



OPINION 6 AUNG SAN SUU KYI: PRISON OR HOUSE ARREST?

WORLD 8 UKRAINE CLAIMS IT SHOT DOWN RUSSIAN STRATEGIC BOMBER

MONEY 10 STOCK MARKETS STAGE STRONG REBOUND

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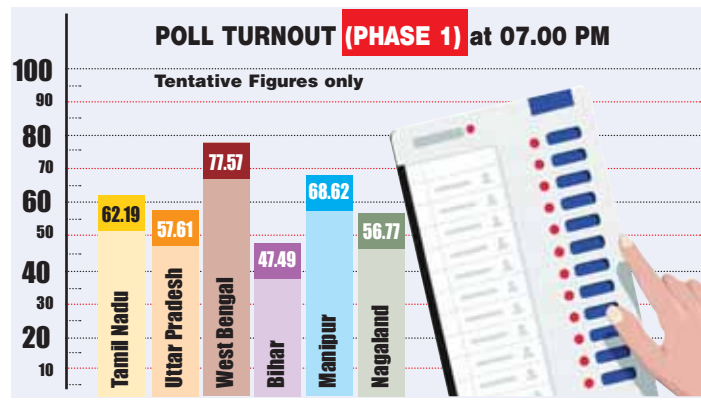
RISHABH PANT SET FOR HOMECOMING 12 SPORTS

Over 62 per cent polling in 1st phase of LS polls

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a kaleidoscope of democracy in action, voters of all ages — from wheelchair-bound seniors to newlyweds and Great Andamanese Tribe from Strait Island in South Andaman to the world's shortest woman cast their vote on Friday with an estimated 62.37 per cent turnout recorded till 6 pm in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections.

explosion of a grenade launcher shell in Chhattisgarh left a CRPF jawan dead. The highest voter turnout on the first day of polling under Phase 1 of the Lok Sabha elections was recorded in Tripura at 79.90 per cent, followed by West Bengal at 77.57 per cent and Assam at 71.38 per cent, with Bihar witnessing the lowest turnout at 47.49 per cent till 7 pm. According to officials, the prevailing heatwave condition in Bihar could be a possible reason for the low voter turnout. In strife-torn Manipur, around 68.62 per cent polling was recorded



amid incidents of shooting, damage to electronic voting machines (EVMs), threats to voters and polling agents by armed miscreants while voters in six districts of eastern Nagaland stayed indoors following an indefinite shutdown call by an apex body of tribal organisations to press for its demand for a separate state. Tamil Nadu recorded a voter turnout of 72.09 per cent in the Lok Sabha polls with no major

untoward incidents while 58 per cent voter turnout was recorded on eight seats of western Uttar Pradesh. According to the Election Commission's Voter Turnout app, 63.29 per cent voting was reported in Saharanpur, 57.83 per cent in Moradabad, 60.39 per cent in Kairana, 59.17 per cent in Nagina, 60.23 per cent in Pilibhit, 54.68 per cent in Bijnor, 52.42 per cent in Rampur and 54.91 per cent in Muzaffarnagar. These seats fall in the Jat and sugarcane belt of the

State. The commission described the turnout as "high", noting that voting remained "largely peaceful". In the first phase of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the voter turnout was recorded at 69.43 per cent. Some of the constituencies were different then and the total number of seats which went to polls were 91. Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged voters to exercise their franchise in record numbers as the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls started with polling being held in 102 constituencies.

THE PIONEER REPORTS FROM GROUND ZERO

TAMIL NADU

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

As polling in the first phase of the general election concluded by Friday 6 pm, Tamil Nadu registered a voter turn-out of 63.2 per cent till 5 pm, according to the Election Commission of India. Final figures would be released by 8 pm, said the ECI officials. Dharmapuri registered 73.51 per cent while Krishnagiri recorded 64.24 per cent (figures recorded till 5 pm). Chennai Central, from where former Telangana Governor Dr Tamilisai Sounderarajan was contesting

recorded 41.47 per cent till 3 pm, according to Satyabrata Sahoo, chief electoral officer. Latha Ravishankar, a BJP activist in Chennai Central, had disappointment written all over her face as voters failed to make it to the polling booths despite lot of cajoling by her and other volunteers. But the DMK camp sounded positive as the low-turnout out is expected to make the prospectus of the party candidates smooth. The State has 39 constituencies while the neighboring Puducherry has one seat.

WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH

VIRENDRA NATH BHATT ■ LUCKNOW

Voter turnout of 57.54 per cent was recorded till 5 pm in all eight parliamentary constituencies of Western Uttar Pradesh where polling was held in first phase of Lok Sabha elections on Friday. Total turnout of voters was expected to be marginally above 60 per cent. The eight constituencies where polling was held on Friday included Pilibhit, Saharanpur, Kairana, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Nagina, Moradabad and Rampur. Of these,

Saharanpur, Kairana, Bijnor, Moradabad and Rampur are general constituencies. Over 25 per cent turnout was recorded till 11 am, and it rose to an average of 37 per cent till 1 pm. By 3 pm over 47.44 per cent voters had cast their votes in the eight constituencies. The voter turnout was 54.68 per cent in Bijnor, 58.68 per cent in Kairana, 57.65 per cent in Moradabad, 54.91 per cent in Muzaffarnagar, 58.05 per cent in Nagina, 60.23 per cent in Pilibhit, 52.42 per cent in Rampur and 63.29 per cent in Saharanpur.

WEST BENGAL

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

There were sufficient reasons for the Election Commission of India to heave a big sigh of relief as the first round of elections for Bengal's three parliamentary constituencies of Cooch Behar, Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri passed off without any loss of life though reports of "stray incidents of clashes, stone-pelting or booth capture," came in from many areas. Polling passed off near-peacefully amid stray incidents of violence and complaints of booth capture

by both the Trinamool Congress and the BJP, sources in the ECI said adding the three constituencies witnessed a brisk polling of about 77.5 per cent till 5 pm. The polling percentage was likely to go beyond 82 per cent as many voters were still standing in the queue. While Cooch Behar recorded a comparatively high polling rate of 77.73 per cent, about 75.54 per cent voters voted at Alipurduar whereas Jalpaiguri witnessed about 79.33 per cent franchise.

NAGALAND & MANIPUR

PTI ■ IMPHAL/KOHHIMA

At least four Electronic Voting Machines were damaged at different polling booths in conflict-hit Manipur on Friday where polling was held in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections, according to sources. Meanwhile, the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland recorded a voter turnout of over 50 per cent till 4 pm, the closing time for voting, on Friday, officials said. The polling began at 7 am. The polling was held, amid a call given by the Eastern Nagaland People's

Organisation (ENPO) to abstain from voting in six districts of the region over its demand for a separate State. People in the six districts, which have over four lakh votes spread over 738 polling stations, remained indoors in solidarity with the ENPO. Under the shadow of a long-drawn ethnic conflict, Manipur was set to go to polls on Friday for the two constituencies — Inner and Outer Manipur. Polling is also scheduled in some areas of the Outer Manipur constituency in phase 2 on April 26.

BIHAR



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA/AURANGABAD/GAYA

Around 46.32 per cent of the 75 lakh voters in four Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar exercised their franchise till 5 pm on Friday, officials said. The polling began at 7 am and went on till 6 pm, a senior election official said. The voters will decide the fate of 38 candidates in these four seats. Tight security arrangements were in place at Nawada and Aurangabad, besides the reserved seats of Gaya and Jamui, where a majority of nearly 5,000 polling booths have been marked as "sensitive". Over 49.95 per cent voters have exercised their franchise in Aurangabad Lok Sabha constituency, 48.54 per cent in Gaya, 47.09 per cent in Jamui and 40.20 per cent in Nawada till 5 pm, officials said. Of the four seats, Nawada has the highest number of 20.06 lakh voters, where altogether eight candidates are in the fray though the contest is primarily between Vivek Thakur, a BJP Rajya Sabha MP seeking entry into the Lok Sabha, and RJD's Shrawan Kushwaha. Gaya has 18.18 lakh voters, but the highest number of 14 candidates. Here, former chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi, an NDA ally, who is just a few months shy of turning 80, is making yet another bid to enter Parliament.

MAHARASHTRA

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

More than 55 per cent of total 95.54 lakh voters exercised their franchise in five constituencies that went to polls in the first phase of Lok Sabha polls eastern Maharashtra on Friday, with the naxalite-infested Gadchiroli-Chimur accounting for a maximum of 65 per cent polling. With no untoward incident reported from anywhere, the polling passed off peacefully in Nagpur, Chandrapur, Bhandara-Gondiya, Ramtek (SC), Gadchiroli-Chimur (ST) constituencies, as voters turned out in large numbers braving harsh temperatures. As per the polling percentages put out by the Chief Election Officer, Maharashtra at 5 pm, an average of 54.85 per cent of the total electorate in five poll-bound constituencies cast their votes. The final poll percentages (as of 5.30 pm) were expected only after 9.30 pm. The average final polling percentage in the five constituencies may be anywhere from 57 to 60 per cent. In Nagpur where the two-time sitting MP and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari is taking on Congress Vikas Thakre, there was a relatively lowest turnout of 47.11 per cent of voters. The polling percentage might have either touched or barely crossed 50 per cent when the polling ended at 5.30 pm. In contrast, the Maoist-infested Gadchiroli-Chimur recorded the highest poll percentage of 64.95, while the voter turn-outs reported from three other Lok Sabha constituencies where the elections were held were: Bhandara-Gondiya-56.87 per cent, Chandrapur-55.11 per cent and Ramtek-52.38 per cent. Nitin Gadkari, his wife Kanchan and other family members voted at a



polling station near their residence in Nagpur. Talking to media persons after exercising his franchise, Gadkari expressed that the ruling BJP will cross a winning tally of 400 seats in the country, while he would win the polls from Nagpur by a margin of more than 5 lakh votes. "We are also targeting a record voting turnout this time, from 54 per cent in 2019 to 75 per cent in 2024. I appeal to all the people to step out and exercise their right to vote, and celebrate the greatest festival of democracy," Gadkari said. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Sarsanghchalak Dr. Mohan Bhagwat cast his vote at a polling booth near Reshimbagh in Nagpur. Dr Bhagaat was among the earliest to arrive at a polling station and waited for nearly 15 minutes before the polling started, entered to cast his vote and emerged soon thereafter, displaying his inked left-hand forefinger with pride. "I have performed my personal duty for the day and I call upon all the people to cast their vote since as citizens it is our right as well as a duty," Dr Bhagwat said. Maharashtra Congress president

Nana Patole exercised his franchise along with his family members at Sukli village in Bhandara district. Talking to media persons after he cast his vote, Patole said that the BJP-led government had "cheated" people for 10 years and they were determined to end the 10-year dictatorship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The people of Vidarbha have always stood firmly behind the Congress. We are receiving great support from the people this time as well. I am confident that we will win all the five Lok Sabha seats that went to poll today," he said. Barring Nagpur where voter turn-out was the lowest, there was considerable enthusiasm among voters in four other poll-constituencies of Chandrapur, Bhandara-Gondiya, Ramtek (SC), Gadchiroli-Chimur (ST). Lakhs of people, including large numbers of first-time voters, youth, senior citizens and transgenders, exercised their voting rights. In a heart-warming sight witnessed in Gadchiroli-Chimur constituency, nine handicapped senior citizens were brought in a 'rath yatra' by people, accompanied by a brass band playing on the roads, to cast their votes at a polling station.



An elderly woman along with others waits to cast votes for the first phase of Lok Sabha polls, in Sivasagar, Assam, on Friday

Google Doodle salutes Indian democracy

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As India's much-awaited 2024 Lok Sabha elections' first phase unfolded on Friday, Google's iconic Doodle joined the country's democratic journey by featuring the iconic ink mark on the index finger, a hallmark of Indian democracy. A click on the Google Doodle takes the users, from across the globe, to witness the monumental scale of India's vibrant democratic process being held in the seven phases from April 19 to June 1 in the country. In the first phase, starting on Friday a total of 102 constituencies in 21 States have gone to vote, including 5



of India's 2024 Lok Sabha elections is currently underway, with significant participation across multiple regions," it posted. Stella Paul with @stellasglobe handle termed Google's move as "pretty cool" while one @virgojyoti02 found the move exciting "Let the festival of

democracy begin!!! Google doodle". Naveen Athresh, having twitter handle @naveenathresh said, "Google Doodle with our Indian elections voting to push people to vote. A nice touch." Pritansu Priyadarshini Biswal from Bhubaneswar in Odisha too was excited at Google's innovative idea saying that, as citizens across

the country exercise their right to vote, Google Doodle stands as a virtual companion, reminding us of the significance of our collective journey towards a more inclusive and democratic society." Jagdish Kaur, founder of the WILGA, an NGO engaged in empowerment of women shared that, "Through this Doodle, Google aims to educate people about the importance of voting and to highlight the significance of democracy. This also shows how our democracy has become stronger every passing year." "I think the vibrancy of any democracy lies in the power of an individual vote which decides the future of any powerful country like ours. It is a welcoming move

by Google which is presently the only country with 1.4 strong population to create awareness about elections," added Dr Rahul Bhargava, a bone marrow transplant specialist and haematologist at Fortis Hospital, Gurgaon echoed similar sentiments. For Sanjay Ojha, Corporate Communication head at the ACME Green Solutions, it was "like a significant moment for India. The Google Doodle seems like a thoughtful way to commemorate the start of such an important event. It's great to hear about the high level of participation in the elections. The democratic process is a vital aspect of any nation's

governance." A senior official from Delhi Election Office informed that the classic symbol of Indian polls will be visible everywhere — a left hand with only its index finger extended, marked by a purple-black indelible ink. Devised as a method to prevent a person from casting more than one vote, to preserve the principle of "one man, one vote", the ink manufactured by Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd, a Karnataka Government Undertaking has been used in Indian elections for decades. The ink manufactured in India has also travelled to other parts of the world to be used in other elections.



# CEO takes stock of preparations, meets voters at Budha Pahad

NITYANAND DUBEY : GARHWA

Budha Pahad of Garhwa district known as the safe hideout of the Maoists, which was freed by the police and CRPF, is once again going to create a new record because for the first time after independence, the people of primitive tribe living on this Budha Pahad will be a part of the great festival of democracy and will vote.

Jharkhand's Chief Election Commissioner (CEO) K Ravi Kumar reached Hesatu village of Budha Pahad with his eight-member team including Nodal officer Amol Homkar and



**CEO, Jharkhand K Ravi Kumar, Nodal officer cum IG Amol Venukant Homkar, Garwa DC Shekhar Jamuar, SP Deepak Pandey and others talk to villagers at Hesatu village in Budha Pahad area of Garhwa on Friday. PNs**

CRPF IG Rakesh Agarwal on Friday. The Election Commission team visited Budha Pahad which was once a highly Naxal-infested area. Voting is to be held here for the first time after independence, so the commission has also geared up.

Therefore, the Election Commission reached here and took stock of the preparations and also reviewed the preparations for the peaceful conduct of voting with the officials.

The CEO also talked to the local people here about the voting. Voters said that for the first time we will vote in the Lok Sabha elections. The officials have come and made us aware about voting.

Earlier we were not able to vote because there were Naxalites, today we will vote in a fear free environment. Voters said that the officials have come among us and what can be better than this. The Mukhiya, Hesatu Panchayat said that now since the police camp has been set up in areas like Budha Pahad, development is reaching here, people are coming and going somewhere without any fear.

This time people here are very excited that they will not have to go anywhere to vote because earlier they had to go very far and that is why people were not able to go to vote.

While reviewing the elec-

tion preparations by holding a meeting in the premises of Hesatu Middle School, Chief Election Commissioner K Ravi Kumar said that people are being made aware. 30 years ago, polling booths were made in these areas. In the meantime, some circumstances arose that people had to go far away to vote and people were not able to reach there. Ever since the security personnel have set up their camp in these areas, people are fearlessly taking their problems to the administration and they are also being resolved. Now polling booths will be re-established at these places so that people can cast their votes.

# JAC results divide 24 districts into 2 segments

PNS : DALTONGANJ

Results of the secondary examinations 2024 declared today by the Jharkhand Academic Council had halved the 24 districts of Jharkhand.

Its first 12 districts have achieved 90 percent results while the remaining 12 districts are caught in 80 and plus percent.

