pratap Singh (Delhi) was selected for logo as well as motto of the IHRC, the Ministry of Culture said in a statement.

"In order to visually communicate the unique identity of IHRC and the ethos that it



represents, an online competition was launched in 2023 on MyGov portal to invite the designs for logo and motto, and in response a total 436 entries were received," the statement said. "The pages in the shape of lotus petals represent IHRC as the resilient nodal institution for maintaining historical records. The Saranath pillar in the middle represents

India's glorious past. Brown as the colour theme reinforces the organisation's mission of preserving, studying and honouring India's historical records," the statement said. Set up in 1919, the Historical Record Commission (IHRC), an apex advisory body on archival matters and headed by the Union Minister of Culture, acts as an all-India forum of creators, custodians and users of records to advise the government of India on the management of records and their use for historical research. The National Archives of India in New Delhi is the Secretariat of Indian Historical Records Committee (later re-designated Indian Historical Records Commission).



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Patrimonial dispute

It may be time to debate a tax on inheritance in India, but it will not be a walk in the park

The informal proposal in the Congress quarters of an inheritance tax has garnered attention and curiosity across India. While the party has distanced itself from these remarks, originally made by Indian Overseas Congress chairperson Sam Pitroda, the Statement has given another stick to the BJP to beat the Congress with. As to the viability of implementing a tax system akin to America's, delving into the issue requires a comprehensive examination of various factors, including economic, social and political. The US has long embraced the concept of taxing inheritance, albeit with its own complexities and controversies. The rationale behind such a tax is multilayered. One, it aims to address wealth inequality by ensuring that accumulated wealth is not perpetually passed down generations without contributing to public good. Two, it serves as a source of revenue for the Government, aiding in funding public services and initiatives. However, the implementation of an inheritance tax in India would face unique challenges. One of the primary concerns is the prevalence of informal economies and undocumented wealth, which could potentially evade taxation. Additionally, India's cultural and social fabric places a significant emphasis on familial ties and inheritance practices, making the introduction of such a tax a sensitive issue. Moreover, the Indian taxation system already comprises various levies, including income tax, capital gains tax and wealth tax (though repealed in 2015), which may complicate the addition of an inheritance tax. There are also concerns about the practicality of administering such a tax, given the diverse nature



of assets and prevailing inheritance structures. However, proponents argue that implementing an inheritance tax could serve as a tool for promoting economic mobility and reducing wealth concentration among a select few. By imposing a tax on large inheritances, the Government could potentially redistribute wealth more equitably and generate revenue to fund social welfare programmes. To effectively assess the feasibility of an inheritance tax in India, policymakers would need to engage in extensive consultations with stakeholders, including economists, tax experts, legal professionals and the public. Additionally, careful consideration has to be given to designing a tax framework that minimises loopholes and ensures compliance while addressing concerns related to family businesses, agricultural land and other sensitive assets. Any decision to introduce an inheritance tax should be accompanied by measures to enhance tax transparency, improve enforcement mechanisms and bolster efforts to combat tax evasion and avoidance. In conclusion, while the idea of taxing inheritance in India draws parallels with the US model, its implementation would necessitate a nuanced approach tailored to the nation's unique socio-economic context.

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The marginalisation of disabled in politics

Despite 2.68 crore persons with disabilities, the *divyang* community struggles to find representation in mainstream politics



VAMIKA GUPTA

In the vast landscape of Indian democracy, where diversity should thrive, the voices and needs of individuals with disabilities often echo in silence. Despite India accounting for 2.68 crore persons with disabilities, making up 2.28 per cent of the population as per Census 2011, the disabled community has been unable to find its place in mainstream politics. With the Lok Sabha General Elections 2024 looming large and around the corner, a stark reality emerges: out of the 543 seats, not even one is occupied by a person with a disability. This absence speaks volumes, reflecting a systemic failure to acknowledge the rights and contributions of over 2.68 crore disabled individuals. As the countdown to the elections intensifies, this leads us to critical questions. Why do the demands of persons with disabilities find little or no place in the manifestos of the political parties? Why do the exit polls overlook this significant demographic, pushing them to the sidelines of the demographic discourse? Can we truly celebrate the biggest festival of democracy with one of the significant sections of the population lagging behind? A vicious cycle of exclusion persists when it comes to the political representation of persons with disabilities. Political parties often overlook people with disabilities, considering them a marginalised group who do not vote and are "incompetent" and "incapable" of creating any electoral impact. Professor Anita Ghai poignantly observes this disparity as "to be disabled is to be disabled by society". Too often, persons with disabilities are portrayed solely as objects of inspiration, highlighting their perceived "achievements" in crawling, reaching a polling booth and overcoming all the adversities. While these stories may momentarily touch hearts, they ultimately reinforce stereotypes, further excluding the disabled community from active participation in the electoral process. Moreover, the physical barriers



encountered at the polling stations compound the challenges faced by disabled voters, stripping away their dignity and agency. Lack of accessibility of polling stations and booths, absence of information, as well as inadequate capacity building of staff to support persons with disabilities, often make it difficult for disabled people to exercise their political rights. For instance, during the Karnataka Assembly Elections held in 2023, when Anitha (38) arrived at the polling center, having traveled 20 km on her three-wheeled mobility bike, she was unable to make her way to the polling booth. There were no wheelchairs stocked at the facility. She says "The ramp was too narrow and could only accommodate a two-wheeler. It could not fit my three-wheeled assisted bike. The only person to ask for help was the security guard, who shrugged it off and told me to 'manage' like the other voters with disabilities, who were forced to crawl up the ramp, to the booth to cast their vote." Anitha's experience serves as a reminder of the systemic neglect that plagues our electoral infrastructure.



AS WE MARK 75 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE, THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CIVIL AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS OF THE STATE MUST BE RESPECTED AND HONOURED

The challenges multiply for those with lesser known and lesser visible disabilities, such as those with blood disorders and intellectual and developmental disability. For example, the absence of sign language interpreters during political campaigns renders crucial information inaccessible, further alienating persons with speech and hearing impairments. In a democratic process that is built on inclusivity and fairness, these barriers erode the dignity of its disabled citizens, which it promised to uphold. Further, the lack of concrete and official data exacerbates the situation. Without accurate statistics on the number of disabled voters who cast their votes and their representation in positions of power, policy formulation becomes a shot in the dark. The reliance on outdated figures, such as considering only 7 kinds of disabilities as against 21 as per the amended Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD) 2016, further compounds the problem. This dearth of information results in a lack of targeted policies and inadequate budget allocations for persons with disabilities. Yet, amidst these challenges lies an opportunity for trans-

formation. The need is for persons with disabilities to be considered a part of the mainstream discourse around development. It is time to shift from a tokenistic approach to disability towards a more rights-based approach. Significantly, we need to move away from the traditional approach of treating disabled persons as mere beneficiaries and recipients of pensions and assistive devices.

As we mark 75 years of independence, the fundamental rights of persons with disability to participate in the civil and political systems of the State must be respected and honoured. This necessitates that persons with disabilities hold a seat at the table, with them being key stakeholders in designing and developing all policies and programs developed for them. Integration of the needs of the disabled community across all facets of governance is the need of the hour. I believe that it is only then that we can truly realise the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' and propel India towards its aspiration of a \$ 5 trillion economy.

(The writer is Program Officer-Advocacy, NCPEDP; views are personal)

PICTALK



Tibetan monks during special prayers for the long life of the 11th Panchen Lama on his birthday, in Shimla PTI

Why do Indians excel abroad and fail back home?

Emphasis on fostering creativity, innovation and risk-taking is pivotal for the nation to become a global hub for knowledge creation



RADHIKA SHRIVASTAVA

Indians have undeniably left a lasting impression across various global arenas, spanning technology, entrepreneurship, academia and healthcare. However, a perplexing paradox persists - why do Indians excel overseas while encountering unique obstacles within their homeland? This compelling question warrants immediate attention and a thorough exploration of the multifaceted challenges at hand. **Deciphering the Enigma: Indian Excellence Abroad and Domestic Hurdles** The disparity between Indian achievements on the international stage and the hurdles faced domestically primarily stems from deficiencies in the public education system. The insightful narrative of "Why Indians Succeed Everywhere Except in India," as presented by EW, adeptly dissects this paradox, attributing it to the lamentable State of public education - an observation that holds true. **The Interplay of Education, Governance and Economic**



Development The nexus between the quality of education and the overall health of political, socio-economic and law and order systems is profound. A robust education system forms the cornerstone for an informed citizenry, competent leadership and a flourishing economy. Recognising education as a catalyst for effective governance and economic prosperity, it is imperative to prioritise education within national development strategies. **Challenges in Primary and Secondary Education** The current State of primary and secondary education reflects the trajectory of our nation's future. ASER surveys reveal a stark reality - a significant portion of our youth lacks even basic

skills expected at their grade levels. This systemic failure jeopardises the very foundation of our future, necessitating a discerning response to address underlying issues. **Higher Education: Quality and Employability Crisis** Graduation should ideally open doors to a world of opportunities. However, India grapples with the challenge of higher education - the mismatch between degrees and employability. It is crucial to question whether higher education institutions adequately prepare graduates for the dynamic job market, reflecting the systemic challenges faced by graduates and the subsequent brain drain. **The Brain Drain Predicament: Retaining India's Brightest Minds** While India boasts exporting talent worldwide, there's a sobering reality - a loss of intellectual capital that could otherwise fuel national growth. Understanding the migration patterns of Indian graduates to foreign shores challenges the convention-

al narrative of brain drain. Yet, it's vital to acknowledge the diaspora's positive contributions as a bridge between India and the global economy. **A Call to Action for Change** Viewing the emigration of skilled individuals as a loss for India underscores the urgency for comprehensive strategies to reverse brain drain, attract exceptional talent back home and invest in research and development. A paradigm shift in higher education is imperative, emphasising creativity, innovation and risk-taking to foster a globally competitive India. Restoring the spirit of private enterprise and nurturing a dynamic academic and industrial environment is crucial for sustained growth. As we navigate the complexities of reform, the vision outlined in this analysis serves as a beacon toward a more prosperous, innovative and globally competitive India. (The author is a Managing Director, FIIB; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DISRESPECT BY HIGH COMMAND

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Churn in Congress over Delhi candidates", published on April 25, this is my response. The recent resignation of Raj Kumar Chauhan, a stalwart in Delhi politics and a prominent Dalit leader, from the Congress party highlights a deepening discontent within its ranks. Chauhan's departure, fuelled by allegations of disrespect from the party high command, sheds light on internal rifts over ticket distribution and outsider nominations.

The incident underscores a broader issue of party unity and inclusivity, especially ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. The rejection of 'outsider' candidates and the clash between grassroots leaders and central leadership reflect a disconnect that could harm the party's electoral prospects. Chauhan's decades-long dedication to the Congress, coupled with his grievances, poses a significant challenge to the party's leadership. His departure, along with the protests against nominations like Udit Raj's, signals a need for introspection and reconciliation within the Delhi Congress. Ultimately, the party must address these grievances transparently to uphold its integrity and regain the trust of its members and constituents alike.

Ayesha Singh | Jaipur

CORRUPTION, A PERVERSIVE REALITY

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Determining the limits of corruption, the Indian way", published on April 25, this is my response. Corruption, an omnipresent spectre, haunts every facet of Indian society, transcending the boundaries of public and private sectors. While Governmental and political malfeasance often grab the headlines, corruption manifests in myriad forms, from petty bribery to workplace coercion. The notion that only monetary exchanges define corruption overlooks systemic injustices and abuses of power. The oath-bound duty of public officials to serve the populace is marred by arrogance

India's democracy dilemma



Apropos the news article, "The democratic status of India under scanner", published on April 25, this is my response. The V-Dem Institute's report labeling India as an "electoral autocracy" raises eyebrows, suggesting a skewed perspective on its democratic landscape. While global indices like the EIU Democracy Index provide a framework,

their methodology and accuracy have been questioned. Civil liberties, a cornerstone of democracy, show a worrying decline in India, impacting its global rankings and sovereignty. The World Happiness Report highlights India's struggle, exacerbated by the pandemic, influencing its happiness index. Moreover, the RSF's Press Freedom Index depicts a concerning picture, placing India unfavorably alongside Pakistan and Afghanistan. The methodology critique underscores the importance of robust research methodologies. As India faces scrutiny, it's imperative to introspect and perhaps develop indigenous indices aligned with its realities. Decolonising the democracy index could offer a more accurate reflection of India's democratic journey amidst global assessments.

Anand Rajan | Chennai

and apathy, fostering a culture where exploitation thrives unchecked. Despite legislative efforts, corruption persists unabated, prompting introspection on the efficacy of legal remedies. Is corruption an indelible part of our collective psyche, entrenched beyond legislative constraints? The normalisation of corrupt practices challenges societal morality, blurring the lines between acceptance and condemnation. As scandals unveil the deep-seated roots of corruption, it beckons a reevaluation of societal norms and ethical compasses. The lament of a disillusioned officer underscores a sobering reality: corruption knows no bounds, yet its normalisation is a limit we dare not accept.