East Singhbhum has achieved 94.075 percent of results while Deoghar has to remain contented with 84.531 percent of results. The surprise result is of Latehar district. Its success percent is 93.23. It leaves no one in doubt that missionary people have a big say in it.

There is a close finish between Palamu and Garhwa. Palamu has achieved 91.90 percent of results while Garhwa stands at 91.13 percent.

# Lok Sabha polls: Sector officials prepped for election duties

PNS : Jamshedpur

A one-day comprehensive training program concerning Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) commissioning was organised for sector officials gearing up for the forthcoming Jharkhand Lok Sabha elections. The event, held at the Ravindra Bhawan Auditorium in Sakchi, saw the active participation of esteemed dignitaries including District Election Officer Ananya Mittal, Deputy Development Commissioner Manish Kumar, and various other pertinent officials. During the training session, ADM (SOR) Mahendra Kumar along with other master train-

ers provided detailed insights into the process of EVM commissioning, encompassing control unit, ballot unit, and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) setup prior to voting. Furthermore, the meticulous sealing procedures for ballot unit, control unit, and VVPAT display unit were meticulously elucidated. Every officer and staff member underwent thorough training on each aspect of EVM commissioning, followed by practical hands-on exercises. Addressing the gathering, the District Election Officer underscored the pivotal role of Sector Officers in ensuring the smooth conduct of the electoral process, emphasiz-

ing the necessity for complete familiarity with every electoral procedure. He urged all sector officers to absorb the training content diligently to eliminate any potential hurdles during elections and stressed the importance of maintaining continuous communication with the returning officer of their respective areas. Emphasizing proficiency in every aspect from EVM setup to the counting process, he reiterated the importance of Sector Officers in the electoral process. Echoing these sentiments, the Deputy Development Commissioner emphasized the significance of rigorous training for Sector Officers, as it directly corre-

lates with their ability to discharge duties effectively. He encouraged Sector Officers to seek clarification from master trainers if any doubts arise, emphasizing adherence to Election Commission guidelines without any ambiguity.

In a bid to ensure the participation of all eligible voters, the District Election Officer directed sector officers to verify their names in the voter list, emphasizing that failure to do so may result in disenfranchisement. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of postal voting for deputed officers/employees and urged those not listed in the voter roll to register through Form 6 before the 26th of April.

# SAIL emerges champion in All India Public Sector Volleyball Tournament

Also wins All India Public Sector Hockey Tournament

Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) won the All India Public Sector Volleyball Tournament 2024 held at Bhopal from 15 - 18 April, 2024 organized by All India Public Sector Sports Control Board (AIPSSCB). Earlier, SAIL had also emerged the champion in the All India Public Sector Hockey Tournament, also organized by AIPSSCB, beating Food Corporation of India in Bhubaneswar recently.



In the All India Public Sector Volleyball Tournament, SAIL beat OIL India (3-0) to become the champion of this tournament.

Total nine public sectors viz. SAIL, LIC, BSNL, Coal India, Nyveli Lignite Corporation, OIL India, ESIC, BHEL and NALCO participated in the

tournament. The back-to-back trophies won by SAIL are a testament to its unwavering dedication to foster and advance sports

and athletic talents continuously. The company runs and operates multiple sports academies at various locations in the country to nurture budding sporting talents of the nation. Apart from upgrading and developing sporting infrastructure and nurturing talents on a sustained basis, the company also organizes inter-SAIL sports championships across its plants and units to offer opportunities to hone sporting talents. SAIL organizes various games and sports competitions throughout the year under the aegis of Steel Plant Sports Board (SPSB).

**Format C-7**  
(for political parties to publish in the newspapers, social media platforms & website of the party)

Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.

(As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in contempt petition(C) no. 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) no. 536 of 2011)

**Name of Political Party: BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**  
**\*Name of the Election: General Election of the Lok Sabha, 2024 Name of State/UT: Jharkhand**

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Khunti Loksabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Arjun Munda**

Sl.No.	1. Criminal antecedents	
a.	Nature of the offences	1 Allegation for Participating in a public protest against the state government. Sec. 147, 148, 188, 109, 353, 332, 427, 323
b.	Case no.	1 Dhurwa PS Case no. 107/2023
c.	Name of the Court	1 Smt. Nutan Ekka Spl. JMFC, MP, MLA, Civil Court Ranchi
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	NO
e.	Date of conviction, if any	N/A
f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	N/A
g.	Any other information required to be given	N/A
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)	The selected candidate is a very sincere and dedicated party worker and he is presently MP of Khunti Loksabha.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	As a dedicated party worker, he had an edge over other individuals, considering the fact that whatever charges were alleged in the FIR has no substance and were purely with a vindictive approach and personal vendetta being waged by his political enemies. That one case is pending and protested, and the FIR is registered with reason of waging public protest, and the party believes that there will be no adverse outcome against the alleged accused.

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Khunti Loksabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Arjun Munda**  
..... and so on

\* In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name is Constituency,

Signature of office bearer of the Political Party Name  
**Aditya Prasad, General Secretary BJP Jharkhand**

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Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.

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**Name of Political Party: BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**  
**\*Name of the Election: General Election of the Lok Sabha, 2024 Name of State/UT: Jharkhand**

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Hazaribagh Loksabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Manish Jaisawal**

Sl.No.	1. Criminal antecedents	
a.	Nature of the offences	1 U/S 147, 149, 323, 341, 325, 337, 379 IPC.
		2 U/S 188 IPC, 51 Disaster Management Act 2005 and 3 Jharkhand State Epidemic (Covid-19) Act 2020.
		3 Sec. 341/323/324/504/509/34 IPC and 3 (i) (iii) (X) (XI) SC/ST Act
b.	Case no.	1 Katkamdag PS Case no. 131/2021
		2 Sadar PS Case no. 380/21
		3 Sadar PS Case no. 1300/2014
c.	Name of the Court	1 Sri Sushil Kumar Pingua, JM Hazaribagh
		2 Miss Arpita Narayan (MP/MLA) Court
		3 CJM Hazaribagh
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	1 No
		2 No
		3 No
e.	Date of conviction, if any	N/A
f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	N/A
g.	Any other information required to be given	N/A
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)	The selected candidate is a very sincere and dedicated party worker and he is presently MLA of Hazaribagh Vidhansabha.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	As a dedicated party worker, he had an edge over other individuals, considering the fact that whatever charges were alleged in the FIR has no substance and were purely with a vindictive approach and personal vendetta being waged by his political enemies. That Total -03 case is pending and protested, and the FIR is registered with reason of waging public protest, and the party believes that there will be no adverse outcome against the alleged accused.

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Hazaribagh Loksabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Manish Jaisawal**  
..... and so on

\* In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name is Constituency,

Signature of office bearer of the Political Party Name and  
**Aditya Prasad, General Secretary BJP Jharkhand**



# INDI Alliance indulges in negative politics, NDA is positive: Marandi

## Satyanarayan Yadav along with hundreds of supporters join BJP

**PNS : RANCHI**

Hundreds of people under the leadership of Domchanch block chief Satyanarayan Yadav today joined the BJP in a Milan Samaroh organised here at the State BJP office. State President and former Chief Minister Babul Marandi welcomed Yadav along with Sanjay Mehta, Shivshankar Rai, Manoj Yadav, Pintu Yadav, Ramdev Mehta, Dinesh Yadav, Bajju Tiwari, Praveen Yadav, Bajinath Yadav, Ram Suresh Yadav, Neelu Devi, Mamta Kumari, Vijay Kumar, Rani Kumari, Manoj Das, Gudiya Devi, Priyanka Rani and Sanjay Mehta to the BJP on the occasion. Addressing the program, State President and former Chief Minister Babul Marandi, while congratulating and giving best wishes to those who took membership, said that the credibility of the INDI alliance has been lost. This alliance only does negative politics. This is a group of anti-Sanatan and corrupt



**BJP State President-cum former Chief Minister Babul Marandi greets newly inducted party member Koderma Zila Pramukh Satyanarayan Yadav, during a Milan Samaroh, ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, at party State HQ in Ranchi on Friday. Union State Minister-cum party Koderma Lok Sabha candidate Annapurna Devi and others are also seen in the picture. Pix by Ratan Lal**



**State BJP President-cum former Jharkhand Chief Minister Babul Marandi alongwith Union State Minister-cum party Koderma Lok Sabha candidate Annapurna Devi and newly joined party leaders garlanded by party workers, ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, at party State HQ in Ranchi on Friday. Pix by Vinay Murmu**

people. He said that this alliance is formed only to earn money. It is in their nature to loot the country and the state after gaining power. He said that the people of the country do not trust the INDI Alliance. The public is trusting Modi's guarantees. He said that BJP is determined to make Jharkhand a separate state and serve the villages, the poor and the farmers. Modi government

has connected villages and poor with the mainstream of development. He said that people are taking membership of BJP trusting Modi's guarantee. He called for efforts to ensure victory for the NDA candidate with an overwhelming majority in the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies of Jharkhand. While addressing the program, Union Minister Annapurna Devi said that

Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas is being realized in the Modi government. She said that BJP does what it says. She said that the country has made historic progress in the last ten years. India's pride has increased in the world. She said that the Modi government has done historic work for women empowerment. On one hand, the Modi government built Izzat Ghar, freed the sisters from smoke by giving them gas cylinders, and also took the initiative of political empowerment. She said that for the third time under the Modi government, India will become the third economy of the world. On this occasion, online membership was given by State Vice President Vikas Pritam. Operation was done by State Media In-charge Shivpujan Pathak and vote of thanks was given by Koderma District President Anup Joshi. Outgoing District President Nitesh Chandravanshi was also present in the program.

# Laxity and excuses will not work in election preparations: CEO

## Kumar reviews poll preparations in Garhwa of Palamu Lok Sabha

**PNS : RANCHI**

Preparations for the Lok Sabha elections are being finalized. There will be no laxity or excuses in preparations. If you feel hot or sunny, apply a towel on your forehead and ensure preventive actions by visiting the area. Better results are needed in the preparations for election work," said Chief Electoral Officer, Jharkhand K Ravi Kumar while reviewing the preparations made so far in Garhwa district of Palamu Lok Sabha constituency in Garhwa district on Friday. In the meeting the CEO directed to impose a complete ban on the sale and movement of illicit liquor. He directed to take strict action against the accused by conducting intensive raids and investigation campaigns in the entire district area as well as in the block and police station areas of the border area. He directed the Excise Superintendent to coordinate with the police officials to stop the sale of illegal liquor and take strict action against the persons involved and submit the report by April 22, 2024. He directed the officials to complete all necessary preparations to ensure peaceful, fair and fear-free voting. The Chief Electoral Officer directed to speed up the process of depositing weapons. He also instructed to cancel the arms licenses of those who do not deposit their arms and instructed to take action in case of violation of Model Code of Conduct. He also directed for timely management of vehicles engaged in election work. The CEO directed to provide health facilities at the polling stations. He mapped the polling booths to the health department and deploy ANM, GNM Sahiya etc and provide necessary medicines so that the health related problems of the polling personnel and the voters coming to the polling booth on the day of polling could be diagnosed. Kumar said that this time voting will be held throughout the day as per the instructions of the Election Commission of India. Voting is to be held from 7 am to 5 pm at all polling stations. He directed to conduct intensive investigation by keeping special vigil on inter-state and inter-district check posts. He said that it is summer season. The problem of water has started coming to the fore, in such a situation, ensure complete arrangements for drinking water supply at the polling stations. He instructed to ensure availability of drinking water supply through tankers at polling stations facing water shortage. State Police Nodal Officer A. V. Homkar directed to launch a special campaign against all history-sheeters, kingpins and warrantors and take action to arrest them. He said that the safety of everyone including polling parties, EVMs, voters, security forces is the priority of all of us.

# Ranchi Police arrest inter-state drug peddler

**PNS : RANCHI**

The leader of the gang that brought brown sugar from Sasaram in Bihar to Ranchi and sold it in the State Capital was arrested on Friday. The police team took action under the leadership of Kotwali DySP, Prakash Soy.



During this time, gang leader Pintu Sah was arrested near Akashvani located on Ratu Road. Police have recovered 26 grams of brown sugar and many other items from him. SSP Chandan Sinha gave this information in a press conference in his office on Friday. During interrogation, Pintu Sah said that the people of his gang supply brown sugar from Sasaram to Ranchi, and also bring it to Ranchi from time to time. Even today, he had come to Ranchi from Sasaram to deliver brown sugar to some people. During this time the police arrested him.

Jharkhand High Court, heard a PIL filed suo motu against the large-scale illegal cultivation of opium and growing drug trade in Naxal-hit Khunti district. During this time, the court has directed the central agency and the state intelligence agency to conduct a joint operation and take strict action to stop the buying and selling of drugs in Jharkhand. The court orally said that Khunti is a tribal district and it is becoming a major opium producing area. This is not good. In this case, the court has made the state Home Secretary, DGP, DG CID .

**Format C-7**  
(for political parties to publish in the newspapers, social media platforms & website of the party)

Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.  
(As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in contempt petition(C) no. 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) no. 536 of 2011)

**Name of Political Party: BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**  
**\*Name of the Election: General Election of the Lok Sabha, 2024 Name of State/UT: Jharkhand**

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Dumka Lok Sabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Smt. Sita Soren**

Sl.No.	Criminal antecedents	
1.	a.	Nature of the offences
		1 U/S 120(B), 171E of the IPC and U/S 13(2), 13(1)(D) of the Prevention of Corruption Act.
		2 U/S 195 (A), 323, 342, 365, 506, of the IPC.
		3 U/S 403, 406, 420, 451, 452, 465, 467, 468, 477-A of the IPC.
	4	U/S 241 and 242 of the Companies Act 2013
		1 Regular CBI- 02/2012
		2 Regular CBI- 02/2014
		3 Ghatshila PS Case No. 02/2019
	4	C.P/219(KB)-2019
		1 Add. Dist. & Sess. Judge- XVIII, Ranchi
		2 SDJM, CBI, Ranchi
		3 ACJM, Ghatshila
	4	National Company Law Tribunal, Kolkata-Bench
		1 Yes
		2 Yes
		3 No
4	No	
	1 N/A	
	2 N/A	
	3 N/A	
4	N/A	
	f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any
	N/A	
	g.	Any other information required to be given
N/A		
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the	The selected candidate is a very sincere and dedicated party worker and he is presently MP of Ranchi Lok Sabha.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	She had an edge over other individuals, considering the fact that whatever charges were alleged in the FIR has no substance and were purely with a vindictive approach and personal vendetta being waged by his political enemies. That Total - 04 case is pending and protested, and the FIR is registered with reason of waging public protest, and the party believes that there will be no adverse outcome against the alleged accused.

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Dumka Lok Sabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Smt. Sita Soren**  
.....and so on

\* In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name is Constituency,

Signature of office bearer of the Political Party  
**Aditya Prasad, General Secretary BJP Jharkhand**

**Format C-7**  
(for political parties to publish in the newspapers, social media platforms & website of the party)

Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.  
(As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in contempt petition(C) no. 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) no. 536 of 2011)

**Name of Political Party: BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**  
**\*Name of the Election: General Election of the Lok Sabha, 2024 Name of State/UT: Jharkhand**

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Ranchi Lok Sabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Sanjay Seth**

Sl.No.	Criminal antecedents	
1.	a.	Nature of the offences
		1 Sec. 147, 148, 341, 323, 353, 332, 427, 188, 269, 270, of IPC and Sec. 51 of DM Act 2005- Allegation for Participating in a public protest against the state government.
		2 Under Sec. 147, 148, 188, 353, 332, 109, 427, 323 of IPC
		1 Dhurwa PS Case no. 159/2021
	2	Dhurwa PS Case no. 107/2023
		1 Smt. Nutan Ekka Spl. JMFC, MP, MLA, Civil Court Ranchi
	2	Smt. Nutan Ekka Spl. JMFC, MP, MLA, Civil Court Ranchi
		1 NO
	2	NO
		e.
	N/A	
	f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any
	N/A	
	g.	Any other information required to be given
	N/A	
	2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	As a dedicated party worker, he had an edge over other individuals, considering the fact that whatever charges were alleged in the FIR has no substance and were purely with a vindictive approach and personal vendetta being waged by his political enemies. That total-2 case is pending and protested, and the FIR is registered with reason of waging public protest, and the party believes that there will be no adverse outcome against the alleged accused.

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Ranchi Lok Sabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Sanjay Seth**  
.....and so on

\* In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name is Constituency,

Signature of office bearer of the Political Party  
**Aditya Prasad, General Secretary BJP Jharkhand**



# Your votes safe, EVMS 100 per cent safe: CEC to voters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Friday dismissed apprehensions about Electronic Voting Machines (EVMS) and assured people that their vote was safe and secure. Kumar asserted that the EVMS were 100 per cent safe as a large number of safeguards – technological, administrative and process-oriented – were in place. “It is a settled issue. It is 100 per cent safe. It has been raised in the honourable court also. We are awaiting judgment, nothing can happen to the machines. Every stage political parties and their candidates are involved. Mock polls are done,” he said to questions on doubts raised on the EVMS. “There are a large number of safeguards, technological, administrative, and process-oriented. Just enjoy the voting. This is a time to enjoy the voting, not doubt anything,” the CEC said. “Enjoy your voting, your vote is safe, secure and will be recorded as you vote,” Kumar said. The first phase of the Lok Sabha elections got underway across 102 constituencies in 21



states and union territories on Friday. “We are getting reports from the field that even if rains are happening, people are really coming out in large numbers. Women, youth, old age people... everyone is rushing towards the polling stations. It is really a delightful situation to see that people are dancing to the tune of democracy,” Kumar said. He said the Election Commission has used technology to a great extent to ensure better voter turnout by reaching out to the youth and women voters by mapping parliamentary constituencies where voting has been traditionally less. “A turn out plan was made

depending on the local context. Lots of celebrities were roped in, a number of organisations have worked with us – petrol pumps, banks, post offices in the outreach program,” Kumar said. “We are very hopeful that people will come out to vote. It is our appeal, please join in this festival of democracy. Youth, women, transgender, PwD, all geographies... It is your right, your duty, your responsibility, your pride,” the CEC said. Kumar, along with fellow Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and S S Sandhu, was monitoring the progress of the election process from the control room set up at the Election Commission headquarters here.

# India ready to take next step towards becoming science powerhouse: Journal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Science journal ‘Nature’ has said India along with being an economic power is also more than ready to take the next step towards becoming a science powerhouse, as it called for a rise in the country’s research and development spending, especially from the private sector. The prestigious British weekly said in its editorial headlined “How India can become a science powerhouse” cited researchers to highlight that basic research has been neglected by successive governments and that a thriving research system needs much greater autonomy. “Along with being an economic power, India is also more than ready to take the next step towards becoming a science powerhouse. This is not yet a given, but it can happen,” it said. “In this editorial, we discuss a third aspect: how to bridge the funding gap. One thing India’s government can do is to boost science spending by encouraging businesses to contribute more, as is the case for other leading economies. If policymakers and industrialists can get this right, an opportunity to put rocket boosters under the country’s impressive scientific achievements is there for the



taking,” the journal said. The editorial noted that in 2021-22, according to government data, India had the world’s third-largest pharmaceutical industry by volume and was the leading supplier of affordable medicines and generic drugs, some of which were “crucial” to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide. Last year, India became the fourth country ever to achieve a soft landing on the Moon and the first to land near the lunar south pole, it said, adding that the country also has the world’s largest constellation of remote-sensing satellites. The magazine said India is among the world’s most prolific countries in terms of research output after the United States and China. From 2014 to 2021, the number of universities increased from 760 to 1,113. In the past decade, seven more Indian

Institutes of Technology have been established, raising the total to 23. In the same period, two new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research were also established. “Now consider that these gains were achieved by a nation that spent just 0.64 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on research and development (R&D) during 2020-21,” it said. Whichever political formation is elected to power in the ongoing polls, it must consider how to increase the country’s R&D spending, as well as what could be achieved with more money, it said. Nature said around 60 per cent of India’s research spending can be traced to central and state governments and universities, and around 40 per cent to the private sector. In comparable nations, there is often much more private-sector funding. “In 2022, the private sector contributed, on average, 74 per cent of OECD nations’ R&D spending and 66 per cent of such funding for the 27 members of the European Union. India today has many global companies in construction, information technology, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and more. They could be contributing a lot more to the nation’s research -- both in terms of funding researchers and also infrastructure,” it said.

# On voting day Rahul urges voters to open Mohabbat ki Dukaan



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As polling began in the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls on Friday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi urged voters to strengthen democracy and open ‘Mohabbat ki Dukaan’ in every corner of the country by defeating hatred. “Today is the first phase of voting! Remember, each and every vote of yours is going to decide the future of India’s democracy and its generations,” Rahul Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X. “Go out and strengthen democracy by applying the balm of your vote on the wounds inflicted on the soul of the country in the last 10 years,” he said. Open ‘Mohabbat Ki Dukaan’ in every

corner of the country by defeating hatred, the Congress leader added. Rahul Gandhi also shared a graphic of the key Congress guarantees to the people, including the right to apprenticeship, a legal guarantee of MSP and a nationwide caste census. The 2024 Lok Sabha polls kicked off Friday with polling being held for the first phase scheduled in 102 seats spread across 21 states and Union territories. Among those in the fray are Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, Sarbananda Sonowal and Bhupendra Yadav, Gaurav Gogoi of the Congress, the DMK’s Kanimozhi and K Annamalai of the BJP. Assembly elections in Arunachal Pradesh (60 seats) and Sikkim (32 seats) are also being held simultaneously.

# 1992 batch IPS officer Nalin Prabhat appointed NSG chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Nalin Prabhat has been appointed as the chief of National Security Guard (NSG), the country’s counter-terrorism force, according to a Personnel Ministry order. Prabhat, a 1992 IPS officer of Andhra Pradesh cadre, is presently working as Additional Director General in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved his appointment as the Director General, NSG for a period up to August 31, 2028 i.e. The date of his superannuation, the order said. Popularly known as the “black cats”, the federal contingency force NSG was raised in 1984. Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB) chief Daljit Singh Chawdhary



was holding the additional charge of the NSG. The ACC has also approved appointment of Sapna Tewari as the Special Director in the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Tewari, a 1992 batch IPS officer of Odisha cadre, is currently working as Additional Director in the IB. She has been appointed as the Special Director, IB for a tenure of two years from the date of assumption of charge of the post or up to the date of her superannuation i.e. April 30, 2026, the order said.

# Civil Services topper Aditya scores 54.27 per cent in UPSC exams

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Civil services examination topper Aditya Srivastava scored 54.27 per cent in the prestigious exam conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), according to the detailed marks of the recommended candidates released by the Commission on Friday. Following closely behind is Animesh Pradhan, who scored 52.69 per cent in the Civil Services Examination 2023. As many as 1,016 candidates -- 664 men and 352 women -- have qualified in the examination, results of which were announced on Tuesday. The civil services examination is conducted annually by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) in three stages -- preliminary, main and personality test (or interview) -- to select officers for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian

Police Service (IPS), among others. The preliminary examination consists of two objective type (multiple choice) question papers of 400 marks. This stage is meant to serve as a screening test only, and the marks obtained in it by the candidates, who are declared qualified for admission to the main examination, are not counted for determining their final order of merit. The merit is determined out of the total of 2,025 marks -- written or main exam is of 1,750 marks and the interview is of 275. Srivastava (27) got a total of 1,099 marks -- 899 in the written and 200 in the personality test, according to the marks of recommended candidates disclosed by the UPSC. A trainee Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, he hails from Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh. Srivastava completed his BTech in electrical engineering from the Indian



Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur and also possesses an MTech degree. He had electrical engineering as his optional subject in the civil services exam. Pradhan (24), resident of Talcher town in Odisha’s Angul district, scored 1,067 marks -- 892 in written and 175 in interview -- and secured the second rank.

He had chosen sociology as his optional subject in the examination. Pradhan completed his BTech in computer science from the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Rourkela and is currently an employee of the Indian Oil Corporation’s (IOC) refineries division here. Third rank holder Donuru Ananya Reddy, who appeared

in the exam as an economically weaker section candidate, got 1,065 marks (52.59 per cent) -- 875 in the main and 190 in the interview -- and fourth rank holder P K Sidharth Ramkumar scored 1,059 marks (52.29 per cent) -- 874 in written and 185 in the interview. Reddy (22), who has a BA (Hons) in geography from Miranda House, Delhi University, had anthropology as her optional subject. She hails from Mahabubnagar in Telangana. Ramkumar (27) has a bachelor’s degree in architecture from the College of Architecture in Trivandrum. Ruhani got the fifth rank with a total of 1,049 marks (51.8 per cent) -- 856 in written and 193 in the interview. She completed her BA (Hons) in economics from St Stephens College, Delhi University. The UPSC has put details of marks achieved by all the 1,016 candidates on its web-

site. The Civil Services (preliminary) Exam 2023 was conducted on May 28. A total of 10,16,850 candidates applied, of which 5,92,141 appeared in the examination. As many as 14,624 candidates qualified for the written (main) examination, which was held in September. “A total of 2,855 candidates qualified for the personality test of the examination,” the UPSC said. Of these, 1,016 candidates were finally recommended for different government services. The government had reported 1,143 vacancies -- 180 in IAS, 37 in IPS, 200 in IPS, 613 posts in different central Group A services and 113 in Group B services -- to be filled through the civil services examination 2023, the UPSC said. As many as 240 candidates have been put on a reserved list, it said, adding that the candidature of 355 recommended candidates has been kept provisional.

# Congress raps Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress charged Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday with protecting the paper-leak and recruitment “scams” in Madhya Pradesh and asked him why the crime rate against Dalits is “increasing” in the state. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh hit out at the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre ahead of Modi’s rally in Damoh in Madhya Pradesh. “Today’s questions for PM Modi as he heads to MP: Who is the PM protecting in MP’s paper leak and recruitment scams? Why has the BJP let down Adivasis in Forest Rights Act implementation? MP has the highest crime rate against Dalits. Why is it increasing?” Ramesh asked in a post on X. Elaborating on what he said were details of “jumlas” (rhetoric), the Congress leader said the government might have changed the name of the Employees Selection Board in Madhya Pradesh but nobody has forgotten the notorious Vyapam “scam” that rocked the state 10 years ago. Since then, allegations of rigging have cropped up in the recruitment of nursing staff, school teachers, constables and agriculture development officers, but all that the BJP government has done is deny and subvert, he alleged. “Just last year, allegations broke out of a scam in the patwari recruitment examination. Seven of ten toppers in the examination came from the same exam centre in Gwalior which is owned by a BJP MLA.



“A few years earlier, in 2021, three tests -- for agriculture extension officers, senior agriculture officers and nursing staff -- were cancelled when the evidence of foul play became too obvious to ignore,” Ramesh said. He said a probe subsequently found out that the papers for the exams were leaked by a private company that was already implicated in the Vyapam “scam.” Who is the PM protecting in these scams? What is PM Modi doing to ensure that our youth never face such injustice again?” the former Union minister asked. In 2006, the Congress passed the revolutionary Forest Rights Act (FRA) that granted the Adivasi and forest-dwelling communities legal rights to manage their forests, and economically benefit from the forest produce they collect, he pointed out. “The BJP government, however, has obstructed the implementation of the FRA, depriving millions of Adivasis of its benefits. Only 47 per cent (2,94,877 claims) of the 6,27,513 individual claims filed have been granted, and land titles distributed cover only 10 per cent (5,931 sq. km) of the 57,948 sq. km eligible

for community rights,” Ramesh alleged. Why have the successive BJP governments in Madhya Pradesh failed to provide the Adivasi communities their rights, he asked. Citing data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the Congress leader pointed out that Madhya Pradesh has the highest crime rate against Dalits in the country. “In 2021 (the latest year for which data is available), the crime rate against SCs was 63.6 as compared to the national average of 25.3. The state also recorded high crime rates against Dalits in 2019 and 2020 -- 46.7 and 60.8 against the national averages of 22.8 and 25 respectively. It is disgusting and shameful that the rate of crimes against Dalits has actually increased year-on-year,” he said. “The BJP has been in power in MP for more than two decades now. Why is it that Dalits have to increasingly fear for their safety? Does PM Modi feel no shame for the countless atrocities that Dalits have endured under his watch?” Ramesh asked and said the prime minister should break his silence on the issue.

# Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar to become new Navy Chief



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi will be the new Navy Chief by the end of this month succeeding incumbent Admiral R Hari Kumar. Admiral Kumar will retire from service on April 30. Tripathi is currently serving as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff. “The government has appointed Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, presently serving as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff as the next Chief of the Naval Staff with effect from the afternoon of April 30,” the defence ministry said. Born on May 15, 1964, Vice Admiral Tripathi was commissioned into the executive branch of the Indian Navy on July 1, 1985. A communication and electronic warfare specialist, he has had a long and distinguished service spanning nearly 30 years. Prior to taking over as Vice Chief of Navy, he had served as Flag Officer Commanding-

in-Chief of the Western Naval Command. Tripathi has served in a variety of command, staff and instructional appointments. He has commanded INS Vinash. He has also held various important operational and staff appointments which include Fleet Operations Officer of the Western Fleet, Director of Naval Operations, Principal Director Network Centric Operations and Principal Director of Naval Plans at New Delhi. As Rear Admiral, he served as Flag Officer Commanding of the Eastern Fleet. He also served as Commandant of the prestigious Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala. An alumnus of the Sainik School, Rewa and National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla, Vice Admiral Tripathi has undergone courses at the Naval War College, Goa and Naval War College USA. He is a recipient of the Ati Vishist Seva Medal (AVSM) and Nau Sena Medal (NM).

# DRDO hands over indigenous actuators, air brake modules to HAL



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)’s Aeronautics Development Agency (ADA) has handed over the first batch of the indigenous Leading Edge Actuators and Airbrake Control Module to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), marking a significant leap towards self-reliance in aeronautical technologies, defence ministry said here on Friday. Giving details, officials said Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Lucknow has already made preparations for the production of these units for the current 83 LCA Tejas Mk1A order. The Secondary Flight Control of LCA-Tejas, comprising Leading Edge Slats and Airbrakes, now boasts state-of-the-art Servo-Valve based electro-hydraulic servo actuators and control modules. These high pressure, redundant servo actuators and control module, characterised by astute design, precision manufacturing, assembly, and testing, represent a culmination of ADA’s relentless pursuit of indigenous technological prowess.

# Medical experts for reintroduction of Indian Medical Services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Medical experts representing the public and private sector have batted for reintroduction of Indian Medical Services (IMS), akin to Indian Administrative Service, to boost the healthcare sector infrastructure, and enhance coordination in healthcare policy formulation. Led by the Think Change Forum (TCF), a think tank, the experts submitted a five-point agenda to the government to roll-out the IMS following discussion at a recently held panel discussion titled ‘Is it time for India to resurrect Indian Medical Services?’. The deliberation highlighted the imperative of strengthening the public healthcare system and emphasised the pivotal role that IMS can play in achieving this objective. The IMS will help bring the sheen and trust back to public health sector which has been lost to private sector; help stop brain drain from public medical services by attracting and retaining the best medical talent; allow for superior healthcare outcomes with better managed facilities and processes, as no longer generalists will be managing the specialists, said the experts. Overall, the healthcare infrastructure is fractured and falls short of providing quality and effective healthcare at scale. These shortcomings primarily stem from inefficient bureaucratic management rather than lack of skills among healthcare

professionals, noted the experts. Dr Rajesh Gupta, Additional Director, Pulmonology and Critical Care, Fortis Healthcare, Noida, said, “The majority of the Indian public relies on the private sector for healthcare services, with 60 per cent of inpatient admissions (IPDs) and 80 per cent of outpatient visits (OPDs) occurring in private facilities.” The second point highlighted challenges in staffing the public healthcare system with skilled doctors. Lack of incentives for these highly educated professionals to work under generalist administrators has resulted in brain drain, they noted. Dr Sharad Kr Agarwal, the immediate past national president of IMA, said, “The implementation of IMS holds the promise of enhancing service quality through induction of skilled doctors and addressing the persistent doctor shortage, especially in rural areas. Crucial to its success is equipping the cadre with ample facilities and resources comparable to those provided to IAS or IPS officers.” “This will ensure that doctors are incentivized to join IMS, drawn by a clear career trajectory and motivated to serve communities, even in remote areas,” he said. It was also felt that the IMS will be able to enable seamless coordination and cooperation between the central and state health departments, for improved national healthcare policies for the country.