Nikhil Desai | Pune

NAVIGATING WORKPLACE DYNAMICS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Nurture workplace safety and inclusivity", published on April 25, this is my response. The modern workplace is a dynamic ecosystem, mirroring Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where foundational

elements must be addressed before reaching higher goals. With a diverse workforce spanning multiple generations, including X-Gens to Generation Alpha, it's imperative to adapt policies and practices accordingly. Pay parity, safe workplaces and respectful environments are crucial pillars, alongside diversity and inclusion initiatives. Flexibility, accessibility and appreciation further enhance employee well-being and engagement. Training and development programs ensure continuous growth and inclusivity. By prioritising accessibility and accommodation, organisations demonstrate their commitment to equality. In this evolving landscape, fostering a culture of support and appreciation is key to nurturing talent and achieving collective success. As we navigate these workplace dynamics, it's essential to embrace change and prioritise the well-being of all employees.

Pooja Menon | Kochi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

THE ESSENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

It is awareness of the environment, thoughts, feelings and sensations



RAVI VALLURI

We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think. When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves. What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow, the Enlightened One, Buddha was to say.

In our lexicon today subjects and topics like physics, metaphysics, an elevated State, consciousness, life coaches and mind, apart from iconic names of Stephen Hawking, Jim Holt, and Carl Sagan among others are all bandied quite recklessly without deep study. This is perhaps done under pressure to keep up with Jones or to display our awareness about certain issues of topical interests without proper research.

Recently my jaw dropped when confronted with some basic facts and facets of our universe. Through my elementary study of physics and geography, I was aware that we live on Planet Earth, which is an integral part of a Solar System; though I was in the dark and not fully aware that each star in the galaxy has its own solar systems like ours. I was certainly an ignoramus on these riveting concepts. Apparently, several of these stars and their respective solar systems do not exist anymore and have disappeared forever in the sands of time or are perhaps gravitating towards a black hole. It dawned on me as to how ignorant I was despite my readings on the subject.

So how does this lead us to the quintessential term of consciousness? Simply put consciousness is a State when humans are aware of and responsive to their environment. This is inclusive of both prevailing internal and external conditions. An individual blessed with an efficacious and robust thought process becomes aware and responsive to various occurrences which are taking place both within and without.



Consciousness is an individual's State of awareness of their environment, thoughts, feelings, or sensations; and in order to experience consciousness, one must be both awake and aware. Arjuna, the ace archer slumped and his fabled Gandiva fell to the ground as his mind was gripped with doubts and fear as the spectre of battling his cousins, his Gurus and above all the patriarch Bhishma coloured the mind and Sisyphean thought process engulfed his persona.

This was when Lord Krishna unleashed his Vishwarup Darshan and rendered the song celestial Bhagavad Gita which revealed his true self and raised the consciousness in Arjuna who took up the cudgels once again. King Janaka the father of Sita was a Jnani Purush. He was a highly knowledgeable and enlightened person and was referred to as a Raj Rishi. One day in his court he fell asleep and dreamt that Mithila his kingdom was stricken by severe and dreaded drought conditions.

The suzerain visualised an eagle swooping down and plucking a piece of bread/chappati from the hands of an impoverished peasant. This shocked the king and he woke up from a State of slumber to receive sage Ashtavakra who was to reveal the gospel of truth, which is popularly referred to as Ashtavakra Gita. Janaka then realised his true self and the consciousness was ignited. Buddha for years continued with his spiritual practices and was perennially haunted by Mara (evil/fiendish forces) while cogitating, until on one full moon night pristine truth dawned on him and he went into deep silence.

Consciousness in Buddhism refers to life force, mind and discernment. Consciousness is the State when the human mind is verily awakened and assumes the form of a pure and pristine child brimming with enthusiasm, joy and curiosity. This is an experiential State of mind and consciousness.

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

Neglect spurs industry exodus in Punjab



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

The Punjab Government has not only lacked an industrial policy for a long time, but there has been a continuous deterioration in the infrastructure required for industries

After independence till the year 2011-12, Punjab was considered to be one of the rich and prosperous States of India. In the year 2000-01, the per capita income of Punjab was not only the highest in the country, but it was also 9 per cent more than the second richest State, namely, Haryana. But in the year 2012-13, the per capita income of Punjab slipped to the second position and today Punjab has reached the 10th position in terms of per capita income among the States with a population of more than 1 crore and the 19th position among all the States, and has now become the second slowest growing States in the country.

In the year 2011-12, when Punjab's per capita income was the highest in the country, the share of agriculture was 24 per cent, that of industries 28.4 per cent and that of services 47.6 per cent. But by the year 2022-23, the share of agriculture had increased to 28.94 per cent, while the share of industries and services was reduced to 25.51 per cent and 45.91 per cent respectively. It can be assumed that the industry and service sector have shrunk in Punjab. While talking about its neighbouring State Haryana, the share of industries in GDP in Haryana has increased from 25.90 per cent to 28 per cent between the years 2011-12 and 2021-22. The share of industries in Gujarat has increased from 36 per cent to 43 per cent during the same period, and in Tamil Nadu from 27.9 per cent to 33 per cent.

It can be understood that during this period, deindustrialisation has taken place in Punjab. Although Punjab is famous in the world for its population migrating to different parts of the world, since the beginning, after independence, a large number of Punjabi people migrated to the USA, Canada, Europe and many other countries. Punjab benefited a lot from these migrant Punjabis. The money sent to Punjab by the migrant Punjabis from abroad was greatly beneficial for the development of agriculture and industries. A wave of industrial development was seen in Punjab for a long time.

But for quite some time now it has been observed that not only has the industrial development of Punjab come to a halt, but a large number of industries have now started migrating out of Punjab. Industries of Punjab have now started shifting to its neighbouring States like Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan etc. as well as to distant States like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat etc. Punjab was especially known for its engineering industry, but many engineering companies have now shifted to the user States of their products. On the other hand, Jalandhar was considered a big centre for sports products, and many sports industries there, have now shifted to Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. It is being observed that textile and garment industries have shifted to Madhya Pradesh, the bicycle industry to Chennai and China, knitwear industry to Africa, Southeast Asia and Madhya Pradesh.

Anti-industry policies of Punjab Government

The agriculture sector in Punjab has been considered very important from an economic point of view. It is worth noting that although only 28.94 per cent of the total GDP in Punjab comes from agriculture, more than 65 per cent of its population depends directly on agriculture. A sad part of Indian democracy is its populist policies. In Punjab, these populist policies have



PUNJABIS ARE GOOD ENTREPRENEURS, WHICH MAKES PUNJAB EXCEL IN INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT. BUT TODAY, PUNJAB IS LAGGING BEHIND IN COMPETITION WITH THOSE STATES WHERE LOGISTICS COSTS ARE LOW AND WHERE THERE HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN INFRASTRUCTURE

worked to adversely affect the economic development of Punjab. Punjab, that is, the region of five rivers, has been very rich in terms of water. However in Punjab, due to the ease of groundwater extraction, a large number of tube wells were installed. To please farmers, the Punjab Government started the scheme of giving free electricity for agriculture. In such a situation, excessive exploitation of water started. Due to this, many districts of Punjab have now become dark zones, that is, where the availability of groundwater has depleted excessively. However, the Punjab Government's policy of giving free electricity to agriculture has not only affected the availability of groundwater but has also affected the industries there. The Punjab Government has put most of the burden of free electricity for agriculture on industries and businesses. Due to this electricity has become very expensive for industries, causing a huge disadvantage to the Punjab industry vis a vis their counterparts elsewhere. This has seriously affected the viability of industries. They have no option left but to move out of Punjab to other States and even to foreign countries. Environmental laws in Punjab are such that it is almost impossible to comply with them. In such a situation, industries have no choice but to shut down their units or move to other States. Not only this, industries and businesses in Punjab also have to pay high water cess, due to which industries have to face losses.

Conditions becoming difficult

One of the reasons for rapid indus-

trial and economic development in States like Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh etc. is infrastructure development and other facilities, which leads to a reduction in their logistics cost. It is well known that Punjabis are good entrepreneurs, which made Punjab excel in industrial and commercial development. But today Punjab is lagging behind in competition with those States where logistics cost is low and where there has been significant progress in infrastructure. It is worth noting that the condition of infrastructure in Punjab has become much worse in recent years.

Not only this, the implementation of the GST system has also affected the industries of Punjab. Earlier, indirect taxes were levied at a low rate by the Punjab Government, but after the implementation of the GST system, the possibility of State-specific fiscal incentives is very limited, due to which the competitive power of the industries of Punjab has now become much lower than other States.

Obstacles for new and old industries

If someone wants to set up a new industry in Punjab, then not only environmental but also other types of clearances are highly difficult. Not only this, allotment of land for industries is also very difficult and is also plagued by corruption. The financial sector in Punjab has also been seriously affected, because most of the agricultural loans of Punjab have turned bad and due to this, NPAs in Punjab are also very high.

Not only this, the continuously dete-

riorating law and order situation in Punjab is wreaking havoc on the industries.

Half-hearted efforts

The distance from the sea and the high logistics cost of exports are also one of the reasons why Punjab's industries have to send goods through a long route. Earlier, goods could be sent through Pakistan, but now since that route is closed, goods can be sent overseas only through Mumbai port. To deal with this situation, an air cargo facility was started in Amritsar, but there was a lack of complementary efforts. Due to the lack of backward linkages of air cargo with industries, only 20 per cent of the air cargo facility is being used presently. While other State Governments are offering various incentives to attract industries, the Punjab Government has not only lacked an industrial policy for a long time but there has been a continuous deterioration in the infrastructure required for industries. There is also a lack of research and development activities.

Due to the lack of industrial development, Punjab is continuously lagging behind economically, but the biggest concern is that the Punjab administration has no thought or policy initiatives on this subject. In such a situation, if this trend is not stopped, Punjab can lag far behind in economic development, which will be neither good for Punjab nor for the country.

(The writer is a professor at PGDAV College, University of Delhi, views are personal)

Bihar's educational reforms cock a snook at private players

Bihar Government's bold education initiatives combat global capital's influence on marginalised, writes Keyoor Pathak

The failure of the Bihar Government on countless fronts in the last few decades cannot be dismissed, and an exclusive example of the failure can be perceived in the law made without any proper preparation and study against liquor. Apart from this, there are many issues where the Government has demonstrated its substantial weakness such as rural migration, agriculture et cetera. However, there are some steps taken by the Government that must be appreciated without any political prejudices, this is the initiative on the subject of education in the State. Today, when the market is bent on taking over education completely in almost the entire India, the effort of the State to patronise education on such a

large scale can be considered a very bold step. In a way, this is a counter by the State to global capital. When the educational institutions are coming out of the hands of the Government and going into the hands of the corporates, the work done by the Bihar Government on the education system is in a way like the return of the welfare State. Such efforts must be made on health services too. However, in recent years, its big beginning can be seen in Delhi where it was claimed that Government school education has been taken to a prestigious level, and this claim should not be denied. But through education reforms in Bihar, the State is again visible in its public-concerning role, albeit partially, only in a few

subjects. Bihar is one of the poorest States in the country, and social and economic inequality is also at its peak. Then in such a situation, the model of economic development of putting education in the open market will push marginalised people even further to the margins. It has always been a crying question of how much space will be left for the rights of education of the marginalised sections while in most of the private schools are functioning like money making industries. And it should be understood that private schools do not flourish because of their quality, rather the failure of the Government schools gives them an opportunity to spread their footing. Unfortunately, Government schools have



been continuously neglected by the State for decades. And all this did not happen spontaneously, rather there was a well-planned conspiracy of the Global Capital behind it that firstly let the Government schools be destroyed and then the private schools would automatically get legitimacy. In a way, the society has given up all its expectations from Government schools, they have accepted that children

have no future in Government schools. Consequently, social psychology developed which did not take the availability of quality education as a serious question. If it had been taken, there would have been pressure on the Governments and they would have worked on the facilities and quality education in the Government schools, but this rarely happened. The Bihar Government again made Government schools a part of the election manifestos of political parties. We saw some of the work that the Government has done to improve the education system. For example, there was a severe shortage of teachers in schools for a long time, to fulfil teachers were recruited on a large scale. The appointment of more than one lakh teachers is

enough to show the seriousness of the Government's vision on education. Undoubtedly a large part of the budget would have been spent on this. If we talk about infrastructure, the schools of Bihar had turned into ruins. It was difficult to say which building would collapse and when. Children were often forced to sit in the open field or in the veranda. But to fix all these things the Government allocated a huge amount. Allotment of the books, dresses and bags and water bottles for children along with other materials not only attracts them towards schools but also reduces the financial burden for the parents, especially for those who are barely able to earn their living by doing farm labour. For urban elites

these things might be futile but for the rural people this is not affordable by their own income. We all had seen children carrying books in their hands or in dusted polythene or in torn cloth (jhola), but now they had beautiful bags in their hands and instead of torn half-naked clothes on their bodies, uniforms were shining on them. It was well known fact how little attention they paid to the children.

The Government has strictly forced the teachers to be responsible for their duties towards children, which was not an easy task, years of Government negligence had made them indolent. Some other small and big efforts can be seen there to control the deep-rooted corruption in the

education system. A pertinent aspect which perhaps sought for more attention that is 'Mid-Day Meal'. This should be allowed to continue in a smoother manner and at the local level merely, any interference by any external agency is likely to lead to many other complications. Amidst all these achievements, the biggest problem visible is, how to continue this reform in the future, because there still seems to be a lack of proper mechanism for this; and in the absence of a mechanism all efforts and achievement may be proven futile.