# Modi takes dig at Rahul, Akhilesh

**PM says film of do shehzade already rejected by people**

**PTI ■ AMROHA (UP)**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a veiled dig at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Friday, saying the shooting of the film "do shehzade ki jodi" is on but it has already been rejected by people.  
"Every time these people seek votes from the people of Uttar Pradesh, they carry a basket of dynasty, corruption and appeasement. They do not leave any chance to attack our faith," Modi said, addressing a rally here.  
In a veiled attack on Gandhi and Yadav, he said, "The shooting of the film 'do shehzade ki jodi (a pair of princes)' is going on. But their film has already been rejected

by people."  
Hitting out at Danish Ali, the Congress candidate from Amroha, Modi alleged that he has objections in saying "Bharat Mata ki jai".  
"Will a person, who cannot accept Bharat Mata ki jai, look good in the Indian Parliament? Should such a person be allowed entry into the Indian Parliament?" he asked the gathering.  
Slamming the opposition, the prime minister said, "The SP and the Congress declined the invitation for the Ram temple's consecration ceremony in Ayodhya. People hankering for vote banks refused the invitation for the ceremony. Instead, look at those who fought the Babri Masjid case in the Supreme Court but still participated in the consecration ceremony

after losing the case."  
Iqbal Ansari, a litigant in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case, attended the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple on January 22.  
"They are not satisfied even after refusing the invitation, so they abuse the Ram temple and Sanatan Dharma. The SP, for its vote bank, calls Ram bhakts 'pakhandi' (hypocrites). Those in the INDIA opposition bloc hate Sanatan Dharma," Modi said.  
The prime minister alleged that when he went under the sea to offer prayers in Gujarat's Dwarka, where Lord Krishna had gone from Amroha, "the prince of the Congress said there is nothing to pray under the sea. They are rejecting our faith only for their vote banks".  
Hitting out at Akhilesh Yadav as well as Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav, Modi said, "Those in Bihar, who say they are Yaduvanshi, in Uttar Pradesh, the leader who takes the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being felicitated by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a public meeting for the Lok Sabha elections, at Gajraula in Amroha, on Friday

benefits of being Yaduvanshi, I want to ask them, how can they sit with a party that insults Lord Krishna? How can you have an agreement with them?"

He criticised the Congress, SP and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) governments in Uttar Pradesh in the past for allegedly ignoring farmers and said those growing

sugarcane were given Rs 500 crore annually during the SP's rule, whereas the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government gave Rs 1,500 crore to them.

Blaming vote-bank politics for communal riots, Modi said, "This vote-bank politics burnt western Uttar Pradesh in the fire of riots. The people of Uttar Pradesh can never forget that era of Goonda Raj. People had to migrate and leave their houses behind."  
"In several western Uttar Pradesh neighbourhoods, posters with 'makan bikau hai' (house for sale) written on those were put up. But, Yogi (Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath) got rid of criminals for your safety. We must ensure that these forces are not strengthened again in any manner."  
The prime minister accused the previous governments of cheating the Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) communities in the name of social justice, and said he is working towards achieving the dream of social reformers Jyotiba Phule, B R Ambedkar and Chaudhary Charan Singh.

"The previous governments have only cheated the people of the SC, ST and OBC communities in the name of social justice. Modi is working day and night to achieve the social justice dream of Jyotiba Phule, Ambedkar and (former prime minister) Chaudhary Charan Singh," he said. The prime minister addressed the rally as polling was underway in eight western Uttar Pradesh constituencies in the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls.  
Amroha will go to polls in the second phase on April 26. The counting of votes will be taken up on June 4.  
The prime minister began his speech with an appeal to people to vote.  
"I appeal to everyone to exercise their right to vote given by the Constitution," he said while emphasising that youngsters should especially go out and vote to secure their future and that of the country.

**Format C-7**  
**(for political parties to publish in the newspapers, social media platforms & website of the party)**

**Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.**  
**(As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in contempt petition(C) no. 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) no. 536 of 2011)**

**Name of Political Party: BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**  
**\*Name of the Election: General Election of the Lok Sabha, 2024 Name of State/UT: Jharkhand**

1) Name of the Constituency- **Dhanbad - Lok Sabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Dulu Mahato**

Sl.No.	Criminal antecedents	Sl.No.	Case no.
1.	a. Nature of the offences	1	385, 504, 506 of IPC
		2	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 307, 120B, 504, 25(1-B), 26, 27 (2), 35, 326 of IPC
		3	147, 149, 160, 323, 342, 504, 506, 109, 120B of IPC
		4	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 307, 354, 427, 379 of IPC
		5	147, 148, 149, 379, 384, 385, 427, 120B of IPC and 27 Arms Act
		6	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 324, 427, 120B of IPC and 27 Arms Act
		7	147, 148, 341, 323, 307, 354, 504, 506 of IPC and 27 (1) of Arms Act
		8	395, 120B, of IPC and 27 of Arms Act
		9	147, 148, 149, 324, 341, 427, 120B, 307 of IPC and 3/4 of Explosive Act
		10	147, 148, 149, 341, 324, 387, 307, 120B of IPC and 27(1) of Arms Act
		11	341, 387, 504, 506 of IPC
		12	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 337, 504, 506, 307, 353, of IPC and 25 (1B) (a), 26, 35, 27 of Arms Act and 3/4 Explosive substance Act
		13	147, 148, 149, 120 B, 504, 506, of IPC and 27 Arms Act and 3/4 Explosive Substance Act.
		14	147, 148, 149, 341, 504, 506 of IPC and 3(1) (F), 3(1)(G) of SC/ST Act
		15	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 385, 386, 307, 504, 506 of IPC and 27(1) of Arms Act
		16	147, 148, 188, 353, 332, 109, 427 of IPC
		17	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 379, 307, 387, 120B of IPC and 27 Arms Act and 3/4 of Explosive Substance Act.
		18	109, 387, 504, 506, 120B of IPC
		19	107 of IPC
b.	Case no.	1	Dhanbad PS Case no. 85/2020
		2	Kenduadih PS Case No. 132/2023
		3	Barora PS Case No.150/2006
		4	Barora PS Case No.12/2022
		5	Rajgang PS Case No. 15/2022
		6	Katras PS Case No. 106/2018
		7	Barora PS Case No. 11/2020
		8	Baghmara PS Case No. 17/2020
		9	Barora PS Case No. 21/2021
		10	Barora PS Case No. 54/2022
		11	Barora PS Case No. 39/2021
		12	Loyabadi PS Case No. 58/2021
		13	Loyabadi PS Case No. 59/2021
		14	Barora PS Case No. 17/2020
		15	Barora PS Case No. 20/2020
		16	Dhurwa PS Case No. 107/2023
		17	Jogta PS Case No. 11/2024
		18	Barwadda PS Case No. 53/2024
		19	Barora PS Case No. 05/2024

c.	Name of the Court	Sl.No.	Name of the Court
		1	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		2	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		3	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		4	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		5	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		6	SDJM Dhanbad
		7	Akhilesh Kumar ADJ XVI Dhanbad
		8	Akhilesh Kumar ADJ XVI Dhanbad
		9	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		10	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		11	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		12	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		13	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		14	ADJ 1st ST/SC SPL Court Dhanbad
		15	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		16	Nupur Ekka JM Ranchi
		17	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		18	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad
		19	SDM Dhanbad
	d. Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	1	YES
		2	NO
		3	YES
		4	NO
		5	NO
		6	NO
		7	YES
		8	YES
		9	NO
		10	NO
		11	NO
		12	NO
		13	NO
		14	NO
		15	NO
		16	NO
		17	NO
		18	NO
		19	NO
	e. Date of conviction, if any	1	20-01-2016 ( In Connetion with Barora PS Case no. 307/2006)
		2	09-10-2019 ( In Connection with Katras PS Case No. 120/2013)
	f. Details of punishment undergone, if any	1	1 Year (12 Months), Appeal(Cri. Rev. 278/2016) is Admitted and Pending in High Court in Ranchi
		2	18 Months, Appeal(Cri. Rev. 1157/2022) is Admitted and Pending in High Court in Ranchi
	g. Any other information required to be given		N/A
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)		The selected candidate is a very sincere and dedicated party worker and he is presently MLA of Baghmara Vidhansabha.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)		As a dedicated party worker, he had an edge over other individuals, considering the fact that whatever charges were alleged in the FIR and Charge sheet have no substance and were purely with a vindictive approach and personal vendetta being waged by his political enemies. That total-19 case is pending and protested, and the FIR is registered with reason of waging public protest, and the party believes that there will be no adverse outcome against the alleged accused.

1) Name of the Constituency- **Dhanbad - Lok Sabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Dulu Mahato**  
..... and so on  
\* In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name is Constituency,  
  
Signature of office bearer of the Political Party  
Name and Designation **Aditya Prasad, General Secretary BJP Jharkhand**





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Theatre of the absurd

The ever-falling state of polity touches a new low, trivialising life for political gains

In the realm of politics, where governance and public welfare should reign supreme, a disturbing trend has emerged — the trivialisation of human life for the sake of political benefits. Recent events surrounding Delhi's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal exemplify this worrying trend, where his health crisis has become a point of one-upmanship and is being used to serve narrow political narratives rather than addressing the genuine concerns of his health. The case took a curious turn when the Enforcement Directorate (ED) claimed that Kejriwal intentionally indulged in a high-sugar diet to fabricate grounds for bail. Kejriwal's colleague Atishi has countered this assertion, alleging a conspiracy to deny the jailed Chief Minister access to essential insulin and home-cooked food, potentially putting his life at risk. Both claims, while patently opposite, underscore a distressing reality — the callous politicisation of a health crisis. In the theatre of politics, where power dynamics often overshadows ethical considerations, the sanctity of human life seems to have been direly neglected. The focus has shifted from genuine concern for an individual's well-being to exploiting their vulnerabilities for partisan gains. Such a narrative not only reflects poorly on the integrity of political discourse but also raises profound questions about the moral compass of those entrusted with governance.



The ED's assertion of Kejriwal deliberately manipulating his health for legal advantage is a damning indictment of the extent to which political opponents are willing to go to discredit their adversaries. It underscores a culture where the personal struggles of individuals are weaponised for political advantage. Conversely, Atishi's allegations of a plot to endanger Kejriwal's life highlight the dangerous consequences of unchecked political rhetoric. Accusations of attempted murder, if unsubstantiated, not only sow seeds of distrust but also trivialise the gravity of such heinous crimes. At its core, the Kejriwal saga underscores a broader crisis within the polity — the prioritisation of political expediency over human dignity. In the relentless pursuit of power and influence, the inherent value of human life is often sacrificed at the altar of partisan interests. This erosion of empathy and decency not only corrodes the fabric of democracy but also threatens the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. Without delving into the merits of the case or passing judgment on who is truthful, Kejriwal, like everyone else, must be given the best treatment at the moment, even if the illness is self-inflicted. To reclaim the integrity of polity, it is imperative for political actors to realign their priorities with the values of compassion, integrity and accountability. The welfare of individuals should never be subjugated to the exigencies of political gamesmanship. Instead, leaders must demonstrate a commitment to upholding the dignity and wellbeing of every citizen, irrespective of their political affiliations. The Kejriwal saga serves as a sobering reminder of the perils of allowing politics to trump humanity.

Atishi's allegations of a plot to endanger Kejriwal's life highlight the dangerous consequences of unchecked political rhetoric. Accusations of attempted murder, if unsubstantiated, not only sow seeds of distrust but also trivialise the gravity of such heinous crimes. At its core, the Kejriwal saga underscores a broader crisis within the polity — the prioritisation of political expediency over human dignity. In the relentless pursuit of power and influence, the inherent value of human life is often sacrificed at the altar of partisan interests. This erosion of empathy and decency not only corrodes the fabric of democracy but also threatens the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. Without delving into the merits of the case or passing judgment on who is truthful, Kejriwal, like everyone else, must be given the best treatment at the moment, even if the illness is self-inflicted. To reclaim the integrity of polity, it is imperative for political actors to realign their priorities with the values of compassion, integrity and accountability. The welfare of individuals should never be subjugated to the exigencies of political gamesmanship. Instead, leaders must demonstrate a commitment to upholding the dignity and wellbeing of every citizen, irrespective of their political affiliations. The Kejriwal saga serves as a sobering reminder of the perils of allowing politics to trump humanity.

### PICTALK



School students with their faces and hands painted as part of voter awareness campaign pose for photos, in Jammu

## Transformative trends in India's higher education

The surge in EdTech presents opportunities for democratising education but also highlights challenges such as the digital divide and ensuring quality

India's higher education landscape is undergoing a transformative shift. With initiatives like the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, skill development programs by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the encouragement of 100 per cent FDI in education, the landscape is ripe for innovation and investment. Additionally, UGC's push for setting up international campuses in India and the Ministry of Education's focus on global learning is reshaping our educational framework. The market size of the Indian higher education system was estimated at around \$40 billion in 2023, growing at a CAGR of 15 per cent. With over 1,200 universities, 49,400 colleges and 12,600 stand-alone institutions, India hosts one of the largest higher education ecosystems in the world. Catering to more than 50 million students — a number expected to grow substantially in the next five years — these institutions are crucial in achieving an enhanced Gross Enrollment Ratio and improving the skill set of our future workforce.



Amidst this expansion, the post-pandemic era has seen a significant influx of digitalisation in learning, with universities offering online programs and various platforms providing a broad spectrum of courses online. Considering our current infrastructure and the expected demand, it is essential for the country to further explore online learning and skill development opportunities. Aligning these opportunities with the next 10-year growth plan is crucial for preparing a skilled workforce that enhances graduate employability. However, the selection of courses among students has also seen a paradigm shift. India is moving beyond tra-

ditional domains like engineering, medicine and management. Today, students are increasingly drawn to interdisciplinary programs and new-age courses that promise quicker skill acquisition and certification. There is a significant opportunity for institutions to expand their offerings in these certification/degree courses where students can learn new skills in less duration. The surge in EdTech has been transformative and represents a key area ripe for investment and innovation. By providing everything from career guidance to student counselling digitally, these platforms have democratised access to education, ensuring that students from all regions have better career opportunities. Yet, realising the full potential of these advancements requires overcoming significant challenges. Addressing the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to technology and improving internet connectivity, especially in underserved areas, are critical. Moreover, as the field rapidly diversifies, strengthening quality assurance and adapting accredita-

tion and regulatory frameworks are essential to maintaining standards and credibility. These bodies must adapt to the changing dynamics of higher education to uphold academic integrity and student outcomes. The Ministry of Education's current focus on the internationalization of higher education in India is set to have profound effects, not only on educational practices but also on the broader economy and society. This strategic emphasis will enable transnational education and student/faculty exchanges, thereby building a globally competent workforce and fostering knowledge exchange between nations. As we look ahead, the future of higher education in India is not just about scaling up but also about smart scaling. By embracing these trends and addressing inherent challenges, we can ensure that the sector not only expands but also elevates, providing every student with a world-class education and global opportunities.

(The writer is the founder and director of OneStep Global; views are personal)



ARITRA GHOSHAL

## Aung San Suu Kyi: Prison or house arrest?



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Concerns over Suu Kyi's whereabouts as the junta stares at defeat

The news website, *The Irrawaddy*, cites "informed sources in Naypyitaw and Yangon" as saying that Aung San Suu Kyi (78), the emblem of the Myanmar's struggle for democracy and Win Mint (72), incarcerated president of the country's democratically-elected Government ousted by the coup on February 1, 2021, remain in prison. This, indeed, is likely to be the case given the high level of credibility that the website enjoys. It would be instructive to read what it has to say in this connection. The ball, so to say, was set rolling late on the afternoon of April 16 when a pro-regime media outlet said that both had been moved to a new location. It was followed by the regime's spokesman, Major-General Zaw Min Tun telling the Burmese services of VOA and the BBC: "Not only Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Win Myint but also some [other] older prisoners were given necessary care since the weather is extremely hot." However, he did not say that Suu Kyi had been moved to a new location. When media outlets pressed him for further information, he did not provide any details. Despite this and the absence of any photographic or other evidence showing their having been moved to house arrest, both local and international and news agencies carried stories saying that it was the case.