(The author is Post-Doctorate from CSD, Hyderabad and Assistant Professor in Department of Sociology, University of Allahabad; views are personal)

Maharashtra LS polls: Sena vs Sena dominates polls, BJP fights to retain four seats

T N RAGHUNATHA
MUMBAI

As Maharashtra goes to the second phase of Lok Sabha polls in eight constituencies — five in Vidarbha region and three in neighbouring Marathwada on Friday, the ruling Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena will be slugging it out with the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena in three of the constituencies, while its senior partner BJP appears to have a tough task on hand to retain of its four sitting seats. The Congress, which had failed to win even one seat from among the eight currently poll-bound seats in the 2019 polls, has something to cheer this time around, as it may end up bagging at least a couple of seats in the second phase of polling — especially after Rahul Gandhi's electioneering at Amravati where he managed to elicit enthusiastic response from a huge crowd gathered at his rally and the anti-incumbency factor at Nanded in the

neighbouring Marathwada. Like in the first phase of Lok Sabha polling in five Lok Sabha constituencies of Vidarbha held on April 19, there's absolutely no wave of any kind in Buldhana, Akola, Amravati, Wardha, Yavatmal-Washim — all in Vidarbha region, Hingoli, Nanded, and Parbhani — in Marathwada region, where an approximate 1.5 crore voters will choose eight winners from 299 candidates in the fray. In a way, it is going to be a litmus test for the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, which is taking on the Shiv Sena (UBT) in the constituencies of Buldhana, Yavatmal-Washim and Hingoli. This is the second election that the Shiv Sena outfits are fighting against each other after the Shiv Sena split after senior party leader Eknath Shinde rebelled against Uddhav Thackeray, walked out of the party along with 40-odd MLAs teamed up with the Opposition BJP to form a government in Maharashtra in June 2022. In the first election which was by-

poll held on November 6, 2022, the Shiv Sena (UBT) had won the Andheri (East) Assembly seat.

Between the two Shiv Sena outfits, the Shinde Sena has an advantage over the Uddhav Sena as it has managed to retain the parent party's symbol of Bow and Arrow. The Sena (UBT), which is reaching out to the voters with a new symbol "Mashaal" (Flaming Torch), has already had a run-in with the election authorities who have ordered the party to remove words "Jai Bhavani" and "Hindu" from the song brought by the party to promote its new party symbol. In Buldhana, Shiv Sena (UBT), three-time Shiv Sena MP Prataprao Jadhav is taking on Narendra Khedekar of the Sena (UBT). In the neighbouring Yavatmal-Washim, the Shinde Sena has dropped its five-time MP Bhavana Gwali and fielded Rajashree Patil, wife of the party's Hingoli MP Hemant Patil against Sanjay Deshmukh of the Sena (UBT). In Hingoli,



the Shinde Sena has nominated Baburao Kolatkar against Nagesh Patil Ashtikar of the Sena (UBT). Amravati — where actress-turned sitting MP Navneet Rana of the BJP is fighting an admittedly tough battle against LS poll debutant Balwant Wankhede of the Congress — has come into sharp focus after Rahul Gandhi's rally on April 24. At the Amravati, Rahul — in a retaliation to the bogey of "redistribution of wealth" used by the ruling BJP against his party, had said that the Narendra Modi government in its ten years' rule had waived the loans worth a staggering Rs 16 lakh crore "22 to 25" super-rich persons and made them into billionaires and if the Congress-INDIA was voted to power, it would make crores of people in the country "lakh-patis". Rahul's identical speeches at Amravati and Solapur created buzz across the state, because his address went well with the women voters. Much to the embarrassment of the BJP leadership, a video clip in which the party candidate

from Amravati Navneet Rana saying at a rally — that there is "no Modi wave", that she was speaking the truth, it reflected the mood of the people on the ground and that the party will have to fight the election as if it was a gram panchayat election — went viral. Friday's polls will provide an opportunity to former chief minister and late Union Home Minister S B Chavan's son Ashok Chavan, who quit the Congress and joined the BJP in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls, to prove his popularity in his home constituency of Nanded, where sitting BJP MP Prataprao Patil Chikalkar is pitted against two-time sitting MLA Vasant Chavan of the Congress. Ashok Chavan is no longer a force to reckon with on his home turf. No wonder he is trying hard to redeem himself by ensuring the victory of the sitting BJP MP. Incidentally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing a rally at Nanded, had slammed Congress leader

Rahul Gandhi, by saying that Shehzada' and his team were waiting for the polling to get over in Wayanad, from where he is contesting, to find another safe seat for him, and predicted that he (Rahul) will "run away" from Kerala like he did from Amethi. It remains to be seen if Modi's staunch criticism of Rahul will have an impact on the voters in Nanded. Akola is another seat which has evoked a lot of interest among the people across the seat, because Prakash Ambedkar, the grandson of late B R Ambedkar and founder-chief of Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA), is seeking entry to Lok Sabha for the third time. After unsuccessful efforts to rope him into the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), Prakash Ambedkar has fielded seven out of the eight poll-bound seats while he himself is candidate in Akola, his brother Anandraj Ambedkar is contesting from Amravati as the Republic Sena nominee.

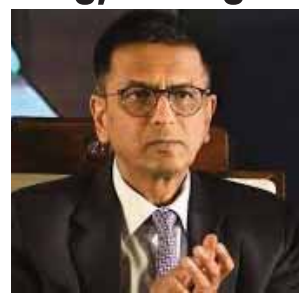
In Akola, Prakash Ambedkar is locked in a three-cornered contest against Anant Dhotre of the BJP and Abhay Kashinath Patil of the Congress. The Akola seat is currently held by the BJP in Lok Sabha. Known for Gandhi's Sevagram Ashram, Wardha is another seat where keen contest is expected. Here, two-time sitting BJP MP Ramadas Tadas is battling it out with three-time MLA Amar Kale of the Sharad Pawar-led NCP. He faces severe anti-incumbency. Intra-party dissent is also threatening to affect his poll prospects. In Parbhani, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena candidate Sanjay Jadhav is sitting pretty as there is no ruling MahaYuti candidate here. He is taking on relatively weak Rashtriya Samaj Paksha (RSP) candidate Mahadev Jankar. Though the ruling MahaYuti has announced its support for him, it remains to be seen if the ruling alliance's support will translate into votes in this constituency.

SC to share information about filing, listing of cases through WhatsApp: CJI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant step towards digitisation, Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud on Thursday announced that the Supreme Court will share information relating to cause lists and filing and listing of cases to advocates through WhatsApp messages, saying it will have a "big-bang impact" and will go a long way in saving paper and the earth. The announcement on integration of WhatsApp with its Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services was made by the CJI before a nine-judge bench headed by him commenced the hearing on the vexed legal question arising from the petitions about whether private properties can be considered "material resources of the community" under Article 39(b) of the Constitution, which is a part of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DSPS). "In the 75th year of its existence, the Supreme Court launches a small initiative. It

has the potential to have a big-bang impact. WhatsApp messenger has been a ubiquitous service in our daily lives and has taken the role of a powerful communication tool. To strengthen the right to access to justice and enhance transparency in the judicial system, the Supreme Court announces integration of WhatsApp messaging services with its IT services," the CJI said. Elaborating further, Justice Chandrachud said under this initiative, the Advocates-on-Records (AoRs) and the litigants, who appear in person before the top court, will get automated messages regarding electronic filing of cases, cause lists, orders and judgments. "The cause lists will be sent to all members of the bar by the registry as and when published. The orders and judgments available on the website will also be sent through WhatsApp," he said. A cause list features the cases to be heard by a court on a



given day. "This is another revolutionary step..." Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said. The CJI also shared the top court's official WhatsApp number 8767687676 and said it will not be receiving any messages and calls. "This will bring a significant change in our working habits and will go a long way in saving papers and our planet Earth," Justice Chandrachud said. The CJI, referring to digitisation of judicial functions, said now more and more lawyers will have access to the courts and "even people from remote

areas can access simple cases involving citizen issues as well." "We are also migrating all our services into Meghraj cloud 2.0 which is the cloud infrastructure created by National Informatics Centre (NIC) ...The data is preserved on servers in India," he said. Taking note of the submissions of a lawyer that high courts and tribunals are not on the same page as the Supreme Court on the issue of technological advancement, he said, "Some high courts say tell us 48 hours in advance for video conference links and you can get only if you are above 60 years of age (and have difficulty attending the proceedings physically). We had to pass a judicial order saying what this is and how it can be done." Underscoring the importance of video conferencing facilities, the CJI said if the investigation officer (IO) of a case has been transferred, he should be able to appear virtually. The trial court proceedings need not be adjourned if the IO has been

shifted, he said. "We are moving rapidly by pushing the high courts to do this and there is financial backing also. And now the money goes straight from the central government through the e-court committee of the high courts," he said. The top court, under the leadership of CJI Chandrachud, has been taking steps to digitise the functioning of the judiciary. He said the Centre has sanctioned Rs 7,000 crore for the e-court project. The solicitor general shared the views of the central government and the prime minister and said they were committed to digitisation of the judiciary to enhance the access to justice for common litigants and lawyers. "There is a direction from the prime minister that gives first priority to digitisation because access to justice is possible to the common man if there is digitisation and this is the priority of the government too," the top law officer said.

All eyes on North East...

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A total of 13.96 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their franchise. Out of them, 7.02 lakh are males, 6.94 lakh are females and 13 are transgenders. The constituency has 38,245 voters in the age group of 18-19 years, 4,678 service voters, and 8,942 voters above 85 years old. As many as 16,260 Bru voters, settled in different locations, will cast their votes in the parliamentary constituency. Assam is all set to witness a triangular and a direct contest for the second of the three-phased polls in five constituencies to decide the fate of 61 candidates in the fray on Friday

and Congress' Munish Tamang who is being supported apart from the Left and CPRM Humro Party chief Ajoy Edward. While Bishta faces challenge from his own party MLA Bishnu Prasad Sharma who is contesting as an Independent after the BJP refused to field him as a Bhumiputra he has the support of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) and JKLF. The TMC is backed by the Benay Tamang faction of the GJM which is presently ruling the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration. The number of sensitive

booths at Darjeeling is 308 out of which most are in the plains of Siliguri, sources say. According to ECI sources 88 companies of CAPF have been deployed in Darjeeling which 73 companies have been sent to Balurghat. Apart from this 12,983 State police personnel will also be deployed by the Commission. On the possibilities of the parties winning the seats local sources said while in Raiganj all the three groups were equally placed at Darjeeling and Balurghat the BJP was a tad ahead with the TMC next in tow.

EC questions Modi, Rahul's poll...

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These complaints had referred to Modi's allegations that the Congress wanted to redistribute the wealth of the people to Muslims and that the opposition party won't even spare the "mangalsutra" of women. The speech led to a major political slugfest with the Congress and other opposition parties accusing the prime minister of making false claims and the BJP alleging that the Congress was nursing an agenda of Muslim appeasement at the cost of weaker sections of the society. Addressing the poll rally, Modi had said: "The Congress manifesto says they will calculate the gold with mothers and sisters, get information about it and then distribute that property. They will distribute it to whom - Manmohan Singh's government had said that Muslims have the first right on the country's assets." Officials said it is the first time that the panel has taken cognisance of a complaint against any prime minister. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the EC had given a clean chit to Modi on complaints lodged by the opposition parties. Then election commissioner, Ashok Lavasa, gave a dissent note on some of the decisions taken by the EC on complaints against the prime minister. In its notice, the EC has invoked Section 77 of the Representation of the People Act and held the party presidents responsible, as a

first step, to reign in star campaigners. The EC said it has taken a view that while individual star campaigners would continue to remain responsible for speeches made by them, the Commission will address party chiefs "on a case-to-case basis". Reacting to this, the Congress said the Election Commission is "super, super cautious" when it comes to complaints against Modi. "Star Campaigners are expected to contribute to a higher quality of discourse by way of providing an all-India perspective, which sometimes gets distorted in the heat of the contests at the local level. Thus, the expectation from Star Campaigners is to provide corrective action or a sort of healing touch, when intensity of local campaign disrupts or inadvertently crosses over such boundaries," wrote Senior Principal Secretary Narendra N. Butolia in the letter to Nadda. Thus, the expectation from Star Campaigners is to provide corrective action or a sort of healing touch, when intensity of local campaign disrupts or inadvertently crosses over such boundaries. The Star Campaigners are thus expected to utilize this privilege for "propagating the programme of the political parties" and, therefore, their speeches in the campaign space necessarily needs to be judged at a higher threshold of compliance," it added.

Akhilesh Yadav enters...

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He asserts that Akhilesh's candidacy is vital for maintaining the party's strength and enthusiasm among supporters, particularly considering the significance of Kannauj as a historical bastion of the SP, which suffered a setback in the 2019 elections. Analysts predict that Akhilesh Yadav's decision to contest from Kannauj will have profound implications, not only within the constituency itself but also in neighboring regions such as Mainpuri and Etawah, reshaping the dynamics of electoral competition in central Uttar Pradesh. Akhilesh Yadav's association with Kannauj dates back to his earlier political career, having been elected MP for the first time in a by-election held in 2000, followed by successful tenures in 2004 and 2009. His wife, Dimple Yadav, also entered the political arena through Kannauj, winning unopposed

in a by-election in 2012 after Akhilesh resigned to assume the role of Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Despite Dimple's victory in the 2014 general elections, the BJP's Subrata Pathak secured the seat in 2019 by a narrow margin. SP leaders view Akhilesh Yadav's candidacy as a strategic maneuver with multifaceted benefits. As the current Leader of the Opposition in the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha, Akhilesh's potential victory in Kannauj would serve to galvanize party morale and energize workers in adjoining constituencies, thereby augmenting the party's electoral prospects. Furthermore, the strategic plan to have Akhilesh contest in Kannauj and subsequently pass the baton to his protégé, Tej Pratap Yadav, post Lok Sabha elections, is perceived as a calculated strategy to ensure the party's sustained presence and relevance in the region.

Congress, BJP clash...

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JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy from Mandya, his brother-in-law and noted cardiologist C N Manjunath from Bangalore Rural on a BJP ticket, erstwhile Mysuru royal family scion Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar from Mysore, also from the BJP, and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's brother and MP D K Suresh of Congress from

Bangalore Rural, are among the prominent candidates in the fray in the first phase. Also in the fray are BJP MP Tejasvi Surya from Bangalore South against Minister Ramalinga Reddy's daughter Sowmya Reddy of Congress, Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje on BJP ticket from Bangalore North against former IIM Bangalore professor M V Rajeev Gowda of Congress.

CBI files first...

From Page 1

After preliminary verification during a field visit in the area, the CBI has registered the first FIR in such allegations of land grab and assault on women handed over to it by the Calcutta High Court. The High Court had also directed the CBI to file a comprehensive report on the alleged illegal conversion of agricultural land into water

bodies for pisciculture after conducting a thorough inspection of revenue records and physical inspection of land alleged to have been converted. The central agency has been tasked to investigate allegations of crimes against women and land grabbing in Sandeshkhali and submit a comprehensive report to it at the next date of hearing on May 2. "As per reports, leaders of some of the churches have declined to meet the Lieutenant Governor," he said.

Stage set for phase II LS...

From Page 1

The BJP is relying on actor Suresh Gopi, Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar and Anil Antony, the son of veteran Congress leader A K Antony, to open its account in Kerala which has never elected an MP from the party. A day before the second phase of the Lok Sabha polls,

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday urged people to support his party and asserted this is an election to save democracy and the Constitution which he alleged the BJP-RSS are trying to "destroy". Rahul who is seeking a second-straight term from Wayanad in Kerala, in a video appeal said this election is to save democracy and the Constitution. "On one hand there is the BJP and the RSS that are trying to finish democracy and destroy the Constitution and on the other hand there is the Congress and the INDIA alliance that is saving democracy and the

Constitution," he said. Notably, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday warned of heatwave to severe heatwave conditions in parts of West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh during the next five days. It has issued a red warning for West Bengal and Odisha and an orange alert for Bihar and parts of Karnataka. The Met office said high humidity could add to people's inconvenience in Tripura, Kerala, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Assam, Meghalaya and Goa.

More than 16 lakh polling officials have been deployed across 1.67 lakh polling stations for over 15.88 crore voters, the EC said. Voters include 8.08 crore male, 7.8 crore female and 5,929 third gender electors. As many as 34.8 lakh first-time voters are registered to cast their votes. Additionally, there are 3.28 crore young voters in the age group of 20-29 years, it said. There are over 14.78 lakh registered 85+ years old, 42,226 voters above 100 years and 14.7 lakh PwD voters for phase 2 who have been provided the option to vote from the comfort of their homes.

The EC said three Helicopters, four Special trains and nearly 80,000 vehicles have been deployed to ferry polling and security personnel. It further said that 251 Observers (89 General Observers, 53 Police Observers, 109 Expenditure Observers) have already reached their constituencies days before the polls. They serve as the eyes and ears of the Commission to exercise utmost vigilance. Additionally, Special Observers have been deployed in certain states. 9. A total of 4553 Flying Squads, 5731 Static Surveillance

Teams, 1462 Video Surveillance Teams and 844 Video Viewing Teams are keeping surveillance round the clock to strictly and swiftly deal with any form of inducement of voters. 10. According to EC, a total of 1237 inter-state and 263 international Border check posts are keeping strict vigil on any illicit flow of liquor, drugs, cash and freebies. Strict surveillance has been kept at sea and air routes. Around 4195 Model polling stations are being set up across the 88 PCs with local themes. More than 4100 Polling stations will be completely managed by

women including security staff and at over 640 Polling stations by Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). In 2019, the BJP had won 53 and its existing allies 12 of these seats, including seven of eight in Uttar Pradesh, all 13, eight and seven in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh respectively, and four of the five seats each in Assam and Bihar. The constituents of the now INDIA bloc had won 23 seats in the last general election. The first of the seven-phase elections held last Friday for 102 seats across 21 states and Union territories saw a voter turnout of around 65.5 per

cent. In the first phase on April 19, polling was completed in all seats of Tamil Nadu (39), Uttarakhand (5), Arunachal Pradesh (2), Meghalaya (2), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (1), Mizoram (1), Nagaland (1), Puducherry (1), Sikkim (1) and Lakshadweep (1). In 2019, the NDA had won 56 of these 89 seats and the UPA 24. Six of these seats have been redrawn as part of the delimitation exercise. It may be recalled that polling for 29-Betul PC in Madhya Pradesh was rescheduled in the third phase due to the death of a candidate from Bahujan Samaj Party.



Stage set for BJP, Congress poll battle in Jammu Reasi Lok Sabha seat

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After witnessing a close contest on the Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat the stage is now set for another interesting poll battle between the Bharatiya Janta Party and the Congress party on the Jammu-Reasi Lok Sabha seat in the second phase of polling on Friday.

Former Minister and Working President of the Congress in Jammu and Kashmir Raman Bhalla is challenging two-time sitting MP Jugal Kishore Sharma of BJP. Ankur Sharma of Ekam Sanatan Bharat Dal is also in the fray to test the political waters ahead of the maiden Assembly polls in the Union Territory.

In 2019, Jugal Kishore won the seat by a margin of over 3 lakh votes defeating his opponent Raman Bhalla. BJP candidate Jugal Kishore is hopeful of scoring a hat-trick riding high on the pro-Modi support base across Jammu, Samba and Reasi districts while the Congress candidate Raman Bhalla is hoping to encash on the anti-BJP sentiment in the backdrop of Abrogation of Article 370.

Lack of employment opportunities for the youth, unattended grievances of the



border residents across Jammu and Samba districts, and sense of insecurity regarding land, and resources are the other key factors around which the Congress party ran its campaign to woo the electorate. The National Conference cadre has also helped the INDIA alliance candidate to give a tough challenge to the sitting BJP MP.

Post Delimitation, the Jammu-Reasi Lok Sabha seat has witnessed significant changes. For the first time after the 1967 polls, the Rajouri and Poonch districts will not be part of the Jammu Lok Sabha seat as the frontier

districts were removed and attached to the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat during the marathon exercise. "Similarly, the whole of Reasi district has been removed from Udhampur constituency and allocated to Jammu. Post Delimitation, Jammu emerged as the constituency with the highest number of 23 percent Scheduled Caste votes.

The Election Commission authorities are geared up to boost the total poll percentage in the second phase on April 26. The first phase of polling on the Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat recorded a poll

percentage of 68.2 percent. In 2019, Jammu Lok Sabha seat had recorded a turnout of over 72 percent.

Around 17.80 lakh voters are expected to seal the fate of 22 candidates in the fray across 2416 polling stations spread across 4 districts of Jammu, Samba, Reasi and Rajouri (83-Kalakote-Sunderbani).

9,21,095 male and 8,59,712 female voters besides 28 third-gender voters have been enrolled in the voters list.

According to the office of the Returning Officer, special arrangements have been made to facilitate around 10498 Persons with Disability and 666 persons above the age of 100 years. At least 62 polling stations have been set up along the International border in Jammu and Samba districts. The polling parties were dispatched on Thursday to far-flung areas.

Around 1454 polling stations in phase 2 will have CCTV cameras for the live webcasting to control rooms established at the CEO/district offices.

In the entire Union Territory, from the date of announcement of the election till date material/cash of around Rs 28.497 crore has been seized by various enforcement departments.

Rajiv scrapped inheritance tax to save Indira's wealth from going to Government, says Modi

PTI ■ MORENA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said then-PM Rajiv Gandhi abolished the inheritance tax after his mother Indira Gandhi's death in 1984 to save her wealth from going to the government, and alleged the Congress now wants to bring back the levy.

As the high-decibel canvassing for Lok Sabha polls sent political temperatures soaring, the BJP's star campaigner doubled down on his wealth redistribution and inheritance tax charge at the Congress and vowed to protect people's from what he called the rival party's plans to loot them.

Addressing a rally in Madhya Pradesh's Morena, where voting will take place on May 7, Modi escalated his attack on the grand old party and accused it of "cutting off the country's hands" by accepting Partition on the basis of religion. Modi said then-PM Rajiv Gandhi abolished the inheritance tax, a levy imposed on inherited movable and immovable assets, in 1985 after his mother Indira Gandhi's death to save her wealth from going to the government.

"Listen with your ears wide

open about the sins the Congress has committed. I want to put forth an interesting fact. When sister Indira Gandhi passed away, there was a law by virtue of which half of the wealth used to go to the government. There were talks then that Indiraji would her wealth in her son Rajiv Gandhi's name," Modi told the gathering.

"To save the money going to the government, the then-PM Rajiv Gandhi abolished the inheritance tax," the BJP stalwart opined. If the main opposition party comes to power, it will snatch more than half of people's earnings through inheritance tax, the PM warned voters, latching onto controversial remarks on the issue made by US-based senior Congress leader Sam Pitroda.

A day after MP Rahul Gandhi's remark that those who call themselves "deshbhakt" (patriots) are scared of a caste census, Modi said the Congress wants to confiscate people's jewellery and small savings by conducting an X-ray of their properties and valuables. An adviser to the opposition party's shehzada (referring to Rahul Gandhi) has now suggested imposition of an inheritance tax, he said, seizing on Pitroda's remarks.



The Congress wants to bring back the inheritance tax now that after its four generations have reaped the benefit of the wealth passed on to them, he said. But the BJP will not allow such designs to succeed, the PM assured the crowd. "The wealth that you have accumulated by working hard and enduring hardships will be looted from you once a Congress-led government is formed," he said.

"Modi with his 56-inch chest is standing as a wall between you and the Congress' plan to loot you. That is why Congress leaders and the opposition abuse me so much," the PM said. He accused the Congress of accepting Partition of the country on religious lines. "Instead of unshackling the hands of 'Maa Bharti', the Congress cut off her hands

and divided the country," Modi alleged.

The Congress wants to snatch reservation of SCs/STs/OBCs for the sake of its Muslim vote-bank and was bent on grabbing power with religious appeasement, the PM said. "The Congress says Muslims have the first right on the country's resources, while I say the poor have the first right on them," Modi emphasised. Describing himself as 'kaamdar' (working class) and Rahul Gandhi as 'naamdar' (dynast), the PM said, "Nowadays, the shehzada (prince) of the Congress is enjoying abusing Modi. We are there to listen to the abuses from the 'naamdaars' but I will continue serving the people and 'Maa Bharti'.

For years, the Congress did not allow the 'One Rank One Pension' scheme for armed forces personnel, but "we did it (implemented the scheme)", the PM noted. The Congress has been hatching a conspiracy to deprive tribals and backward classes of their rights, the BJP stalwart said. "Will you ensure a total washout of those snatching the rights of backward classes?" he asked the gathering, calling for a defeat of the Congress in the ongoing polls.

Stage set for phase II of LS polls in Assam, 61 in fray

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam is all set to witness a triangular and a direct contest for the second of the three-phased polls in five constituencies to decide the fate of 61 candidates in the fray on Friday.

Polling will begin at 7 am and end at 5 pm in the five constituencies - Karimganj, Silchar (SC), Diphu (ST), Nagaon and Darrang-Udalguri.

The prominent candidates in the fray are sitting MPs Pradyut Bordoloi of Congress from Nagaon, BJP's Dilip Saikia and Kripanath Malla from Darrang-Udalguri and Karimganj, respectively, and Assam minister Parimal Suklabaidya of BJP from Silchar (SC), among others. A total of 77.26 lakh voters - 38.95 lakh male, 38.61 lakh female and 179 third gender - are eligible to exercise their franchise across 9,133 polling stations.

Polling will be held amid tight security, with 60 companies of security forces deployed across the five constituencies. The BJP and the Congress are contesting in all five seats, the AIUDF in two and the Trinamool Congress in one. In this phase, only two women candidates are in the fray.

Karimganj constituency, bordering Bangladesh, has the highest number of 24 candidates, with 19 independents, while Diphu (ST) is the lowest with five



candidates in the fray. In Karimganj, a triangular contest is on the cards among sitting BJP MP Kripanath Malla, Hafez Rashid Choudhury of Congress and AIUDF's Sahibul Alam Choudhury.

Eight candidates are in the fray in Silchar, and the contest is likely to be triangular between Assam minister Parimal Suklabaidya of BJP, Surya Kanta Sarkar of Congress and Radheyshyam Biswas of Trinamool Congress.

Five contestants are in the fray in Diphu (ST), and the contest is likely to be between BJP's Amarsing Tisso and Joyram Englung of Congress.