That this is not so is further suggested by Aung San Suu Kyi's son, Kim Aris, who told Kay Burley of Sky News during a breakfast interview, "They are saying house arrest. She only has one house and she's not there." Given the utterly unsavoury reputations that the junta and news outlets which act as its mouthpieces enjoy, the confusion may, in all likelihood, have been deliberately created by both acting in tandem. If this, indeed, is the case, what purpose was sought to have been achieved? The most plausible answer would be that it was to show that the junta cared. Why suddenly? It has been known for some time that Aung San Suu Kyi was very ill in prison and the junta was



not providing her the kind of medical attention she needed. It has also been speculated that the junta could murder her in prison and claim that she had died of old age or other natural causes. Whatever it is, it would serve the generals well to create the impression that it was not their fault if something untoward happened to her. The other reason could be differences within the junta, a section of which wants to do a deal with her to end the civil war they are losing and another would hear nothing of it. The Sit-Tat (which and not Tatmadaw, is the real name for Myanmar Army), is now facing defeat at a none-to-distant future. It has been suffering one major reverse after another since the opposition Three Brotherhood Alliance (henceforth Alliance) launched its current offensive, codenamed Operation 1027, on October 27, 2023. The latest, the loss of Myawaddy, an important border town, on April 11, 2024, to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Karen National Army, is clearly the most devastating blow suffered by



THE JUNTA IS REPORTEDLY PREPARING TO LAUNCH A COUNTER OFFENSIVE. WHETHER IT MATERIALISES AND, IF IT DOES, WITH WHAT SUCCESS, REMAINS TO BE SEEN

the junta since the Alliance's current offensive began. A key trading hub close to the eastern end of Myanmar's border with Thailand—the total value of imports and exports passing through it has been valued at \$ 1 billion in 2023—it is also regarded as Myanmar's opening to South-East Asian countries. The Junta is reportedly preparing to launch a counter offensive. Whether it materialises and, if it does, with what success, remains to be seen. But even if it is successful and the Sit-Tat is able to retain the town after regaining it, the event is unlikely to be a turning point in the civil war which is going overwhelming in favour of the Alliance—comprising the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), active in the Kokang Special Region of northern Shan State, the Taang National Liberation Army (TNLA), also active in the Shan State and the Arakan Army (AA), based in the Rakhine State in the country's western part. Acting in close cooperation opposition National Unity Government's military arm, the People's Defence Force

(PDF) and other ethnic armies like the KNLA and KLA. At the time of writing, the AA has brought almost the entire Rakhine State under its control. By early April, it had captured some 170 junta camps and posts, several larger bases, battalion headquarters and training facilities. It seized the important town of Paletwa on January 15, 2024. Kyaukphyu, where China is developing a port and a special economic zone spread over 1,600 hectares, is about to fall. The AA is pressing hard on Sittwe, an important port town, after seizing control of the small towns around it and cutting off access to it through road and waterways. India shifted its staff from its consulate there to Yangon earlier in April, 2024. Initially, one had thought that the Junta's ouster, even though inevitable, would take a long time to come about. It now seems that it would be defenestrated much sooner than one had thought. India must bear this in mind. (The author is Consulting Editor, *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### BJP'S STRATEGIC MANIFESTO

Madam — Apropos the news article, "A Vision for India's Global Leadership", published on April 19, this is my response. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) manifesto signals a shift towards a policy-centric approach, departing from traditional electoral strategies. By highlighting achievements and projecting a vision for India's future, it aims to secure votes based on governance rather than populist promises. The absence of significant Pakistan-centric rhetoric suggests a nuanced understanding of foreign policy priorities, focusing instead on global engagement and regional stability. Prime Minister Modi's emphasis on "Neighbour First" and "Act East" policies reflects a proactive stance in regional diplomacy, enhancing India's influence and fostering solidarity among neighbouring nations. The manifesto's commitment to global advocacy for the Global South underscores India's aspirations for a leadership role in international affairs. However, challenges persist, particularly in integrating India into global supply chains and enhancing the rupee's acceptability. Yet, the manifesto's articulation of strategic goals and pledges for collaboration within the Indo-Pacific region portrays a coherent vision for India's role in the evolving geopolitical landscape.

Sneha Gupta | Delhi

#### OTT LANGUAGE DEBATE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "How justified is abusive language on OTT?", published on April 19, this is my response. India's OTT platforms have reshaped entertainment, offering diverse content but facing criticism for excessive profanity. The Supreme Court's recent ruling defends free speech, sparking debates on cultural integrity. Profanity may enhance realism yet risks societal norms, especially impacting youth. While OTT isn't solely responsible, it amplifies existing trends. Education reforms emphasise cultural values, conflicting with profanity's normalisation.

#### Political quagmire



Apropos the news article, "Corruption and political defections: A telltale sign of democratic decay", published on April 19, this is my response. The article delves into the unsettling reality of political manoeuvring, where corruption probes seem to act as a revolving door for politicians, raising questions about the integrity of the system. It draws a

sharp contrast between the flawed current State of affairs and the ideal governance system envisioned in ancient scriptures like Manusmriti. The Manusmriti's principles, though controversial, present a compelling blueprint for a more righteous governance model, emphasising a party-less system, voter recall rights and alignment with moral principles. The chasm between this ideal and the existing political landscape is vast, highlighting the urgent need for reform. While achieving perfection may be a distant goal, even partial adoption of Manusmriti's principles could yield significant improvements, reducing electoral malpractice, corruption and divisive politics. As the nation awaits potential reforms under the Modi Government, India, with its rich spiritual heritage, can transcend its current challenges and emerge as a global exemplar of moral governance.

Ishaan Shukhi | Ludhiana

Despite honouring women in tradition, derogatory language persists, undermining societal respect. Education institutions oppose abuse, but OTT exposure challenges efforts. A balanced approach is crucial, fostering dialogue on artistic freedom versus cultural preservation. OTT's influence demands responsible content creation, respect for diverse audiences and societal values. Ultimately, societal progress intertwines with cultural preservation, demanding nuanced solutions to maintain integrity amidst evolving entertainment landscapes.

Rishab Vashisht | Bhopal

#### INSIGHTS ON INDIAN JEWELRY

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Heritage Indian jewellery dazzles the world", published on April 19, this is my response. Dr Alka Raghuvanshi's posthumously published masterpiece, "Rendezvous with Traditional Indian Jewellery," transcends the boundaries of a mere book. It's a heartfelt journey delving into the soul of India's cultural heritage, where artistry intertwines with pro-

found symbolism. The meticulous attention to detail reveals a rich tapestry of craftsmanship, history and significance. The book's thematic chapters unravel the evolution and diversity of Indian jewellery, from the majestic influences of the Mughal era to the intricate designs of South India. It showcases stunning visuals and explores the deep symbolism ingrained in each piece, reflecting social, religious and cultural narratives. Moreover, it sheds light on the craftsmanship and techniques passed down through generations, preserving the essence of traditional jewellery-making. Regional variations highlight the unique aesthetics across India, celebrating its diverse cultural tapestry. This book is a captivating ode to India's cherished art form, offering insights for enthusiasts, historians and admirers alike, encapsulating the beauty and legacy of Indian jewellery.

Lavanya Sharma | Lucknow

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## FIRST COLUMN

## MIND, THE KEY TO HIDDEN FORTUNE

True wealth lies not in material possessions but in the freedom of mind



RAVI VALLURI

Once upon a time lived a woman. She was struck with an unexpected tragedy as her husband passed away untimely. The lady was now left with only one son and precious jewellery. Since she was hounded by creditors to repay the debts accrued by her husband, she conjured a trick to hide the wealth.

In sheer desperation to keep the jewellery safe from creditors, the lady wrapped the precious wealth in a piece of cloth and hid it under a tree. The mother and son lived in an impoverished State. Her mind was always disturbed by the fact that she did not share this piece of vital information with her only son. As it turned out, she carried this secret to the grave.

Consequently, the son inherited plenty of debt, a barren hut and a cot. The son had to work hard for sustenance and to repay the ever-rising liabilities. He toiled hard to survive and regretted his misfortune. 'Property is not the sacred right. When a rich man becomes poor it is a misfortune, it is not a moral evil. When a poor man becomes destitute, it is a moral evil, teeming with consequences and is injurious to society and morality,' opined Lord Acton. Indeed, the impoverishment of the poor is heart-wrenching.

One day while cutting the branches of a tree, he stumbled upon the jewellery. Dumbfounded and stupefied, the strapping youngster hid the bijouterie in a pit he dug in the hut, petrified that the creditors would appropriate the wealth. He too committed the cardinal mistake of not sharing the secret with his wife and carried it to his grave. The mother and son were not mindful and wakeful enough to be in the Present Moment and remained prisoners of their past and future.



Two Buddhist monks were once discussing a flag flapping in the wind. While one felt it was the wind moving, the other conjectured it was the flag fluttering. The imbroglio could not be resolved and they sought the intervention of a Zen Master. The master impassively said, 'It is the MIND that moves, neither the flag nor the wind.'

Humans need freedom from their past and future to be in the present. And being in the NOW or present is true enlightenment and mindfulness. The past is full of sorrows and regrets while the future brims with anxieties and worries and humans are caged in that mindset, thereby postponing their happiness quotient. To appreciate true happiness and joy, the human mind should not vacillate between the past and the future but remain in the PRESENT.

A young monk was once travelling in pursuit of happiness and truth. During his travels, he encountered a massive river that he could not cross. A short while later, he saw a senior monk on the other side of the river. He hailed him and sought assistance to cross the river to reach the other side. The senior monk pondered and replied, 'You are already on the other side.'

This fact can be appreciated only when the mind is centred. Breathing techniques such as Sudarshan Kriya, Pranayama, Yoga, Meditation and Vipassana all help in dissolving the mind so that it becomes centred. 'True happiness is not possible without freedom. We have to learn the habit of being free. We do not allow our past, the future, our projects, or our fear to get hold of us. We are free. Every step is free. Every step is nourishment. Every step is healing. Every step is joy,' says Thich Nhat Hanh.

(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)

## Human-elephant conflict: The way out

To ensure the protection of these majestic creatures, it is imperative to revisit and revise legislative frameworks with a focus on ecological sustainability



BKP SINHA



ARVIND JHA

India's rich biodiversity includes a significant population of Asian elephants, which are not only an integral part of the country's wildlife heritage but also hold cultural and religious significance. However, the increasing instances of human-elephant conflict (HEC) have become a pressing concern for both conservationists and those living near elephant habitats.

The root causes of HEC are multifaceted, primarily stemming from habitat loss and fragmentation due to human activities. As India's population expands, so does the need for land for agricultural and developmental activities. This expansion often leads to encroachment into elephant territories, resulting in the destruction or fragmentation of their natural habitats. Consequently, elephants are forced to venture closer to human habitations in search of food and space. Mining activities, in particular, lead to deforestation and habitat degradation, disrupting elephant migratory routes and undermining the scope and health of elephant habitats. Similarly, urbanisation and infrastructure development often intersect with elephant corridors, pushing these gentle giants into unfamiliar and potentially dangerous territories. Climate change is another significant factor in this conflict. Changes in climate patterns can affect the availability and distribution of food and water sources in elephant habitats. Extreme weather events like droughts, floods and high temperatures can force elephants to migrate in search of these resources, often bringing them into conflict with humans. The current State of HEC in India is alarming. Over 500 humans are killed annually in encounters with elephants and more than 100 elephants lose their lives due to human-related activities, including poaching for ivory, poisoning, electrocution and collisions with trains. Train collisions are the second-highest cause of unnatural elephant deaths in the country, following accidental electrocution. Over the past decade, train collisions have claimed the lives of more than 200 elephants.

As mega-herbivores, elephants consume up to 150 kilograms of forage and drink up to 190 litres of water per day. This necessitates a large foraging area, typically spanning 100-1,000 km<sup>2</sup> for a family herd, to provide a diverse diet of grasses, shrubs and fruits. However, navigating large areas to find sufficient food and water becomes a challenge when these areas overlap with human activities. This often results in crop raiding, property damage, and, in some tragic instances, human casualties. These incidents, unfortunately, lead to retaliatory actions from humans that can be fatal for these majestic creatures, further intensifying their fear and mistrust of humans. Farmers, particularly those with limited resources struggle to cope with crop losses. This hardship breeds resentment towards elephants, undermining conservation efforts and trapping both humans and elephants in a cycle of violence.

Since 2019, there have been over 1500 human fatalities reported due to elephant attacks. In 2023-24 alone, Odisha reported 149 elephant deaths due to HEC. Mineral-rich districts like Dhenkanal, Angul, Keonjhar and Sundargarh have been hit the hardest, with Dhenkanal alone witnessing 130 elephants and 227 human deaths over the last decade.

In August 2023, three elephants were electrocuted at the Rani Tea Estate near Guwahati due to low-hanging high-voltage



WESTERN MAHARASHTRA, A REGION NOT TRADITIONALLY KNOWN FOR ELEPHANT HABITATION, SAW A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN 2002 WHEN ELEPHANTS MIGRATED FROM KARNATAKA. THIS MOVEMENT WAS LARGELY ATTRIBUTED TO THEIR DISPLACEMENT FROM THE DANDELI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, A PLACE THEY HAD INHABITED COMFORTABLY UNTIL 1990

wires. This was not an isolated incident; back in October 2021, sagging power lines near the Dihing-Patkai National Park claimed the lives of another three elephants. The situation worsened in October 2022, when within a single week, 11 elephants across Assam lost their lives to human-related hazards including electrocution, crop poisoning and train collisions.

Western Maharashtra, a region not traditionally known for elephant habitation, saw a significant change in 2002 when elephants migrated from Karnataka. This movement was largely attributed to their displacement from the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, a place they had inhabited comfortably until 1990. The construction of the Kali hydro-electric project is believed to have been the catalyst for their relocation to the districts of Kolhapur and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra, leading to notable incidents of crop raiding. A similar pattern emerged in 2022 when a herd of 22 elephants trekked from Chhattisgarh to Maharashtra, settling in the lush forests along the Wain-Ganga, Pranrita and Dina river basins. This migration has been linked to increased human encroachment, the construction of two canals in Odisha and mining disturbances in their traditional corridors.

The Wayanad region, a vital watershed for Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, is currently facing a multitude of environmental challenges such as deforestation, irresponsible tourism and unscientific development. Such activities are posing a significant threat to the ecological balance of the region, endangering the lives of both humans and wildlife. Wayanad plays a critical role in maintaining regional biodiversity. However, ongoing habitat degradation in this region could potentially intensify the water crisis in the Kaveri basin and escalate the HEC, which has tragically led to 41 fatalities already. Similarly, in the northeastern States of Assam and West Bengal, expanding tea plantations and human settlements have encroached on elephants' traditional grounds, leading to frequent HEC incidents.

Addressing HEC requires a multi-

pronged approach that balances the needs of wildlife conservation with the socio-economic realities of human populations living near elephant habitats. This includes securing and restoring elephant corridors to ensure safe passage for elephants between different habitats, thereby reducing the likelihood of them entering human-dominated landscapes. Recognising this need, the Indian Government has launched an ambitious initiative known as Project Elephant. This program focuses on enhancing elephant habitats by creating a network of reserves, corridors and protected areas. To address the common issue of crop raiding in human-elephant interactions, the project employs innovative technologies such as early warning systems and elephant-proof barriers. It also implements various strategies like durable and solar-powered electric fences and biological deterrents including bio-fencing with cacti, beehive fences and chilli smoke to deter elephants.

Enhancing the natural food supply within forests is another essential strategy for preventing elephants from entering human territories. This involves improving water conservation, regenerating forests by replanting and nurturing native trees and plants, implementing fire protection and removing invasive species. Programs focused on ecotourism and livelihood diversification not only engage local communities in conservation but also provide them with sustainable economic alternatives. Success stories from the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape underscore the effectiveness of community-led conservation endeavours, strategic land-use planning, trans-border collaboration and habitat restoration in diminishing conflict incidents. Kerala has also taken a bold initiative to relocate people from forest regions and reforest agricultural lands, despite the central Government's refusal to fund this Rs. 620 crore project. The State's declaration of HEC as a State-specific disaster and the involvement of the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority in

conflict management, are significant steps towards addressing this complex issue.

Statutory support is fundamental in the conservation efforts addressing the HEC. Elephants, listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List, are protected under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Recent amendments to the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 have raised concerns regarding their impact on elephant reserves and corridors, particularly within the 100 km strip of India's boundary where the majority of these reserves and corridors are located. These changes could potentially worsen the fragmentation and degradation of these vital habitats, thereby intensifying the HEC. The Forest Rights Act of 2006, while well-intentioned in empowering forest-dwelling communities, has also had unintended consequences. Its implementation has sometimes resulted in further encroachments and habitat fragmentation, which can force elephants to venture into new areas in search of refuge and resources, increasing the likelihood and severity of conflicts. Post-project monitoring, particularly in the mining industry, is often insufficient, leading to a neglect of wildlife protection measures that were stipulated during the project's approval. This oversight can result in significant harm to elephant populations and their habitats, undermining conservation efforts.