A total of 13 candidates are in the fray in Nagaon, and the contest is set to be triangular between sitting Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi, BJP's

Suresh Bora and AIUDF's Aminul Islam. In Darrang-Udalguri, 11 candidates are contesting, with the contest likely to be direct between sitting BJP MP Dilip Saikia and Congress candidate Madhab Rajbongshi. The Bodo Peoples' Front candidate Durga Das Boro is also expected to put up a good fight.

Assam Chief Electoral Officer Anurag Goel said all arrangements have been completed for conducting the polls in a free, fair and peaceful manner.

In the first phase of polls held on April 19, 78.25 per cent of the electorate exercised their franchise to decide the fate of 35 candidates for the Kaziranga, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Sonitpur and Lakhimpur constituencies.

Bihar: 50 candidates in fray for five seats

PTI ■ PATNA

The stage is set for the second phase of Lok Sabha polls in Bihar on Friday, when more than 93 lakh voters will decide the fate of 50 candidates across five constituencies.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U), a BJP ally, is contesting all the five seats, including Kishanganj, which it seeks to wrest from the Congress, while its MPs in the remaining four constituencies would try to retain their turf.

Bihar's only parliamentary constituency where Muslims are in majority, Kishanganj, is heading for yet another three-cornered contest between Congress MP Mohd Javed, JD(U) runner up of 2019 Mujahid Alam and Akhtarul Iman of the AIMIM, who had made a splash five years ago by garnering close to three lakh votes.



The maximum spotlight appears to be on Purnea, where altogether seven candidates are in the fray, the lowest for the five seats.

An intense three-cornered battle is being witnessed in the Lok Sabha constituency where JD(U) MP Santosh Kushwaha aims at a hat-trick, but will face a stiff challenge from three-time former MP Rajesh Ranjan

alias Pappu Yadav, who is contesting as an Independent, and RJD's Bima Bharti, an MLA who recently crossed over from the chief minister's party.

In neighbouring Katihar, former Union minister Tariq Anwar, who has won the seat many times, on tickets of the Congress to which he returned a few years ago as also the NCP

of which he was a founding member, is trying to wrest the constituency from JD(U)'s Dulal Chandra Goswami, to whom he had lost by a thin margin last time.

Another keenly watched constituency is Bhagalpur, which the Congress is contesting for the first time in over two decades. Party MLA Ajeet Sharma, who has been springing a surprise in the last couple of assembly polls by winning the eponymous Vidhan Sabha seat, is posing a tough challenge to JD(U) MP Ajay Mandal.

In Banka, JD(U) MP Giridhari Yadav is locked in yet another straight contest with RJD's Jay Prakash Narayan Yadav, from whom he had wrested the seat five years ago.

Among the 50 candidates in the fray for the second phase, only three are women, with RJD's Bima Bharti in Purnea

being the lone female contesting on a major party's ticket.

The total number of voters for the five seats is 93.96 lakh, including 45.15 lakh women and 306 belonging to the third gender.

Young voters form more than one-third of the electorate, with 13.77 lakh in the age group of 18-19 years and another 20.86 lakh aged between 20 and 29 years.

Special arrangements will be in place for 89,743 persons with disabilities and 79,085 voters aged over 85 years.

More than 150 companies of paramilitary forces will assist the local police in ensuring free and fair polls, officials said.

The elections will take place at a time when the state is reeling under an intense heatwave, with the mercury shooting past the 40-degree Celsius mark in most parts.

Tripura BJP vice president accuses ally Tipra Motha chief of spreading hatred among tribals

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Ahead of the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections, Tripura BJP vice president Patal Jamatia accused the saffron party's alliance partner Tipra Motha chief Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma of "spreading hatred" among tribals in the state. She also alleged that the Tipra Motha was "cheating tribals in the name of politics" and

said indigenous people would not support the regional party if he did not apologise.

Jamatia's comment comes two days before the polling for the Tripura East Lok Sabha seat on Friday, where Debbarma's sister Kriti Devi Debbarman is contesting as a BJP nominee.

"Pradyot has started spreading hatred not only among tribals and non-tribal people but also those belonging to various tribes

such as Tripuri, Jamatia, and Reang," the BJP leader said on Wednesday night.

The Tipra Motha did not react to Jamatia's remarks but the BJP disapproved the statement of the party's state vice president.

After signing an agreement with the Centre and the state government, the Tipra Motha, which won 13 of the 60 assembly seats last year, joined the BJP-led coalition government in March.

Woman Collector meets people in buses, shops, urges them to vote on election day in Kerala



PTI ■ KOTTAYAM (KERALA)

Kottayam District Collector KV Vigneshwari, who is also the District Election Officer for the Kottayam parliamentary constituency, pursued a distinctive mission on Thursday, rallying support for increased voter participation in the next day's polls in Kerala.

"Tomorrow (Friday) is our voting day. Don't forget to come and cast your votes," Vigneshwari appealed to passengers in a bus parked at a private bus stand at Nagampadam here on Thursday.

Curious passengers stood up as the 2015-batch IAS officer boarded the bus, making an appeal for their participation in the poll process.

They respectfully nodded positively, accepting a card pinned with a candy provided by the collector. "Children, please tell your parents to cast their votes," she told children sitting on seats in the bus filled to capacity with passengers.

"What is in it (the card)?," she asked the children after giving it to them, and told them, "Tell father, mother, and friends to vote for the person they want as their MP." She

then proceeded towards the shops in the bus stand, making similar appeals. "Have you reached voting age?," she asked a group of girl students waiting for their bus. When they answered "yes," she said, "So, please don't forget to vote tomorrow. You all are the backbone of our democracy. You may be first-time voters. Please cast your votes." Later, talking to reporters, Vigneshwari said, "This is the festival of democracy, and we are inviting all to participate in it. So, all of us should cast our votes, spending an hour of our time."

She added: "All votes are valuable. That is why we are individually impressing upon them the value of their votes," she said. A district information officer said the district administration implemented the programme, whereby the district collector would urge voters to exercise their franchise, in collaboration with the Private Bus Owners Association. A total of 194 contestants in 20 Lok Sabha seats are vying for voters' support as Kerala goes to the polls on Friday, after over a month-long fierce campaign by the CPI(M)-led ruling LDF; Congress-headed UDF; and the BJP-led NDA.

Preparations complete for second phase polling in Manipur

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Arrangements are complete for the smooth conduct of elections to the Manipur Outer Lok Sabha seat, encompassing 13 assembly segments, where over 4.7 lakh voters will decide the fate of four candidates on Friday.

In the first phase, 15 assembly segments of Outer Manipur along with 32 assembly segments of Inner Manipur had gone to the polls on April 19.

Candidates in the fray for this phase are Naga People's Front candidate K Timothy Zimik, Congress' Alfred Kanngam Arthur and independents S Kho John and Alyson Abnonmai. The BJP hasn't fielded any candidate and is supporting its ally, the NPF. Of the 13 assembly segments going to polls, ten are predominantly Naga-inhabited areas.

Senapati district, with the highest number of voters in Outer Manipur (142,843), will see voting across 288 polling stations.

Ukhrul district, predominantly inhabited by the Tangkhul Naga community, has 93,869 voters spread across two assembly segments. The district has set up 141 polling stations and four special booths for internally displaced people.

Jiribam district, bordering Assam's Silchar and the only non-ST assembly seat in Phase-2, has 30,809 voters and 41 polling stations. Notably, two polling stations, Babukhal and Boroikhal, are accessible only through waterways.

Tengnoupal district, which shares a border with Myanmar and witnessed multiple incidents of conflict last year, has 42,731 voters and 74 polling stations.

Jharkhand: Congress Sukhdev files nomination from Lohardaga

PTI ■ GUMLA

Former Jharkhand Congress president Sukhdev Bhagat on Thursday filed his nomination for the Lohardaga Lok Sabha seat and claimed that he would win the elections by a margin of 1 lakh votes.

The Congress is fighting the Lohardaga as per its seat-sharing agreement with the JMM. However, JMM's Bishnupur MLA Chamra Linda filed nomination papers as an Independent candidate for the seat on Wednesday.

"Chamra Linda is like my younger brother. It was an impulsive decision by him. There is time and I think he will use discretion and support the INDIA bloc," Bhagat told PTI.

He said Linda should understand that the coalition was fighting for tribal identity and to save democracy and the Constitution.



"There is a religious identity for every community in India, but there is no column for tribal religion, which is Sarna, in the Census. A resolution was passed by the Jharkhand assembly for the Sarna code but it is stuck with the central government," Bhagat said.

"Now, the BJP wants to abolish the tribal customary law by bringing the Uniform Civil Code. So, it is important for all to root out the BJP

government from the Centre," he added.

Bhagat alleged the BJP government works for corporate and not the people. "There is no price rise, unemployment and women security in the dictionary of the BJP government. On the other hand, Rahul Gandhi is concerned about every section of the society," he claimed.

He was defeated by BJP's

Sudarshan Bhagat by a narrow margin of 10,363 votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. This time, the BJP has fielded Rajya Sabha MP Samir Oraon, who filed his nomination on Wednesday. "My victory is certain and hopefully, I will win by a margin of more than 1 lakh votes," the Congress leader said.

After Bhagat filed the nomination papers, he attended a public meeting at the Town Hall in Gumla. The rally was addressed by Chief Minister Champai Soren, state Congress president Rajesh Thakur and the party's in-charge for Jharkhand Ghulam Ahmad Mir. The Lohardaga Lok Sabha constituency will go to the polls on May 13 along with Singhbhum, Khunti and Palamu.

The nomination process for the four seats concluded on Thursday, and the last date for the withdrawal of nominations is April 29.

Colleges nationwide turn to police to quell pro-Palestine protests

AP ■ AUSTIN

With graduations looming, student protesters doubled down early Thursday on their discontent of the Israel-Hamas war on campuses across the country as universities, including ones in California and Texas, have become quick to call in the police to end the demonstrations and make arrests. While grappling with growing protests from coast to coast, schools have the added pressure of May commencement ceremonies. At Columbia University in New York, students defiantly erected an encampment where many are set to graduate in front of families in just a few weeks. Columbia continued to negotiate with students after several failed attempts — and over 100 arrests — to clear the encampment, but several universities ousted demonstrators Wednesday, swiftly turning to law enforcement when protests bubbled up on their campuses. Police peacefully arrested student protesters at the University of Southern California, hours

after officers at the University of Texas at Austin aggressively detained dozens in the latest clashes between law enforcement and those protesting the Israel-Hamas war on campuses nationwide. Tensions were already high at USC after the university cancelled a planned commencement speech by the school's valedictorian, who publicly supports Palestine, citing safety concerns. After scuffles with police early Wednesday, a few dozen demonstrators standing in a circle with locked arms were detained one by one without incident later in the evening. Officers encircled the dwindling group sitting in defiance of an earlier warning to disperse or be arrested. Beyond the police line, hundreds of onlookers watched as helicopters buzzed overhead. The school closed the campus. Hours earlier in Texas, hundreds of local and state police — including some on horseback and holding batons — bulldozed into protesters, at one point sending some tumbling into the street. Officers

pushed their way into the crowd and made 34 arrests at the behest of the university and Texas Governor Gregg Abbott, according to the state Department of Public Safety. A photographer covering the demonstration for Fox 7 Austin was in the push-and-pull when an officer yanked him backward to the ground, video shows. The station confirmed that the photographer was arrested. A longtime Texas journalist was knocked down in the mayhem and could be seen bleeding before police helped him to emergency medical staff. Dane Urquhart, a third-year Texas student, called the police presence and arrests an "over-reaction," adding that the protest "would have stayed peaceful" if the officers had not turned out in force. "Because of all the arrests, I think a lot more (demonstrations) are going to happen," Urquhart said. Police left after hours of efforts to control the crowd, and about 300 demonstrators moved back in to sit on the grass and chant

under the school's iconic clock tower. In a statement Wednesday night, the university's president, Jay Hartzell, said: "Our rules matter, and they will be enforced. Our University will not be occupied." North of USC, students at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, were barricaded inside a building for a third day, and the school shut down campus through the weekend and made classes virtual. Harvard University in Massachusetts had sought to stay ahead of protests this week by limiting access to Harvard Yard and requiring permission for tents and tables. That didn't stop protesters from setting up a camp with 14 tents Wednesday following a rally against the university's suspension of the Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee. Students protesting the Israel-Hamas war are demanding schools cut financial ties to Israel and divest from companies enabling its monthslong conflict.

'282 mn faced acute hunger in 2023, with the worst famine in Gaza'

United Nations (AP): Nearly 282 million people in 59 countries suffered from acute hunger in 2023, with war-torn Gaza as the territory with the largest number of people facing famine, according to the Global Report on Food Crises released on Wednesday. The UN report said 24 million more people faced an acute lack of food than in 2022, due to the sharp deterioration in food security, especially in the Gaza Strip and Sudan. The number of nations with food crises that are monitored has also been expanded. Máximo Torero, chief economist for the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, said 705,000 people in five countries are at Phase 5, the highest level, on a scale of hunger determined by international experts — the highest number since the global report

began in 2016 and quadruple the number that year. Over 80 per cent of those facing imminent famine — 577,000 people — were in Gaza, he said. South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Mali each host many thousands also facing catastrophic hunger. According to the report's future outlook, around 1.1 million people in Gaza, where the Israel-Hamas war is now in its seventh month, and 79,000 in South Sudan are projected to be in Phase 5 and facing famine by July. It said conflict will also continue to drive food insecurity in Haiti, where gangs control large portions of the capital. Additionally, while the El Nino phenomenon peaked in early 2024, "its full impact on food security — including flooding and poor rain in parts of east Africa and drought in southern Africa, especially

Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe — are like to manifest throughout the year." UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the report "a roll call of human failings," and that "in a world of plenty, children are starving to death." "The conflicts erupting over the past 12 months compound a dire global situation," he wrote in the report's foreword. Guterres highlighted the conflict in the Gaza Strip, as the enclave holds the highest number of people facing catastrophic hunger. There is also the year-old conflict in Sudan, which has created the world's largest internal displacement crisis "with atrocious impacts on hunger and nutrition," he added. According to the report, over 36 million people in 39 countries and territories are facing an acute hunger emergency, a step below the famine

level in Phase 4, with more than a third in Sudan and Afghanistan. It's an increase of a million people from 2022, the report said. Arif Husain, the UN World Food Program's chief economist, said every year since 2016 the numbers of people acutely food insecure have gone up, and they are now more than double the numbers before the COVID-19 pandemic. While the report looks at 59 countries, he said the target is to get data from 73 countries where there are people who are acutely food insecure. Secretary-General Guterres called for an urgent response to the report's findings that addresses the underlying causes of acute hunger and malnutrition while transforming the systems that supply food. Funding is also not keeping pace with the needs, he stressed.

Ship attacked off Yemen coast amid accelerating Houthi rebel campaign

AP ■ JERUSALEM

A ship traveling in the Gulf of Aden came under attack Thursday, officials said, the latest assault likely carried out by Yemen's Houthi rebels over Israel's ongoing war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The attack comes after the U.S. military said early Thursday an allied warship shot down a Houthi missile targeting a vessel the day before near the same area. The Houthis claimed that Wednesday assault, which comes after a period of relatively few rebel attacks on shipping in the region over Israel's ongoing war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. In Thursday's attack, a ship was targeted just over 15 miles (25 kilometers) southwest of Aden, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said. There was no other immediate information about the attack, which also was reported by the private security firm Ambrey. The Houthis did not immedi-

ately claim the attack, though it typically takes them hours to acknowledge an assault. The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sank another since November, according to the U.S. Maritime Administration. Houthi attacks have dropped in recent weeks as the rebels have been targeted by a U.S.-led airstrike campaign in Yemen and shipping through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden has declined because of the threat. American officials have speculated that the rebels may be running out of weapons as a result of the U.S.-led campaign against them and firing off drones and missiles steadily in the last months. However, Wednesday's attack was the first one by rebels in some time. An explosion struck some 130 kilometers (80 miles) southeast of Djibouti in the Gulf of Aden, the UKMTO said. Early Thursday, the U.S. military's Central Command said the explosion came from a coal-

ition warship shooting down the missile likely targeting the MV Yorktown, a U.S.-flagged, owned and operated vessel with 18 U.S. and four Greek crew members. "There were no injuries or damage reported by U.S., coalition or commercial ships," Central Command said. Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, a Houthi military spokesman, claimed the attack but insisted without evidence that the missile hit the Yorktown. Saree also claimed the Houthis targeted another ship in the Indian Ocean, without providing proof. The Houthis have made repeated claims that turned out to not be true during their yearslong war in Yemen. The Houthis have said they will continue their attacks until Israel ends its war in Gaza, which has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians there. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 others hostage.

Blinken discusses trade practices in Shanghai meetings

AP ■ SHANGHAI

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken raised what the US describes as unfair Chinese trade practices during his first full day of meetings in China on Thursday with local government officials in the financial hub of Shanghai.

Blinken met with the city's top official, Communist Party Secretary Chen Jining, and "raised concerns about (Chinese) trade policies and non-market economic practices," the State Department said in a statement.

It said he stressed that the United States seeks healthy economic competition with China and "a level playing field for US workers and firms operating in China."

"The two sides reaffirmed the importance of ties between the people of the United States and (China), including the expansion of exchanges between students, scholars, and business," it said. China's multibillion-dollar trade surplus with the US along with accusations of intellectual property theft and other prac-



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, center, U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns, right, and Scott Walker, second left, visit a waterfront area called The Bund on Thursday. AP/PTI

actices seen as discriminating against US businesses in China have long been a source of friction in relations. China, for its part, has

objected strongly to US accusations of human rights abuses and Washington's support for Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing considers its own terri-

tory and warns could be annexed by force. Asked about Blinken's comments, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin

said China has "always conducted economic and trade cooperation in accordance with market principles, firmly supported the multilateral trading system, and fully complied with the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO)."

"We hope the US will also earnestly respect the principle of fair competition, abide by the WTO rules, and work with China to create favorable conditions for the sound and stable development of China-US economic and trade relations," Wang told reporters at a daily briefing. Blinken also spoke with students and business leaders before flying to Beijing for what are expected to be contentious talks with national officials, including Foreign Minister Wang Yi and possibly President Xi Jinping. Blinken arrived in Shanghai on Wednesday shortly before US President Joe Biden signed a USD 95 billion foreign aid package that has several elements likely to anger Beijing, including USD 8 billion to counter China's growing aggressiveness toward Taiwan and in the South China Sea.

Frigate has destroyed drone launched from Yemen's Houthi-held areas: EU officer

Nicosia (AP): A top European Union military officer said that a frigate that's part of an EU military mission in the Red Sea to protect merchant shipping destroyed a drone launched from an area in Yemen controlled by Houthi rebels on Thursday morning. Austrian Gen. Robert Brieger, who is chair of the EU's military committee, said that it would be crucial for the bloc to "conserve resources" over the long haul because the threat posed by Houthi attacks "will not disappear" due to its connection to the Israel-Hamas war. "The task given to the military is simply to protect merchant ships and to show the public that the European Union is not willing to accept a terrorist organization will interrupt the freedom of movement at sea," Brieger said. Brieger said that he's asking EU members to provide the necessary resources to the EU mission dubbed Aspides — Greek for "shields."

He said that it's the first time that the EU has launched a naval operation in a hostile environment that's twice the size of the 27-nation bloc, calling it a "litmus test" that the bloc will pass successfully. The commander of an EU naval mission in the Red Sea, Greek Rear Adm. Vasilios Gryparis, wants to significantly increase its size to better defend against possible attacks by Houthi rebels based in Yemen. Nineteen of the 27 EU nations are involved in the mission, but only four frigates are patrolling an area twice the size of the bloc. The EU mission was established in February to defend civilian vessels and doesn't take part in any military strikes. The southern part of the Red Sea is deemed a high-risk zone. Iran-backed Houthi rebels, which control much of Yemen's north and west, launched a campaign of drone and missile attacks on shipping in the Red Sea in November.

Trump to attend hush money trial in NY While SC hears his immunity case in DC

AP ■ NEW YORK

Reluctant Donald Trump will be back in a New York City courtroom Thursday as his hush money trial resumes at the same time that the U.S. Supreme Court hears arguments in Washington over whether he should be immune from prosecution for actions he took during his time as president. Jurors will hear more witness testimony from a veteran tabloid publisher, and Trump faces a looming decision over whether he violated a gag order imposed by the judge. But he had asked to skip out on his criminal trial for the day so he could sit in on the high court's special session, where the justices will weigh whether he can be prosecuted over his efforts to reverse his 2020 election loss to President Joe Biden. That request was denied by New York state Supreme Court

Judge Juan Merchan, who is overseeing the trial on the hush money scheme that was meant to prevent harmful stories about Trump from surfacing in the final days of the 2016 campaign. "Arguing before the Supreme Court is a big deal, and I can certainly appreciate why your client would want to be there, but a trial in New York Supreme Court... is also a big deal," Merchan told Trump's lawyer Todd Blanche last week when he nixed the idea. Though 20 miles apart — and entirely separate cases — the proceedings Thursday were jumbled together in one big legal and political puzzle that has implications not just for the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, but for the American presidency writ large. In both instances, Trump is trying to get himself out of legal jeopardy as he makes another bid for the White

House. But the outcome of the Supreme Court case will have lasting implications for future presidents, because the justices will be answering the never-before-asked question of "whether and if so to what extent does a former president enjoy presidential immunity from criminal prosecution for conduct alleged to involve official acts during his tenure in office." The high court's decision may not impact the New York City case, which hinges mostly on Trump's conduct as a presidential candidate in 2016 — not as a president. He faces 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in connection with hush money payments meant to stifle embarrassing stories from surfacing. It is the first of four criminal cases against Trump to go before a jury. The New York trial resumes after a scheduled day off with more testimony from the Manhattan District Attorney's

first witness, David Pecker, former publisher of the National Enquirer and a longtime friend of Trump's who pledged to be his "eyes and ears" during his 2016 presidential campaign. In testimony earlier this week, Pecker explained how he and the tabloid parlayed rumor-mongering into splashy stories that smeared Trump's opponents and, just as crucially, leveraged his connections to suppress seamy stories about Trump, including a porn actor's claim of an extramarital sexual encounter years earlier. Pecker traced the origins of their relationship to a 1980s meeting at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, and said the friendship bloomed alongside the success of the real estate developer's TV show "The Apprentice" and the program's subsequent celebrity version. Pecker recounted how he promised

then-candidate Trump that he would help suppress harmful stories and even arranged to purchase the silence of a doorman. "I made the decision to purchase the story because of the potential embarrassment it had to the campaign and to Mr. Trump," Pecker said of the doorman's story that his publication later determined wasn't true. Judge Merchan may also decide whether or not to hold Trump in contempt and fine him for violating a gag order that barred the GOP leader from making public statements about witnesses, jurors and others connected to the case. Some of Trump's recent online posts in question included one describing prosecution witnesses Michael Cohen, his former attorney, and Stormy Daniels, the porn actress, as "sleaze bags" and another repeating a false claim that liberal activists had tried to infiltrate the jury.

Ariel Henry resigns as Haiti PM

Port-au-Prince (Haiti) (AP): Ariel Henry resigned Thursday as prime minister of Haiti,



leaving the way clear for a new government to be formed in the Caribbean country, which has been wrecked by gang violence. Henry presented his resignation in a letter signed in Los Angeles, dated April 24, and released on Thursday by his office on the same day a council tasked with choosing a new prime minister and Cabinet for Haiti was due to be sworn in.

The council would be installed more than a month after Caribbean leaders announced its creation following an emergency meeting to tackle Haiti's spiralling crisis.

More than 100 inmates break free from Nigerian prison

AP ■ ABUJA

More than 100 inmates have escaped from a prison in Nigeria near the capital city of Abuja after overnight heavy rains destroyed parts of the facility, a prison official said Thursday, as security agencies searched for the fleeing prisoners. The downpour, which lasted for several hours on Wednesday night, destroyed the perimeter fence of the medium-security prison in the neighbouring town of Suleja, in Niger state, "giving way to the escape of a total of 118 inmates from the facility," according to Adamu Duza, a prisons spokesman. The prison service and other agencies have managed to recapture 10 of the escaped



inmates while the search is on to find the rest, Duza said. There are fears that they could find their way into the vast forests that connect Suleja town and neighbouring states, some of which are known hideouts for criminal gangs. In addition to being overcrowded with 70% of the inmates still awaiting trial, most prisons in Nigeria are old, having been built during the colonial era before the West

African nation's independence from Britain in 1960. The structures are rarely renovated, which has made it easier for inmates to escape during past jailbreaks. Thousands of inmates have escaped from prisons during such jailbreaks, including Abuja where nearly 900 inmates broke free in 2022. The authorities are making efforts to rebuild the structures and modernise the ageing facilities, Duza said.

Taiwan's president-elect appoints new ministers

AP ■ TAIPEI

Taiwan's president-elect has appointed new foreign and defence ministers to join his incoming administration as the island faces continuing military threats and diplomatic isolation from China. Lai Ching-te, who assumes the presidency on May 20, announced Thursday that current Presidential Secretary General Lin Chia-lung will take over as foreign minister. He said Wellington Koo will head the Defence Ministry at a time when Taiwan is upgrading its defences against China with new ships, submarines, warplanes, missile systems and other land-based defences. Along with stepping up its threat to annex Taiwan by force, China has whittled down the number of Taiwan's formal diplomatic allies to



In this photo released by the Taiwan Presidential Office, U.S. Democratic Congressman Dan Kildee, left, meets with Taiwan President-elect and Vice President Lai Ching-te in Taipei, Taiwan on Tuesday. AP/PTI

just 12, while excluding it from the United Nations and most other international organisations. Koo, a lawyer, has headed the National Security Council under current President Tsai Ing-wen, who is leaving office as mandated after two four-year terms. He will be replaced in the high-profile role by current Foreign Minister Joseph Wu. Taiwan has a long-embedded tradition of civilians serving as defence minister, in contrast to China's practice of appointing top generals who have taken an increasingly bellicose attitude toward Taiwan, the US and in asserting China's territorial claims in the South China and East China seas. Lin previously served as mayor of Taiwan's largest city, Taichung, and was put in charge of Taiwan's economic outreach to Southeast Asia,

Australia and New Zealand. Both Lin and Koo are members of the Democratic Progressive Party, with which China has cut contacts over its refusal to acknowledge Beijing's claim of sovereignty over the island. Lai handily won the presidential election in January, although the main opposition Nationalist Party that backs eventual unification with China took a one-vote majority in the legislature. Taiwan has a mixture of presidential and parliamentary systems with much power also invested in local city and county governments. The formula emerged after Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists relocated their government to the former Japanese colony of Taiwan in 1949 as Mao Zedong's Communists seized power on the mainland after a decades-long civil war.