As we move forward, let us remember that our fates are intertwined with those of the elephants and all wildlife. Their survival is our survival. Their well-being reflects the health of our planet and their continued existence enriches our world in ways that cannot be quantified. It's high time we recognise our role and act responsibly, ensuring a future where humans and wildlife coexist harmoniously, each playing their part in maintaining the balance of our shared ecosystem.

(The writers are former principal chief conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra; views are personal)

## Rahul Gandhi holds on to Wayanad despite speculation

The decision comes as a strategic move, influenced by a variety of factors, including local dynamics and broader political alliances in Kerala

Even as the Indian National Congress was burning midnight oil about the Lok Sabha constituency from where Rahul Gandhi would contest this time, The Pioneer has reported that the scion of the Nehru-Gandhi clan would not leave Wayanad from where he was elected with a mammoth majority of four lakh votes in the 2019 edition of the General Election. The report was prepared after speaking to a cross-section of the electorate in the Wayanad constituency who were unanimous in their opinion that Rahul Gandhi should contest from Wayanad itself.



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

made it known that Rahul should register a much bigger majority than that of the 2019 poll because the opponent happened to be Annie Raja of the CPI and K Surendran of the BJP. Annie, the spouse of D Raja, CPI's national general secretary, had rubbed Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in the wrong way and the CPI(M) cadres consider it as a cardinal sin.

Raja too had publicly questioned the capability of Vijayan and this made the CPI(M) activists furious. Had the Congress or BJP leaders criticized Vijayan, they would not have bothered but the CPI had crossed the Lakshman Rekha (it could be Stalinist Rekha since the comrades do not accept Ramayana). The CPI(M) comrades would certainly teach Annie Raja a lesson or two in the art of politics. The truth is that the CPI(M) leaders wanted Rahul Gandhi to contest from Wayanad so that the CPI would lose one seat for sure.

The decision to field Surendran, the Kerala State president of the BJP, was made much later. Surendran himself knows that he would

lose by a big margin but he has to kowtow the party line. The information coming out of the BJP office is that he may be given a gubernatorial position even if he loses the security deposit. There are no suitable candidates in Kerala BJP to challenge the supremacy of Rahul Gandhi and the Congress. The question being asked by Wayanad voters is that how many people remember the names of the 2019 challengers to Rahul Gandhi.

What is interesting is that the animosity between the CPI(M) and Congress has come down drastically with Gandhi filing the nomination from Wayanad. Though the Congress leaders lambast the CPI(M), it is just a façade to convince the hardcore mem-

bers of these parties that there is no alliance between them. But what the people of the State see in TV channels and newspapers is the video images and pictures of Sitaram Yechury and D Raja hugging and kissing Rahul Gandhi while in Tripura former CPI(M) Chief Minister Manik Sarkar openly campaigning for the Congress party's candidates.

Kerala is the only State where they act as if they are rivals and enemies. By the next election, one can see the Congress and the CPI(M) fighting it together in Kerala against the BJP-led front (provided the Hindutva party leadership throws out all the rotten eggs from its basket). There is no difference between the Congress and

the CPI(M) as of date.

Political pundits have been asking both parties to officially legalize the ties so that the entire secular parties could be arrayed under the flag of the Congress across the country against the "communal and fascist" forces. The secular parties include the Muslim League! In Marxist parlance, they say that whoever aligns with the CPI(M) is secular while the BJP is "communal and fascist". The CPI(M) does not have any issues in accepting the former NDA constituents as allies once they call off the marriage of convenience with the BJP. Telugu Desam of Andhra Pradesh, BJD of Orissa, BSP and JD(U) are some of the major political outfits whose secularist cre-

dentials depend on their ties with the BJP.

The press meeting addressed by A K Antony, the Bheeshma Pitamah of the Congress on 9 April 2024 at Thiruvananthapuram was an indicator of how political marriages take place in Kerala. While Antony was cursing his son Anil Antony who is contesting from Pathanamthitta as a BJP candidate and asking the electorate to ensure the defeat of his son, he was waxing eloquence on Anto Antony, the Congress candidate who is pitted against Anil. The former defence minister lambasted the BJP as anti-nationalists, communalists and dictators. But what stood out was his silence on the CPI(M) candi-

dates. Antony's ties with the CPI(M) are infamous as he had sailed with the Marxists for almost two years during 1980-1983.

The CPI(M) and the Congress-led by Antony fought the 1980 general election together and ruled Kerala for almost two years. The Congress faction was pushed out of the LDF by the CPI(M) which demolished the offices of the Congress across the State with the police looking the other way. It is not without any reason political pundits say that politics make strange persons into bedfellows. Do we need more proof than A K Antony?

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



# Iran fires at apparent Israeli attack drones

AP ■ DUBAI

An apparent Israeli drone attack on Iran saw troops fire air defenses at a major air base and a nuclear site early on Friday morning near the central city of Isfahan, an assault coming in retaliation for Tehran's unprecedented drone-and-missile assault on the country. No Iranian official directly acknowledged the possibility that Israel attacked, and the Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment. However, tensions have been high since the Saturday assault on Israel amid its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and its own strikes targeting Iran in Syria.

Speaking at the G7 meeting in Capri, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said the US received "last-minute" information from Israel about the attack on Isfahan. United States officials declined to comment as of early Friday, but American broadcast networks quoting unnamed US officials said Israel carried out

the attack. The New York Times quoted anonymous Israeli officials claiming the assault, which came on Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's 85th birthday. Israeli politicians also made comments hinting that the country had launched an attack.

Air defense batteries fired in several provinces over reports of drones being in the air, state television reported. Iranian army commander Gen. Abdolrahim Mousavi said crews targeted several flying objects. "The explosion this morning in the sky of Isfahan was related to the shooting of air defense systems at a suspicious object that did not cause any damage," Mousavi said. Others suggested the drones may be so-called quadcopters — four rotor, small drones that are commercially available. Authorities said air defenses fired at a major air base in Isfahan, which long has been home to Iran's fleet of American-made F-14 Tomcats — purchased before the 1979

Islamic Revolution. Tasnim also published a video from one of its reporters, who said he was in the southeastern Zerdenjan area of Isfahan, near its "nuclear energy mountain." The footage showed two different anti-aircraft gun positions, and details of the video corresponded with known features of the site of Iran's Uranium Conversion Facility at Isfahan. "At 4:45, we heard gunshots. There was nothing going on," he said. "It was the air defense, these guys that you're watching, and over there too."

The facility at Isfahan operates three small Chinese-supplied research reactors, as well as handling fuel production and other activities for Iran's civilian nuclear program. Isfahan also is home to sites associated with Iran's nuclear program, including its underground Natanz enrichment site, which has been repeatedly targeted by suspected Israeli sabotage attacks. State television described all atomic sites in the area as "fully safe." The United Nations

nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, also said "there is no damage to Iran's nuclear sites" after the incident. The IAEA "continues to call for extreme restraint from everybody and reiterates that nuclear facilities should never be a target in military conflicts," the agency said.

Iran's nuclear program has rapidly advanced to producing enriched uranium at nearly weapons-grade levels since the collapse of its atomic deal with world powers after then-President Donald Trump withdrew America from the accord in 2018.

While Iran insists its program is for peaceful purposes, Western nations and the IAEA say Tehran operated a secret military weapons program until 2003. The IAEA has warned that Iran now holds enough enriched uranium to build several nuclear weapons if it chose to do so — though the US intelligence community maintains Tehran is not actively seeking the bomb.

Dubai-based carriers Emirates and FlyDubai began diverting around western Iran about 4:30 a.m. local time. They offered no explanation, though local warnings to aviators suggested the airspace may have been closed.

Iran then grounded commercial flights in Tehran and across areas of its western and central regions. Iran later restored normal flight service, authorities said. Around the time of the incident in Iran, Syria's state-run SANA news agency quoted a military statement saying Israel carried out a missile strike targeting an air defense unit in its south and causing material damage. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said the strike hit a military radar for government forces. It was not clear if there were casualties, the Observatory said.

That area of Syria is directly west of Isfahan, some 1,500 kilometers (930 miles) away, and east of Israel. Meanwhile in Iraq, where a

number of Iranian-backed militias are based, residents of Baghdad reported hearing sounds of explosions, but the source of the noise was not immediately clear.

The incident Friday in Iran also sparked concerns about the conflict again escalating across the seas of the Middle East, which have been seeing attacks by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels of Yemen on shipping over the war in Gaza.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center warned ships in the region that they could see increased drone activity in the skies. "There are currently no indications commercial vessels are the intended target," it wrote. The Houthis have launched at least 53 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sank another since November, according to the US Maritime Administration. Houthi attacks have rebbed in recent weeks as the rebels have been targeted by a US-led airstrike campaign in Yemen and as shipping through the Red Sea

and Gulf of Aden has declined over the threat. The apparent attack also briefly spooked energy markets, sending benchmark Brent crude above USD 90 before it fell again in trading Friday. However, Iranian state-run media sought to downplay the incident after the fact, airing footage of an otherwise-peaceful Isfahan morning. That could be intentional, particularly after Iranian officials for days have been threatening to retaliate for any Israeli retaliatory attack on the nation.

"As long as Iran continues to deny the attack and deflect attention from it and no further hits are seen, there is space for both sides to climb down the escalation ladder for now," said Sanam Vakil, the director of the Middle East and North Africa program at Chatham House. (AP) Associated Press journalists Nasser Karimi, Mehdi Fattahi and Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran; Bassem Mroue in Beirut; and Nicole Winfield in Capri, Italy; contributed to this report.

## Man detained after police op at Iranian consulate

Paris (AP): Police said Friday they detained a man at the Iranian consulate in Paris after responding to a report of a suspicious man possibly carrying a grenade and explosives vest, but did they did not immediately confirm finding any weapons. A Paris police official told The Associated Press that officers were verifying the man's identity and trying to determine whether he had weapons. The official was speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to be publicly named under police policy.

The official said the man was spotted around 11 a.m. (0900 GMT) on Friday and that police launched a special operation as soon as they were alerted. The man's motives were not immediately clear. No explosions have been reported, the official said.

Images on French television and social media showed police surrounding the building.

## Israel warned US about drone attack on Iran, Italian foreign min says at G7

Capri (AP): The United States told the Group of Seven foreign ministers on Friday that it received "last minute" information from Israel about a drone action in Iran, Italy's foreign minister said.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, who chaired the meeting of ministers of industrialised countries, said the United States provided the information at a Friday morning session that was changed at the last minute to address the suspected attack.

Tajani said the US informed the G7 ministers that it had been "informed at the last minute" by Israel about the drones. "But there was no sharing of the attack by the US. It was a mere information."

Early Friday, Iran fired air defenses at a major air base and a nuclear site near the central city of Isfahan after spotting drones, part of an apparent Israeli attack in retaliation for Tehran's unprecedented drone-

and-missile assault on the country last weekend.

In a communique following the three-day meeting, the ministers urged the parties "to prevent further escalation."

The statement pledged support for Israel's security and condemned "in the strongest terms" what the foreign ministers described as Iran's "unprecedented attack against Israel of April 13-14, which Israel defeated with the help of its partners," as well as the seizure of the Portuguese-flagged vessel MSC Aries in the Strait of Hormuz.

"We stand ready to adopt further sanctions or take other measures, now and in response to further destabilising initiatives," the document read.

The group also warned Iran against transferring ballistic missiles and related technology to Russia. On the war in Gaza, the group called on Hamas to release hostages and reminded Israel to respect international and humanitarian law.

# US vetoes Palestinian bid to gain statehood at UN

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

The US has vetoed a resolution in the UN Security Council on the latest Palestinian bid to be granted full membership of the United Nations, an outcome lauded by Israel but criticised by Palestine as "unfair, immoral, and unjustified."

The 15-nation Council voted on a draft resolution Thursday that would have recommended to the 193-member UN General Assembly "that the State of Palestine be admitted to membership in the United Nations."

The resolution got 12 votes in its favour, with Switzerland and the UK abstaining and the US casting its veto.

To be adopted, the draft resolution required at least nine Council members voting in its favour, with no vetoes by any of its five permanent members - China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Palestinian attempts for recognition as a full member state began in 2011. Palestine is currently a non-member

observer state, a status that was granted in November 2012 by the UN General Assembly. This status allows Palestine to participate in proceedings of the world body but it cannot vote on resolutions. The only other non-member Observer State at the UN is the Holy See, representing the Vatican.

Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz praised the US for vetoing what he called a "shameful proposal."

"The proposal to recognise a Palestinian state, more than 6 months after the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust and after the sexual crimes and other atrocities committed by Hamas terrorists was a reward for terrorism," Katz wrote on X, after the US veto.

US Ambassador Robert Wood, Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs, said in the explanation of the vote at the Security Council meeting on Palestinian membership that Washington continues to strongly support a two-state solution.

"It remains the US view that the most expeditious path

toward statehood for the Palestinian people is through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority with the support of the United States and other partners," he said.

"This vote does not reflect opposition to Palestinian statehood, but instead is an acknowledgement that it will only come from direct negotiations between the parties."

Wood said there are "unresolved questions" as to whether Palestine meets the criteria to be considered a State.

"We have long called on the Palestinian Authority to undertake necessary reforms to help establish the attributes of readiness for statehood and note that Hamas - a terrorist organisation - is currently exerting power and influence in Gaza, an integral part of the state envisioned in this resolution," he said, adding that "For these reasons, the United States voted "no" on this Security Council resolution."

Wood noted that since the October 7 attacks last year against Israel by Hamas, US President Joe Biden has been

clear that sustainable peace in the region can only be achieved through a two-state solution, with Israel's security guaranteed.

"There is no other path that guarantees Israel's security and future as a democratic Jewish state. There is no other path that guarantees Palestinians can live in peace and with dignity in a state of their own. And there is no other path that leads to regional integration between Israel and all its Arab neighbours, including Saudi Arabia," he said.

The Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, sharply criticised the US veto, saying that it was "unfair, immoral, and unjustified, and defies the will of the international community, which strongly supports the State of Palestine obtaining full membership in the United Nations."

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, said that "our right to self-determination has never once been subject to bargaining or negotiation."

"Our right to self-determination is a natural right, a historic

right, a legal right. A right to live in our homeland Palestine as an independent state that is free and that is sovereign. Our right to self-determination is inalienable..." he said.

Getting emotional and choking up as he made the remarks, Mansour said that a majority of the Council members "have risen to the level of this historic moment" and have stood "on the side of justice, freedom and hope."

He asserted that Palestine's admission as a full member of the UN is an "investment in peace." On April 2, 2024, Palestine again sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres requesting that its application for full UN membership be considered again.

For a State to be granted full UN membership, its application must be approved both by the Security Council and the General Assembly, where a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting is required for the State to be admitted as a full member.

Earlier in the day, Guterres, in his remarks to a Council meet-

ing on the Middle East, warned that the region is on a "knife edge".

"Recent escalations make it even more important to support good-faith efforts to find lasting peace between Israel and a fully independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian state," Guterres said.

"Failure to make progress towards a two-state solution will only increase volatility and risk for hundreds of millions of people across the region, who will continue to live under the constant threat of violence," he said.

The UN, citing the Ministry of Health in Gaza, said that between October 7 last year and April 17, at least 33,899 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and 76,664 Palestinians injured.

Over 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals, including 33 children, have been killed in Israel, the vast majority on October 7. As of April 17, Israeli authorities estimate that 133 Israelis and foreign nationals remain captive in Gaza, including fatalities whose bodies are withheld.

## Jury selection could be nearing close in Trump's hush money trial

AP ■ NEW YORK

Lawyers worked Friday to round out the panel of 12 jurors and six alternates who will hear Donald Trump's hush money trial, as the former president railed against a gag order that has prosecutors seeking to hold him in contempt of court.

After a jury of 12 New Yorkers was seated Thursday, lawyers turned their attention to picking alternates who can vow to set aside their personal views and judge the presumptive Republican presidential nominee.

Thursday's proceedings demonstrated unpredictability in the jury selection process of such a high-profile case, with two jurors who had been seated a day earlier being dismissed from the panel.

The judge has suggested that opening statements could begin as early as Monday, before prosecutors begin laying out their case alleging a scheme to cover up negative



Former President Donald Trump holds up news clippings as he speaks following his trial at Manhattan criminal court in New York on Thursday. AP/PTI

stories Trump feared would hurt his 2016 presidential campaign.

The trial will place Trump in a Manhattan courtroom for weeks, forcing him to juggle his dual role as criminal defendant and political candi-

date against the backdrop of his hotly contested race against President Joe Biden. It will feature salacious and unflattering testimony his opponent will no doubt seize on to try to paint Trump as unfit to return as commander in chief. After

arriving at the courthouse Friday, Trump complained about the gag order imposed by the judge that limits what he can publicly say about witnesses.

He has lashed out on social media about the judge, prosecutors and likely witnesses, prompting the district attorneys to seek sanctions for possible gag order violations. The judge will hold a hearing next week on prosecutors' request to hold Trump in contempt.

"The gag order has to come off. People are allowed to speak about me, and I have a gag order," Trump said. After a new group of potential jurors was brought into the courtroom, one woman who said she didn't believe she could be "completely fair" was excused.

Judge Juan M. Merchan is also expected to hold a hearing Friday to consider a request from prosecutors to bring up Trump's prior legal entanglements if he takes the stand in the hush money case.

## Attack blamed on IS militants kills 22 people in central Syria

Beirut (AP): An attack on pro-government fighters by suspected members of the Islamic State group in central Syria killed 22 pro-government fighters, an opposition war monitor and pro-government media reported on Friday.

Gunmen attacked a bus carrying members of the Quds Brigade, a government and Russian-backed faction of mostly Palestinian fighters in Syria, near the town of Sukhna late Thursday night. Sukhna was once an IS stronghold. There was no immediate claim of responsibility but both the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based opposition war monitor, and the pro-government radio station Sham FM said IS was behind the attack. Both the Observatory and Sham FM said 22 fighters were killed. Sham FM said they were all Quds Brigade gunmen, while the Observatory said the majority belonged to the group.

## Xi Jinping launches Information Support Force for military

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday launched an Information Support Force, a new wing of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which he said will be a "strategic branch" and a "key pillar" of the army. Xi, who also heads the Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the Chinese military, besides heading the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Presidency, said that the establishment of the information support force is a major decision made by the CPC and the CMC in light of the overall need of building a strong military. After presenting a flag to the force at its establishment ceremony in Beijing, Xi, 71, stressed that the information support force is a new, strategic branch of the military and a key pillar in coordinating the construction and application of the net-

work information system. It will play a crucial role in advancing the Chinese military's high-quality development and competitiveness in modern warfare, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted him as saying.

He ordered the force to resolutely obey the ruling Communist Party's command, and make sure it stays absolutely loyal, pure and reliable. Xi urged the force to integrate deeply into the Chinese military's joint operation system, carry out information support operations in a precise and effective manner, and facilitate military operations in various directions and fields. He also urged efforts to build a network information system that fulfils the requirements of modern warfare and features the Chinese military's own characteristics, as well as efforts to accelerate the development of integrated combat capabilities more effectively.

## 3 dead in UAE floods

AP ■ DUBAI

Three people have died in the United Arab Emirates as a result of heavy flooding caused by record-setting rains this week, officials said Friday.

A statement by the Philippine's Department of Migrant Workers said two women suffocated inside their vehicle during the flooding, while a man died when his vehicle fell into a sinkhole.

The exact number of deaths caused by the storm is not yet known as UAE officials have not released any information.

The UAE, a hereditarily ruled, autocratic nation on the Arabian Peninsula, typically sees little rainfall in its arid desert climate. However, a massive storm forecasters had been warning about for days blew through the country's seven sheikhdoms.

By the end of Tuesday, more than 142 millimeters (5.59 inches) of rainfall had soaked Dubai over 24 hours. An average year sees 94.7 millimeters (3.73 inches) of rain at Dubai International Airport. Other areas of the country saw even more precipitation.

Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, hoped to be back on a normal schedule within 24 hours, its CEO told The Associated Press late Thursday. On Friday, long-haul carrier Emirates said on the social platform X that it would again halt local check-in for passengers traveling on its flights until early Saturday to "support operations recovery from the recent bad weather at our Dubai hub." Low-cost carrier FlyDubai also saw some disruptions. Meanwhile, intense floods also struck neighboring Oman in recent days. On Thursday, authorities raised the death toll from those storms to at least 21 killed.

## Trial underway for Panama Papers case

AP ■ PANAMA CITY

Eight years after 11 million leaked secret financial documents revealed how some of the world's richest people hide their wealth, more than two dozen defendants are on trial in Panama for their alleged roles.

The repercussions of the leaks were far-ranging, prompting the resignation of the prime minister of Iceland and bringing scrutiny to the then-leaders of Argentina and Ukraine, Chinese politicians and Russian President Vladimir Putin, among others.

But those on trial now for alleged money laundering are principally the leaders and associates of the now defunct Panamanian boutique law firm that helped set up the shell companies used to obscure those really behind them. The leaders of that firm, Jürgen Mossack and Ramón Fonseca, are among those on trial.

Panamanian prosecutors allege that Mossack, Fonseca and their associates created a web of offshore companies that used complex transactions to hide money linked to illicit activities in the "car wash" corruption scandal of Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht.

In December 2016, Odebrecht pleaded guilty in US federal court to a charge related to its use of shell companies to disguise hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes paid in countries around the world to win public contracts. According to Panamanian prosecutors, the Mossack Fonseca firm created 44 shell companies, 31 of which opened accounts in Panama to hide money linked to the Brazilian scandal. The judge on the case, Baloisa Marquinez, last year decided to also merge the Odebrecht-related charges to prosecutors' allegations about the firm's work for German

giant Siemens. Prosecutors allege a former executive with the company used entities created by Mossack Fonseca to transfer funds for bribes.

A Siemens spokesperson declined to comment, noting that it is not a party to the Panama case and that it involves former Siemens employees in their private capacity.

The 71-year-old Fonseca has not been present for the trial, because his lawyer said he is hospitalized. But he had previously said his firm did not control how their clients used the shell companies the firm created for them. Its role was simply the creation and sale of the companies. Mossack, a 76-year-old lawyer originally from Germany, said in a statement "we categorically reject that we have committed any crime, nor Mossack Fonseca nor the subsidiaries... and we hope that can be proved in the trial."



Treasurer Jim Chalmers of Australia, from left, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland of Canada, and Finance Minister Nicola Willis of New Zealand, pose for a photograph after a Five Eyes Finance Ministers meeting at the Treasury Department, on Thursday in Washington. AP/PTI



# Envoy says US determined to monitor North Korean nukes

AP ■ SEOUL

The United States and its allies are discussing options "both inside and outside the UN system" to create a new mechanism for monitoring North Korea over its nuclear weapons programme, the American ambassador to the United Nations said on Wednesday.

Russia last month vetoed a UN resolution in a move that effectively abolished monitoring by UN experts of Security Council sanctions against North Korea, which prompted Western accusations that Moscow was acting to shield its arms purchases from North Korea to fuel its war in Ukraine.

"I look forward to engaging with both the Republic of Korea and Japan, but like-minded (countries) as well, on trying to develop options both inside the UN as well as outside the UN. The point here is that we cannot allow the work that the panel of experts were doing to lapse," US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told a news conference in Seoul, using the formal name for South Korea.

Thomas-Greenfield didn't provide specific details about US discussions with allies and other partners, including whether an alternative monitoring regime would more likely be established through the UN General Assembly or with an independent entity outside of the UN.

Thomas-Greenfield met with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul on Monday and they discussed unspecified "next steps to ensure a continuation of independent and accurate reporting" of North Korea's illicit weapons development activities, according to her office.

Thomas-Greenfield said it was



clear that Russia and China, which abstained from voting on the UN resolution vetoed by Moscow, will continue to try to block international efforts to maintain monitoring of UN sanctions against North Korea. She criticised Russia for violating those sanctions with its alleged arms purchases from North Korea, and China for protecting the North from being held accountable.

Moscow and Beijing have thwarted US-led efforts to tighten UN sanctions on North Korea over its ramped-up ballistic missile testing since 2022, underscoring a divide between permanent Security Council members that deepened over Russia's war on Ukraine.

"I don't expect that they will cooperate or agree with any efforts that we make to find another path, but that is not going to stop us from finding that path moving forward," Thomas-Greenfield said.

Thomas-Greenfield also briefly addressed questions about ten-

sions in the Middle East. When asked about the Palestinian Authority's request to have full UN membership, she said a UN resolution in support of that request would not contribute to finding a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"President Biden has said categorically that we support a two-state solution for addressing the situation in the Middle East, where Palestinians will have a state of their own and Israel is secure in their state, and we are working on the ground to get to that place as quickly as possible," she said. "We do not see that doing a resolution in the Security Council will necessarily get us to a place where we can find a... two-state solution moving forward," she added.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest point in years, as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has accelerated his weapons demonstrations and issued provocative threats of nuclear conflict

against rivals. The United States, South Korea and Japan have responded by expanding their combined military exercises and sharpening their nuclear deterrence strategies built around strategic US assets.

In a telephone conversation on Wednesday, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida agreed to further strengthen three-way cooperation with Washington to counter North Korean threats and other regional challenges amid "deepening uncertainties in the international situation", Yoon's office said.

The Security Council imposed sanctions after North Korea's first nuclear test explosion in 2006 and tightened them over the years in a total of 10 resolutions seeking — so far unsuccessfully — to cut funds and curb its nuclear and missile programmes. The last sanctions resolution was adopted by the council in December 2017. The Security Council established a committee to monitor sanctions, and the mandate for its panel of experts to investigate violations had been renewed for 14 years until last month.

Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told the Security Council before last month's vote that Western nations are trying to "strangle" North Korea and that sanctions are losing their "relevance" in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the North. In its most recent report circulated last month, the panel of experts said it is investigating 58 suspected North Korean cyberattacks between 2017 and 2023 valued at approximately USD 3 billion, with the money reportedly being used to help fund its weapons development.

# Ukraine claims it shot down Russian strategic bomber

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's air force claimed Friday it shot down a Russian strategic bomber, but Moscow officials said the plane crashed in a sparsely populated area due to a malfunction after a combat mission. Neither claim could be independently verified.

Previous Ukrainian claims of shooting down Russian warplanes during their more than two-year war have met with silence or denials from Moscow. Meanwhile, Russian missiles struck cities in the central Dnipro region of Ukraine, killing eight people, including a 14-year-old girl and 8-year-old boy, and injuring 28, local officials said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy repeated Kyiv officials' almost daily appeals for more Western air defense systems, again drawing a parallel with how Israel blunted a recent Iranian attack.

Missile and drone attacks can be thwarted, he wrote on social platform X. "This has been demonstrated in the skies over the Middle East, and it should also work in Europe." Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba added: "Children must not be killed in airstrikes in modern Europe." Russia's air force is vastly more powerful than Ukraine's, but sophisticated missile systems provided by Kyiv's Western partners are a major threat to Russian aviation as the Kremlin's forces slowly push forward along the around 1,000-kilometre front line in what has become a grinding war of attrition. Ukrainian officials say they expect a major Russian offensive in the summer. Ukraine said the air force and military intelligence cooperated to bring down the Tu-22M3 bomber

# EU official von der Leyen visits Finland-Russia border to assess security situation

AP ■ COPENHAGEN



The head of the European Union's executive branch said on Friday that Finland's decision to close its border crossings with Russia over a surge in migrants was a security matter for the whole 27-member bloc to consider.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen made the remarks during a trip to the frontier, visiting a part of the border located in the Arctic. "We all know how (Russian President Vladimir) Putin and his allies instrumentalize migrants to test our defenses and to try to destabilize us," von der Leyen said.

"Now Putin is focusing on Finland, and this is no doubt in response to your firm support of Ukraine and your accession to NATO." On April 4, Finland decided to extend the closure of its border crossing points with Russia "until further notice" because of what the government says is a high risk of organized migration being orchestrated by Moscow.

Finland's government has closed eight of its nine checkpoints with Russia. The only one that remains open is dedicated to rail travel only, and cargo trains mainly run through it. Finland shares a 1,340-kilometre (832-mile) land border with Russia, running mostly through thick forests in the south, and to the rugged landscape in the Arctic north. "This is not just about the security of Finland, but it is about the security of the European Union. We are in this together," von der Leyen said

after visiting the border in Lappeenranta with Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo. "We should be more Finnish when it comes to security." Von der Leyen and Orpo flew in a Finnish helicopter over the landscape of forests and towns on the border. In a statement issued after the visit, Orpo said that "the spring's warmer weather increases the risk of Russia helping people illegally try to get to Finland via the land border... outside the border crossing points."

Most of the migrants hail from the Middle East and Africa. The vast majority of them have sought asylum in Finland, a member of the EU and NATO with a population of 5.6 million. Finland joined NATO in April 2023, ending decades of neutrality after the country's defeat by the Soviet Union in World War II. In March, Sweden also became a member of the trans-Atlantic alliance. The move dealt a major blow to Putin, with a historic realignment of Europe's post-Cold War security landscape triggered by Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

with anti-aircraft missiles. Russia commonly uses the bomber to fire Kh-22 cruise missiles at Ukrainian targets from inside its own airspace. The plane can also carry nuclear warheads.

The Russian defense ministry said the warplane crashed "in a deserted area" in the southern region of Stavropol, hundreds of kilometers (miles) from the Ukrainian border. Three crew members were rescued after ejecting from the aircraft, and the search for a fourth is taking place, according to the ministry. But Stavropol Gov. Vladimir Vladimirov said one of the rescued pilots died.

On Christmas Eve, Ukraine claimed to have shot down two Russian fighter jets. In January, the Ukrainian air force said it shot down a Russian early warning and control plane and a key command center aircraft that relays information to troops on the ground, in what appeared to be a significant blow for the Kremlin's forces. The next month, Ukraine said it knocked out another early warning and control plane.

Also in January, Moscow accused Kyiv of shooting down a Russian military transport plane that was carrying Ukrainian POWs who were headed for a prisoner swap. Russian forces overnight conducted a combined aerial attack with the use of 22 missiles of various types and 14 Shahed drones during the night, the Ukrainian air force said. All the drones and 15 of the missiles were intercepted, it said. The attack hit urban areas as well as train infrastructure in the Dnipro region, Ukraine's National Railway Operator said. Among those killed in the strikes was employee Oksana Storozhenko, the mother of two teenage sons, it said.

# More people evacuated after dramatic eruption of Indonesian volcano

AP ■ MANADO

More people living near an erupting volcano on Indonesia's Sulawesi Island were evacuated on Friday due to the dangers of spreading ash, falling rocks, hot volcanic clouds and the possibility of a tsunami. An international airport in Manado city, which is located less than 100 kilometers (62 miles) from the erupting Mount Ruang, is still temporarily closed as volcanic ash was spewed into the air.

Satellite imagery from the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency showed that the ash has spread to the west, northwest, northeast and southeast, covering Manado and North Minahasa, according to a statement from Indonesia's Transportation Ministry.

"We are still monitoring developments in the eruption of Mount Ruang and coordinating with relevant stakeholders... to anticipate the necessary actions to ensure flight safety, security and comfort," said Ambar Suryoko, head of the regional airport authority.

More than 11,000 people were told to leave their homes and at least 1,000 have done so. A joint

team from the local authorities is still combing the villages surrounding the volcano and evacuating the residents to safer areas by boat.

Officials worry that part of the volcano could collapse into the sea and cause a tsunami, as happened in an eruption there in 1871 eruption. Houses, roads and other buildings in the affected areas were covered by gray volcanic ash. Many house roofs were also broken by the materials spewed from the eruption.

Mount Ruang saw at least five large eruptions Wednesday, causing the Centre for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation to issue its highest level of alert. People were ordered to stay at least 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) from the 725-metre (2,378-foot) mountain. The observation showed on Tuesday. "China is the fork in the road. Why? Because China has to define growth strategies for the future. China has the benefit of a particular set of policies over the last decades, export-oriented growth, but the time has come to look at domestic sources for growth, opening up more opportunities for the market to lift up these prospects," Georgieva said.