PRESERVING A RICH LEGACY FOR A GLORIOUS FUTURE

World Dance Day is not just a celebration but a promise for the future, a future where Indian classical dance continues to inspire, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**



Renowned Bharatanatyam dancer, vocalist, and Padma Shri awardee, Geeta Chandran, is a bridge between tradition and contemporary sensibilities. Leading the esteemed Natya Vriksha organisation, her dedication to Indian classical dance extends far beyond captivating performances. Led by the visionary Chandran, her organisation took centre stage in Delhi for World Dance Day, offering a stunning display last week on April 20th and 21st at the India International Centre, co-hosted by the Ministry of Culture. Chandran's talent for blending tradition with contemporary flair was on full display, captivating attendees from all walks of life. The heart of the celebration beat with the youthful energy of the Young Dancers' Festival, promising a bright future for Indian classical dance. The opening was a soulful Bharatanatyam performance by Vaishnavi Srinivasan and Nivedha Harish, disciples of Guru Smt Roja Kannan. Their dance, choreographed by Guru Adyar K Lakshmanan, set a magical tone for the evening. Divya Goswami, a disciple of the late Guru Shri Munnalal Shukla, followed with her mesmerising Kathak performance. Beyond technical skill, the event offered a glimpse into Indian culture through the expressive movements of young artists. Each gesture was filled with passion, captivating the audience,

showcasing Chandran's instinct to identify exceptional talent. On this platform, Natya Vriksha not only celebrated established artists but also empowered emerging dancers, providing them a space to shine. The Bharatanatyam performances were a visual feast, with elaborate costumes, jewellery, and makeup enhancing the storytelling. The audience responded with thunderous applause, appreciating the dedication and skill of the dancers. Chandran's vision for Natya Vriksha extends far beyond the stage. Her organisation serves as a nurturing ground for budding artists. They create a sense of community and collaboration within the Indian classical dance scene, encouraging a sense of shared passion and heritage. Chandran's unwavering commitment to preserving this rich cultural heritage is evident not only in her captivating performances but also in her dedication to empower the next generation of dancers. World Dance Day, under her watchful eye, was more than just a celebration; it was a promise for a vibrant future. A future where Indian classical dance continues to enthral audiences for

generations to come, with young artists carrying the torch forward, with their unique interpretations to keep this ancient art form alive. It's a promise of preserving tradition while embracing innovation, ensuring that the rich tapestry of Indian classical dance continues to inspire and mesmerize. Natya Vriksha's efforts continue to flourish and captivate audiences around the world. Geeta Chandran's Natya Vriksha supports new artists, creating a community within the Indian classical dance scene. Her dedication to preserving this cultural heritage is seen in her performances and her focus on empowering the next generation. World Dance Day is not just a celebration but a promise for the future. It's a future where Indian classical dance continues to inspire, with young artists adding their own styles and keeping the art form alive. It's about preserving tradition while embracing new ideas, ensuring that Indian classical dance remains captivating and inspiring.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar



Voices of women compels us to participate in a world where incredible women artists are striving for a more inclusive and vibrant art world, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**

PAINTED WHISPERS OF STORIES UNTOLD

Imagine a space where each wall whispers a story, a world that is painted not on spatial maps but on timeless canvases. This is the essence of the 'Voices of Women,' an art exhibition recently presented by Art Garde in a vibrant celebration of contemporary art by women artists. It was a testament to the flourishing creativity of these artists, each with a unique voice yearning to be heard. It was indeed a captivating display curated by Teesta Bhandare, where we were invited into the vibrant world of young and contemporary women artists.



Showcasing a diverse range of artwork, this exhibition, held earlier this month, showcased the talent and creativity of emerging and mid-career artists from across India. It was a testament to the increasing presence and influence of women on the art scene. While equal representation between men and women artists is still a work in progress, platforms like 'Voices of Women' play a crucial role in addressing this disparity and providing a space for women to underscore their creativity. Each stroke, each hue, whispered a story untold, drawing the one's attention to a world where art is not just seen but felt, where every canvas is a portal to a soulful journey. Clearly, the exhibition was a testament to the evolving role of women in the art world, a world where their voices resonate with increasing clarity and power. The show also shed light on the growing trend of women collectors, who are now collecting more art than men, further emphasising the importance of platforms like this in promoting women artists. Each piece of art in the exhibition narrates a unique and compelling story, the diverse perspectives of women artists brought together in perfect symphony. Neha Luthra's paintings, such as 'Dol ka bar and

impaired friends, is an artist's courageous exploration of the Braille text. This thought-provoking work challenges societal norms, highlighting alternative notions of sight and communication. By using Braille as a point of departure, Chauhan demonstrates the beauty and power of alternative forms of expression, reminding us that sight is not the only way to experience and understand the world. 'Voices of Women' had more to it than mere aesthetics. It contained a powerful challenge to stereotypes perpetuated of yore, when a female artist was confined to the realm of the decorative. Here, even as Tanushree Sarkar explores themes of body consciousness and sexuality Vijaya Chauhan's works redefine our very perspective on what sight symbolises. The exhibition did not simply present diverse representations of women artists, it also broke the stereotypes and shackles on the art women create. It was a platform for young collectors to discover and acquire art that resonates with the common onlooker, making art accessible and meaningful to a wider audience. Malavika Rajnarayan, Ekta Singha, Maitreyi Desai, and Sareena Khemka, among others also scripted their unique perspectives on their canvas, enriching the exhibition with some exceptional artwork. The exhibition brought forth and celebrated the creativity and resilience of women artists, challenging traditional notions of art and beauty. In a conversation with a Curator Teesta Bhandare highlighted the importance of diversity in representation, stating that the exhibition aims to show the wide range of styles and themes women artists can explore. She also emphasized the challenge of educating people about the value of art as a cultural investment, urging visitors to see art as an integral part of their cultural identity.

Creative submission to the senses

BY **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Every artist has an impressive narrative to tell, recently brought forth in an exhibition, 'Evoke, Ignite, Awaken, Stir,' by the Art Exchange Project which featured not only professional artists but also individuals from diverse backgrounds who pursue art as a passion. In a world growing distant from art, it is difficult to track the journey of each artist and the challenges faced. Appreciation from people and sparse turnouts at art shows pose an ongoing challenge for artists. However, art encapsulates the ability to shine through this opacity. Curated by Aarti Patel, the exhibition featured 16 artists from Delhi, Haryana, and Rajasthan, each art piece a pouring out of the artist's inner core. The show provided a platform to the uninitiated to step on the canvas and chart their individual journeys of seeking meaning in every piece of art. The exercise was truly exhilarating for every artist showcased. Sixteen artists, each with their own unique story, some well-known, others only starting out, all sharing the common love and passion for creativity. Artist Ritu Chopra's work left a lasting memory on the onlooker, an artist whose works resonate with her felt physical experiences. Chopra relentlessly pursued new forms highlighting the freshness of a raw artist. Her love for trees, for example, is evident in her series where the tree symbolises the real sage, the silent spectators to life, emitting knowledge and enlightenment. Chopra's paintings have ensured that her spirit



lives on, much after life, a poignant reminder that artists never die, they work an immortal and vibrant legacy for generations to come. Kavita Lomror's cityscapes, using reflective glass, are abuzz with the energy of city life, a sharp contrast to Chopra's serene landscapes. While Lomror captures the rush, complexity, and rhythm of urban life, Indraneel Ghose's photographs serve as a magic window to his winter wonderland, an escape from the searing heat of Delhi, a world of frosty mornings and misty landscapes. Madhav Bhardwaj, views art as a medium to express the depth of human emotions, his personal release inviting the outsider to connect with one's inner self. Bhardwaj's hope is that his paintings evoke serenity and ease, and inspire others to remain undefeated, as a beacon of hope. His

series, 'A Stroll with Blooms,' is all about an all-encompassing positivity. Reena Chopra's work is a testimony to the free-flowing forms in life that speak of a journey and a destination that no one knows about. Life is a river that we float on and the sooner

we realise we have no control and surrender to the flow, the better the journey will be.

Sushil Thakur's 'The Matrix' series was truly stunning. Artist Harsh Jalendra's oil paintings, like 'Falling' and 'Bitter Sweet,' were incredibly realistic, almost in motion. A fusion of intertwined styles, his work was a walk through dreams and reality, through a colourful spectrum of emotions. 'The Change of Perspective' truly altered the way art is perceived. Artists Khushboo Kalyanwala and Sarka Chandra explored the cyclical movement of celestial bodies. Sujata Khanna, Tushar Nath, and Winnie Singh, contributed uniquely to the exhibition, creating a magical experience for all. The overall display of creativity was mesmerizing for people who invest their time in art. Aarti Uppal Singla, the artist and Curator who made it all happen, spoke of a community reborn. Here, art was not just for a privileged few; it was for everyone. Her dream to ignite the creative spark even in silent onlookers contains the power to bring people together. Evoke was not just another art show. It was a journey where tired eyes rediscovered the joy of colour, where doubts melted away in the face of imagination, when strangers became soulmates, all on an artistic discovery creating an invisible bond. Exhibitions like these are a vibrant testimony to the human spirit and its unending search for beauty, a celebration of the transformative power of art that can evoke, ignite, awaken, and stir long after the final curtain are down.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar

Raj Arjun, what was the biggest challenge in portraying your character in Razakar?

Every character gives me a challenge, and every character elevates me. That's what is exciting in this journey. I am in this field because I am always bored by monotonous routines, and I need challenges in my life. If you don't get challenges, you get bored, so I need challenges in my characters. That's why the excitement was there from the moment I was offered the role of Kasim Rizvi. He has a lot of complexity; he is a brutal man, Hitler-like, and a tough character. I thought I could justify it because of my thought process, and that's how I started. **Razakar deals with a dark period in Indian history. Did portraying a character from that time impact you in any way?** It does impact you for each and every character, whatever you

A Journey through Darkness

Delving into a turbulent period of Indian history, *Razakar* brings a complex narrative to life.

In a conversation with **SAKSHI PRIYA**, the film's cast sheds light on their experiences portraying characters from a dark chapter in Indian history



because a particular character is very intense. He is so brutal, he is thinking of his own Islamic state, and everything, and then, cut, the process is over. Now, that mindset you are left with for the last five months, and now there is nothing. You are not allowed to go beyond that. You start thinking about how you will move to the next character. That always gives you pain, but at the same time, there is happiness also. The mixed emotions are what we have to deal with. That's why we are actors, and that's why we are artists. **There is often debate surrounding historical**

portrayals in movies. How do you feel about the responsibility of actors in portraying such events accurately? For every role I am offered, if I have been called, I feel that without them giving me the responsibility, I take it upon myself because I feel if they have called me, they know I am a good actor, and I have to serve the purpose. I have to justify the role with my honesty and my craft, by not showing that I am overacting. They have to see the character, not Raj Arjun the actor. That is my forte. People call me that because I start looking like the character. So,

I do feel the responsibility so much that I get involved with my production house, my people, director, makeup artist, as a family member. I will go beyond everything because for me, my film, my character, and my story are my God.

How did working alongside your fellow cast members enhance your understanding of the film's themes? They are so lovable, and they are great. If you see love outside and around you, you will find love. If you throw hatred through your eyes, you will find hatred. In the work zone, I don't find anybody who is jealous of me or not giving me good vibes because I am so engrossed in my work that I don't have time to look up and see what others are thinking. If I start thinking about others, it would be a criminal waste of my time, and I don't believe in that kind of thinking. Sometimes, when you

talk to actors, when you do the scene, you get the energy. Over here, as I said, if you are good, everybody is good. In any case, they all work here, so we will all be good people, good energy around. That's why commercially, where this project will reach, I am not worried about that. That should be my concern because I am a part of this film, and I should think that my producer should benefit. But it is not in my hands. But what can I do? I can just support this film. That's why all this good energy works together, and here is a good product out of that good energy.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar





RCB snap six-match losing streak

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Rajat Patidar's explosive fifty and a collective effort from the spinners set up Royal Challengers Bengaluru's 35-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL here on Thursday, bringing an end to their six-match losing streak. Patidar's 50 off 20 balls stood in stark contrast to Virat Kohli's measured 51 off 43 balls as RCB put up 206 for seven after opting to bat. For a team that has breached the 250-run mark thrice season, the target was very gettable but the in-form SRH batting line-up could not deliver on this occasion and ended at 171 for eight in 20 overs.

It was a much-needed result for RCB, who lost seven of their first eight games. The loss was SRH's third in eight matches.

Considering the effectiveness of the spinners in the first innings, RCB opened the bowling with part-time off-spinner Will Jacks. The Englishman had the destructive Travis Head (1 off 3) caught at third man to give RCB a massive boost. Head's opening partner Abhishek Sharma (31 off 13)



did entertain the home crowd until his attempted slog ended up in the hands of wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik. Left-arm spinner Swapnil Singh, making his RCB debut, struck twice in his first over removing the dangerous South Africa duo of Aiden Markram and Henrich

Klaasen. While Markram missed a full toss to be adjudged lbw, Klaasen was caught at mid-on after mistiming a lofted drive, leaving SRH at 56 for four in five overs. Leggie Karn Sharma then dismissed Nitish Reddy and Abdul Samad to shut the door

on the opposition. Earlier, Patidar did the bulk of the work in his 65-run stand with Kohli who was focused on giving the strike to his partner, an approach which was questioned by Sunil Gavaskar on air. Cameron Green (37 not out off 20) and Swapnil Singh (12

off 6) came up with timely strikes in the death overs to take RCB past 200. RCB were all guns blazing in the first three overs with Kohli and Faf du Plessis (25 off 12) going hard at the SRH bowlers, including opposition skipper Pat Cummins who conceded 19 runs in his first

over. However, from 43 for no loss of the first 18 balls, RCB could only reach 61 for 1 by the end of the powerplay. Du Plessis was deceived by a slow short ball from T Natarajan to be caught by Aiden Markram at mid-off. Will Jacks (6 off 9) went for a wild slog sweep off a flighted delivery from leg-spinner Mayank Markande but could not make contact to be bowled, leaving RCB 65 for two in seven overs. That was when Kohli and Patidar got together to take the innings forward. The spinners were able to put pressure on the batters after the powerplay. As Kohli went for rotation of strike in this tough phase for RCB, Patidar broke the shackles by smashing Markande for four straight sixes in the 11th over. The first two hits were down the ground before Patidar read Markande's googly to send it over mid-wicket. The fourth and final six came off a wide and loopy delivery which Patidar dispatched over extra cover. Such was the contrast in the style of approaches that Patidar took 19 balls to reach his fifty, while IPLs leading run-getter Kohli took 37.

All rounder role is in danger: Axar Patel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Axar Patel, who is a very capable batter besides being a quality left-arm spinner, feels the "all-rounder's role is in danger" because of the 'Impact Player' rule, making him the latest cricketer to give a thumbs down to the IPL innovation that has polarised opinions.



Player rule. Every team is looking to play either a pure batter or a pure bowler as the Impact Player, and the all-rounders are not being used. "With the Impact Player, every team goes into the match thinking they have six batters or bowlers, depending on if they are batting or bowling. This also creates a lot of confusion sometimes," Axar told 'JioCinema'.

The rule has also been criticised by the likes of Indian captain Rohit Sharma and several former players as well. Introduced in 2023, the 'Impact Player' rule allows teams to substitute players during innings, sparking debate and scrutiny in the current season.

Axar, who sees himself as an all-rounder, had earlier said that because of the rule, the value of an all-rounder has gone down. Thanks to Axar and Pant's brisk 113-run association, DC put up a total that helped them register their season's fourth win. "I didn't know beforehand that I would bat at No. 3. When our batting came, they told me that they were thinking I should go at No. 3 because three spinners were playing. First, they asked Rishabh and then we discussed, and I said that I'll go."

"Rishabh also wanted to go, but then I told him that they'll use spinners later as well, and he should go at No. 4 because he can handle the middle-overs," Axar said. On his bowling, Axar said, "I am not doing anything new. I am just adding variations to the pace. I wasn't confident about bowling my slow ball earlier, but I have found that confidence regardless of the batter being right or left-handed."

"The pace variations are making a big difference now. With the high-scoring games we're seeing, it's important to have the right attitude."

Promoted to No.3, Axar made a counter-attacking 43-ball 66 and along with skipper Rishabh Pant, lifted Delhi Capitals from 44/3 to 224/4 in their Indian Premier League match against Gujarat Titans here on Wednesday. Later, he picked up one wicket as DC successfully defended their total to win by four runs. Sharing his thoughts on the Impact Player rule, Axar said, "As an all-rounder, I feel that an all-rounder's role is in danger with the Impact

KKR bowling woes under spotlight vs shaky Punjab Kings

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Mitchell Starc will be desperate to justify his USD 3 million price tag as Kolkata Knight Riders bowling unit try to find ways to be less profligate when it is pitted against a perennially under-achieving Punjab Kings in an IPL match here on Saturday. KKR is currently second in the 10-team table with 10 points, four behind table toppers Rajasthan Royals (14 points) and the team's success is largely due to the batting efforts from the top-order.

In Punjab Kings, they meet a side that has been inconsistent and despite two good finds in Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma, they haven't exactly done well during key moments and like every other year, they are all but out of play-off contention.

Sunil Narine (286 @176.54 SR) and Phil Salt (249 @169.38 SR) have been phenomenal at the top. Andre Russell (155 @184.52), skipper Shreyas Iyer (190 @126.66) have all been

among the runs. Even Rinku Singh, who has just faced 67 balls in 7 games has a strike-rate of close to 160. Save captain Iyer, all the specialist batters have scored at a strike-rate northwards of 150 and that has been instrumental in the Shah Rukh Khan co-owned team posting four 200-plus totals in their seven games so far.

Only Venkatesh Iyer's poor form has stuck out like a sore thumb and Nitish Rana's finger fracture has not only robbed KKR of a master player of spinners but also a very handy off-break bowler.

However the same can't be said about the bowling unit where Narine with his immaculate line and length is the only person, who has been able to maintain an economy rate of just above 7.10 which is brilliant in times when 'Impact Player' is in vogue. The Trinidadian has also started leaking runs and the way Rajat Patidar took him on, hitting him for two sixes in one over, will definitely inspire the likes of Ashutosh and



Shashank — the two in-form batters of PBKS. But it is Starc, whose underwhelming performance (6 wickets at ER 11.48) is the worst among the specialist bowler. At an all-time high price tag of Rs 24.75 crore (USD 3 million), Starc must be feeling the heat but to be fair to him, some of the tracks, including the one at the Eden

Gardens have been perfect belters where length balls are soaring into the stands. Compared to Starc, uncapped India pacers Harshit Rana (ER 9.25, 9 wickets) and Vaibhav Arora (9.57, 7 wickets) have been more impressive but they have also got hit at times. Against a side like Kings with some power-hitters at the back-end, a better

performance will be warranted from the bowling unit. Starc has looked unidimensional, relying more on pace and has been reluctant to bowl the slower ones as the batters have negotiated him easily especially in the death overs. For KKR to go all the way, Starc will have to get his mojo back and play a lead role in the bowling department, for the

likes of Narine and Varun Chakravarthy to dominate in the middle overs. This is one area PBKS would like to exploit as they would look to return to winning ways. While KKR top-order has done the bulk of their scoring, it's the opposite in case of Punjab Kings who have struggled to get it going from the outset. The likes of Prabhsimran Singh, Liam Livingstone, Rilee Rossouw and Jonny Bairstow have failed to get into the act. It's their uncapped duo of Ashutosh and Shashank who have salvaged the team from precarious situations with their astonishing powerhitting. They would hope that their regular skipper Shikhar Dhawan who is nursing a shoulder injury makes a comeback, after sitting out of their last three matches. Dhawan was seen knocking in two phases and also playing a football match during their training after reaching here on Wednesday as his inclusion would definitely be a boost to their sagging morale.

Rishabh Pant looks hungry, he is in very good form: DC batting coach Amre

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The swashbuckling Rishabh Pant has showed with his scintillating knock against Gujarat Titans that he is ready to roar in the upcoming T20 World Cup, feels Delhi Capitals' batting coach Pravin Amre.

A month after returning to competitive cricket after recovering from the multiple injuries sustained during a horrific car accident in December 2022, Pant virtually sealed his spot as India's first choice wicketkeeper for the T20 World Cup with an unbeaten 88 off 43 balls in DC's four-run win over GT in an IPL match here on Wednesday. Skipper Pant and Axar Patel (66 off 43) forged a brisk 113-run stand off 68 balls to power DC to 224/4 after they were reaching at 44/3 in their must-win game.

"He (pant) started with a two-week camp in Vizag, he came there, he prepared himself very well. I remember when he came for the Vizag camp, he came straight to the ground from the airport. "He was hungry and made sure



everyday he is going to utilise. It is all about his hard work, which is paying him," Amre said at the post-match press conference.

"And obviously a couple of good knocks gave him the confidence and today we saw a special knock. Finishing was important, and we saw how Rishabh single-handedly got 31 runs against an experienced bowler (Mohit Sharma), and that really says that he is in good form." Amre also praised Axar, who made the opportunity count after being promoted to the No.3 spot.



It is Rahul vs Sanju and Avesh vs Bishnoi and Axar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

KL Rahul is believed to be slightly ahead of Sanju Samson in the race for second wicketkeeper's slot even as Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya's indifferent batting form remains a worry for the national selection panel which is expected to announce the 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup in Americas by the end of this month. The other bone of contention in drafting the final squad could be the choice of an extra bowler.

It remains to be seen whether an extra pace bowler in Avesh Khan will be accommodated or whether the choice would be between Lucknow Super Giants leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi and Delhi Capitals all-rounder Axar Patel considering the low and slow tracks in the West Indies. It is understood that skipper Rohit Sharma is likely to have a meeting with chairman of

selectors Ajit Agarkar to discuss the outline of the team. With the ICC setting a May 1 deadline for the announcement of 15-member squads, the BCCI is expected to reveal the names anytime between the end of this week or the beginning of next week. Pandya has so far bowled 17 overs out of a possible 32 in eight games for MI. As a designated finisher, he has hit only seven sixes in these games, which is below par by every measure. The free-flowing bat-swing is completely missing in the 150 odd runs that he has scored in the tournament so far at a strike-rate of 142.

However, Pandya can be called a "TINA" option (There Is No Alternative) for the selectors as Shivam Dube, who is also expected to board the New York bound flight, isn't bowling either. Also in terms of skill and pace, Dube the bowler isn't anywhere close to Pandya but

his current batting form (22 sixes in eight games) can't be ignored either. RAHUL VS SANJU: It can be safely concluded that Rishabh Pant, who is now third among the top run-getters in the competition with 342 at a strike rate of 161, has sealed his place as the team's No. 1 keeper-batter and also as a designated finisher.

The fight is pretty intense for the second keeper's slot and despite KL Rahul (302 at 141 SR) not batting in the middle-order, his range of strokes might just help him pip Samson (314 at SR 152). Samson might again have to be content with being a stand-by inclusion like last year's 50 over World Cup. BISHNOI VS AVESH VS AXAR: The five bowlers, who have all but sealed their places are Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Mohammed Siraj, Ravindra Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav. However save Bumrah and

Kuldeep, the other Indian bowlers haven't been in great form during IPL and hence the choice of an extra bowler becomes very important. It will be a three-way fight between Rajasthan Royals' pacer Avesh, Delhi Capitals' left-arm spin bowling all-rounder Axar and Lucknow Super Giants leg-spinner Bishnoi. Avesh, who has improved a lot as far as his death bowling is concerned, has eight wickets from as many matches with an economy rate of 9.41 while Bishnoi has only taken five wickets but on flat tracks, his economy of 8.47 can be considered impressive. Axar, who has seven scalps from nine games but is bowling at an rate of just above 7, would be a brilliant choice too taking the conditions into consideration. Add to it, his batting prowess, scoring runs at a strike of 132, and also the fact that he is a very good all-round fielder.

OTHER SPORT

I will not have been close to what I am now if it was not for Vishy: Gukesh

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Indian chess prodigy D Gukesh on Thursday thanked the legendary Viswanathan Anand for playing a huge role in shaping his career, saying "I wouldn't have been close to what I am now if it wasn't for him". The 17-year-old Grandmaster scripted history on Monday by winning the Candidates Chess Tournament in Toronto to become the youngest ever challenger to the world title, beating a record created by the legendary Garry Kasparov 40 years ago. The triumph paved the way for Gukesh's clash against reigning world champion Ding Liren of China later this year.

"Vishy sir has been a huge inspiration for me and I have heavily benefitted from his academy. I am truly grateful to him and wouldn't have been close to what I am now if it wasn't for him," Gukesh said at a press conference a few hours after his arrival here to a rousing reception from fans and schoolmates. Gukesh has trained at the Westbridge-Anand Chess Academy which came into existence in 2020. Incidentally, before Gukesh, Anand was the only Indian to have won the Candidates, the last time being 2014.

Speaking about his much-anticipated clash against Liren, Gukesh said, "The biggest challenge against Ding would be how I prepare myself and being in the right state of mind since it will be a big match. "There are a lot of expectations and a lot at stake. I have full



belief in myself and will be going in with the same strategy. Hopefully, it will work out well." The history-making teen was swamped by fans as he returned to an enthusiastic reception early this morning. Hundreds of students from the Velammal Vidyalaya, the school where Gukesh studied, lined up at the airport at least one hour before his flight landed to greet him. "I am happy to see what the victory meant to the country. I was delighted to see young kids full of energy and rooting for me the moment I landed in Chennai. It's truly special and means a lot to me," he said. His mother Padma, who is a microbiologist, was at the airport to receive him. His father Rajinikanth had travelled with Gukesh to Toronto.

Circle SASTRA, Lucknow Vikram Khanna Gostinagar, Lucknow 226018 Email: sst72@bank.org.in In the E-auction sale notice of Punjab National Bank published by Authorised Officer on dated 24.04.2024. Kindly read Official notice on dated 02.01.2010 in the place of 02.01.2020 at the S.No. 12 & Read date of Possession 18.03.2024 in the place of 18.03.2010 at S.No. 13 Rest Contents will remain unchanged. Authorised Officer