# IMF MD says China has to define growth strategies for the future

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Observing that China has the benefit of a particular set of policies over the last decades for its export-oriented growth, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has said that the time has come for Beijing to look at domestic sources for growth, opening up more opportunities for the market.

China's economy grew at 5.3 per cent in the first quarter, making a stronger-than-expected start to the year even as the downturn of its property market continued while the domestic demand remained subdued. The GDP grew 5.3 per cent year on year to 29.63 trillion yuan (about USD 4.17 trillion) in the first three months of 2024, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Tuesday. "China is the fork in the road. Why? Because China has to define growth strategies for the future. China has the benefit of a particular set of policies over the last decades, export-oriented growth, but the time has come to look at domestic sources for growth, opening up more opportunities for the market to lift up these prospects," Georgieva said.

The IMF sees three important opportunities for China, she said. Number one, to shift the economy more towards domestic consumption. It is actually in line with what China is aspiring to, the dual circulation economy. It would take giving consumers more confidence and offering them more services, and more things to buy. "We know that the healthcare services in China can expand quite significantly. We know that getting the social safety nets to work more effectively would give people an opportunity to save a bit less, to spend a bit more," she said.

"Secondly, we see the reforms in China that have served the country well continuing to be needed, reforms of state-owned enterprises opening up for a more competitive environment. In the years ahead, that can help China grow more," Georgieva said. Last but not least, there are some problems right now, and how they are solved will have implications for China's growth, she observed. "The most obvious example is the property sector. People in China rely on their homeownership as a way of saving. When prices there—as savings go down, when prices of real estate go down, that

affects consumer confidence. So clearing up the problems in the sector more resolutely would certainly help China," she said.

"We see China making some important decisions around greening their growth pattern. Again, the more China does for lifting up domestic consumption, the better," the IMF Managing Director said. At a separate news conference, Krishna Srinivasan, Director of IMF Asia and Pacific Department, told reporters that on the macroeconomic aspects, China's economy is experiencing weak domestic demand. This emanates from two factors: the continued weakness in the real estate sector and the legacies of the pandemic.

So in that context, the IMF has advocated for two things. One is policies that would help address the problem in the property sector and other than that, trying to boost consumption demand by improving social safety nets in the case of China and again, improving the pension system in a fiscally prudent way and investing in people, education, and health. "So that's as far as once on the domestic demand side if you pursue these policies, you will see domestic demand rising

and deflation risks coming down," he said.

China provides wide-ranging support to priority sectors. This includes preferential access to credit research funds and incentives for certain firms, particularly in the areas of strategic manufacturing and science and technology. "In terms of what China can do, on the first issue of misallocation of resources, we have talked about the fact that it is important to address SOE reform quite urgently, scaling back of industrial policies, which provide implicit or explicit guarantees for SOEs. So in other words, try to make it have to ensure competitive neutrality between SOEs and the private sector so that there's no misallocation of resources doesn't happen," Srinivasan said.

"That's one thing. And again, we also said that SOE reforms, some SOEs are clearly unprofitable. And the more support you provide, you keep them in business for longer than they should be. So that's something which we've called for in terms of SOE reforms. And so those are the policies which we're advocating for China both to address, to address the issue of what you talked about as over-production," he added.

# Teenager charged with terror in stabbings of bishop and priest at Sydney church

Sydney (AP): A 16-year-old boy accused of stabbing two Christian clerics during a Sydney church service has been charged by police with terrorism offenses. Authorities said the stabbing was declared a terrorist act because of the teenager's suspected religious motivation and that the boy travelled up to 90 minutes from his home to the Christ the Good Shepherd Church in Sydney's western suburbs.

The teen spoke in Arabic about the Prophet Muhammad being insulted after he stabbed Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel and the Rev. Isaac Royel during Monday night's Assyrian Orthodox service. He was later overpowered by parishioners, sustaining severe hand injuries. "Yesterday investigators attended a medical facility to interview the alleged offender where he was charged with committing a terrorist act," said Federal Police Commissioner Reece Kershaw at a press conference on Friday in Sydney.

The offense carries a maximum penalty of imprisonment for life. The matter was heard at a Sydney children's court on Friday. The juvenile, who is not being named, did not appear via video link from his hospital bed and did not apply for bail at the brief hearing.

The teen has a history of knife-related offenses and had seen three psychologists and a school counsellor, and had an appointment to see a psychiatrist, his lawyer said during Friday's court hearing. The boy's family had previously said the 16-year-old might have "anger management and behavioral issues" and a "short fuse," but had

shown no signs of being radicalised. The 16-year-old's lawyer, Greg Scragg, said the boy had a "long history of behaviour" consistent with a mental illness or intellectual disability.

The magistrate made a recommendation for the boy to have a mental health assessment while in custody. He will enter remand custody at a children's detention centre once released from the hospital, until his next court hearing on June 14. A crowd of up to 600 people converged on the church after the attack, some demanding that police hand over the boy. Hours of rioting led to 51 police officers being injured.

Sydney mosques also received firebomb threats. The bishop released an audio statement on Thursday saying that he was "doing fine, recovering very quickly" and that he forgave his attacker. He also used his statement to call for calm after the attack, which was Australia's second high-profile knife attack in a week, after a man stabbed six people to death at a busy Sydney shopping centre on Saturday before he was fatally shot. Regarding the church attack, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said, "Clearly this was a terrorism event", and it had been disappointing to see the riots that followed.

# US ambassador to UN visits Nagasaki A-bomb museum

AP ■ TOKYO

The American envoy to the United Nations called Friday for countries armed with atomic weapons to pursue nuclear disarmament as she visited the atomic bomb museum in Nagasaki, Japan.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who became the first US cabinet member to visit Nagasaki, stressed the importance of dialogue and diplomacy amid a growing nuclear threat in the region. "We must continue to work together to create an environment for nuclear disarmament. We must continue to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons in every corner of the world," she said after a tour of the atomic bomb museum.

"For those of us who already have those weapons, we must pursue arms control. We can and must work to ensure that Nagasaki is the last place to ever experience the horror of nuclear



US Ambassador to United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield, left, and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, right, shake hands during a meeting on Friday

weapons," she added, standing in front of colourful hanging origami cranes, a symbol of peace. The United States dropped the world's first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, destroying the city and killing 140,000 people. A second attack three days later on Nagasaki killed 70,000 more people. Japan surrendered on August 15, ending World War II and its near-

ly half-century of aggression in Asia. Nagasaki Gov. Kengo Oishi said in a statement that he believed Thomas-Greenfield's visit and her first-person experience at the museum "will be a strong message in promoting momentum of nuclear disarmament for the international society at a time the world faces a severe environment surrounding atomic weapons."

# Five Japanese escape unhurt in Karachi suicide bombing

PTI ■ KARACHI/PESHAWAR

Five Japanese nationals had a lucky escape when their vehicle was targeted by militants in a suicide attack here in Pakistan's Sindh province on Friday, police said.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) East Azfar Mahesar said the terrorists on a motorbike attempted to hit the van of the Japanese nationals near Murtaza Chorangi in Landhi.

"All five Japanese remained safe. However, the private security guard with them was injured," he said. "The Japanese nationals were on the way to the Export Processing Zone from their residence in Zamzama, Clifton," he said. Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) DIG Asif Ajiz Shaikh told Dawn News that the Japanese nationals were travelling in a van along with two security guards when two terrorists tried to hit the van. The

security guards killed one terrorist while another blew himself up in an attempt to get close to the van, the official said.

"All five Japanese nationals are safe," DIG Shaikh said. "No one has claimed responsibility so far," the DIG said, adding that the vehicle carrying the Japanese nationals was bullet-proof. Meanwhile, with the death of two more persons, the toll in Thursday's ambush on a government vehicle in Pakistan's restive Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province rose to seven, police said on Friday. The deceased include five officials and two passer-bys, including a four-year-old girl and a man.

The officials from Customs Intelligence were on routine duty on Quetta Road in Dera Ismail Khan district in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province when unknown gunmen opened fire at their vehicle, police said. On Thursday, police said five people, including a girl

child, were killed in the attack. The killers fled from the scene before police from Drabon Police Station rushed to the area. Chief Minister of the province Ali Amin Gandapur strongly condemned the attack and directed the police to arrest the attackers.

On Wednesday, Pakistani security forces killed seven terrorists trying to infiltrate the country's border with Afghanistan in the same province.

There has been an uptick in terror incidents across Pakistan, especially in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province over the last two years since the Taliban-led dispensation took over the control of Afghanistan. Pakistan has consistently asked the Taliban-led interim Afghan government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border and deny the use of Afghan soil by terrorists for perpetrating acts of terrorism against Pakistan.

**PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY**  
MARINE DEPARTMENT  
No.-MD/ACCTS/W/R-18/2023-415 Date: 16.04.2024  
e-Tender/Call Notice (e-TCN) No. MD/ACCTS/W/R-18/2023/16 dtd.07.02.2024  
Name of the Work: Hiring of 01 No. 60 ton Bollard pull tug along with manning crew for Marine Operation at SPMS and inside Harbour at Paradip for a period of 07 (seven) years. Estimated cost put to tender: Rs. 86,35,39,812/- With reference to above e-tender, revised tender document has been published in the e-procurement website with extension. Last date & time of submission of bids through on-line bidding is 17.00 Hours on dt. 07/05/2024. Technical Bids shall be opened at 16.00 hours on dt. 08/05/2024. For details, please log on to the Website: https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app. Sd/- Deputy Conservator, Paradip Port Authority PPA/PR-01/2024-2025 dtd.16.04.2024

**BITES LIMITED**  
(A Govt. Of India Enterprise)  
Shikhar, Plot No.1, Sector-29, Gurgaon - 122001

**Engagement of manpower on contract:**

VC No.	Post	No. of Vacancies
	Written test for the posts of Assistant Manager (Mechanical/Metallurgy), Assistant Manager (Electrical/Electronics), Assistant Manager (Civil) and Assistant Manager (IT/CS) advertised vide VC No 132/24-135/24 will be conducted on 05-05-2024. Last date for submission of application has been extended to 29-04-2024.	
	Written test will be conducted at Guwahati, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Gurugram, Hyderabad on 05-05-2024.	



# India standout performer amidst sluggish global growth: IEA Secretary

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Despite a challenging global scenario, India's economy has shown robust growth over the past year backed by sustained consumption and investment demand, a top Indian official told members of a World Bank committee here.

The GDP growth estimate for the fiscal, which has been revised upwards from 7.3 per cent to 7.6 per cent in the second advance estimates, highlights the enduring strength and resilience of the Indian economy, India's Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said while addressing the Development Committee meeting here on Thursday.

"India grew above 8 per cent for three consecutive quarters of FY24, reaffirming its position as a standout performer amidst sluggish global growth trends," Seth said.

He said that similar sentiments have been echoed by various agencies who have revised India's fiscal 24 growth estimate closer to 8 per cent. India's proactive stance on reform and investment in sustainable growth avenues sets a benchmark for emerging economies.

The Indian delegation at the



annual Spring Meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank is being represented at the official level this time. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is not attending the annual gathering of global financial leaders due to the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

Seth told the Development Committee that India's thrust on capex continued to crowd in private investment resulting in enhanced Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) at constant prices registering a growth above 10 per cent in FY24.

India's inflation outlook appears positive with headline and core inflation trending downwards, indicating a broad-based moderation in price pressures, he said.

Seth said that on the external front, the narrowing merchandise trade deficit and

global supply chain," he said. Observing that the manufacturing sector registered double-digit growth in Q3 of 24 fiscal years, driven by a surge in investment, improved investor confidence, and strong domestic demand conditions, Seth said the year also saw continued strong growth in services, led by non-contact-intensive services sectors.

Emphasising that India has the highest digital transactions globally with a share of 46 per cent of global real-time transactions in 2022, Seth noted that the monthly transactions for March 2024 stood at 13.44 billion totalling an amount of INR 19.78 trillion.

The volume of UPI online transactions witnessed a 54 per cent YoY growth in Q3 FY24, which can be attributed to convenience, security, increased financial flexibility, and avenues in ease of spending for consumers, he said.

"Today this increased mobile connectivity and its linkage with the bank accounts has become an integral part of India's inclusive economic growth story with consumers, small traders, vendors, and vulnerable populations from the lowest rung of the society, being the key beneficiaries," he said.

# Stock markets stage strong rebound

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Stock markets rebounded from early lows to close higher on Friday, snapping the four-day losing streak on heavy value buying in banking and auto shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 599.34 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 73,088.33. The index opened lower and tanked further 672.53 points or 0.92 per cent to hit a low of 71,816.46 in early trade. However, the index rebounded in the second half on value-buying in banking shares.

The NSE Nifty jumped 151.15 points or 0.69 per cent to close at 22,147. The broader index dropped to a low of 21,777.65 in early trade before paring its losses to end in the green.

From the Sensex basket, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, HDFC Bank, JSW Steel, Maruti, Wipro, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank and ITC were the major gainers.

Nestle India, HCL Technologies, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Motors and Infosys were among the laggards.

Infosys declined nearly 1 per cent after the company's revenue growth guidance for FY25 failed to meet market expectations.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Hong Kong settled in the negative territory.

European markets were trading in the



red. Wall Street ended mostly lower on Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.55 per cent to USD 87.62 a barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,260.33 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

"Despite global weakness, Indian markets staged a strong recovery driven by large-cap stocks, buoyed by the expectation of limited prospects of escalation following Israel's action against Iran. However, fragility persists with elevated oil prices, posing inflation risks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

"Nifty reversed a four-day losing streak to end higher," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.39 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.04 per cent.

Among the indices, bankex jumped 1.02 per cent and metal climbed 0.85 per cent. Financial services (0.83 per cent), consumer durables (0.78 per cent) and commodities (0.54 per cent) also gained. IT, telecommunication, utilities, realty and tech were among the laggards.

On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark declined 1,156.57 points or 1.55 per cent and the Nifty dipped 372.4 points or 1.65 per cent.

Meanwhile, the 2024 Lok Sabha polls kicked off on Friday with the beginning of polling for the first phase. The BSE benchmark tanked 454.69 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 72,488.99 on Thursday. The NSE Nifty declined 152.05 points or 0.69 per cent to 21,995.85.

### Format C-7

(for political parties to publish in the newspapers, social media platforms & website of the party)

Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.

(As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in contempt petition(C) no. 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) no. 536 of 2011)

Name of Political Party: **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**

\*Name of the Election: **General Election of the Lok Sabha, 2024 Name of State/UT: Jharkhand**

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Lohardaga Lok Sabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Samir Oraon**

Sl.No.			
1.	Criminal antecedents		
a.	Nature of the offences	1	Allegation for Participating in a public protest against the state government. No coercive allowed by Hon'ble Court. Sec. 147, 148, 188, 109, 353, 332, 427, 323
		2	Criminal Case Sec. 143, 448, 376, 511, 506 of the IPC but the police field charge sheet under sec. 504 of the IPC
b.	Case no.	1	Dhurwa PS Case no. 107/2023
		2	Bariyatu 201/2017
c.	Name of the Court	1	Smt. Nutan Ekka Spl. JMFC, MP, MLA, Civil Court Ranchi
		2	Smt. Ruchi Dayal JMFC Ranchi
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)		No
e.	Date of conviction, if any		Not Applicable
f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any		Not Applicable
g.	Any other information required to be given		Not Applicable
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)		The selected candidate is a very sincere and dedicated party worker who has already been in various important positions.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)		As a dedicated party worker, he had an edge over other individuals, considering the fact that whatever charges are alleged in the FIR and Charge sheet have no substance and were purely with a vindictive approach and personal vendetta being waged by his political enemies. That Two case is pending and protested, and the FIR is registered with reason of waging public protest, and the party believes that there will be no adverse outcome against the

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Lohardaga Lok Sabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Samir Oraon**  
.....and so on

\* In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name is Constituency,

Signature of office bearer of the Political Party

Name and Designation **Aditya Prasad, General Secretary BJP Jharkhand**

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Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.

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Name of Political Party: **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**

\*Name of the Election: **General Election of the Lok Sabha, 2024 Name of State/UT: Jharkhand**

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Jamshedpur Lok Sabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato**

Sl. No.			
1.	Criminal antecedents		
a.	Nature of the offences	1	Violation of Model Code of Conduct
b.	Case no.	1	Sakchi (Jamshedpur) PS Case no. 3/22
c.	Name of the Court	1	Chaibasa MP/MLA Court
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)		NO
e.	Date of conviction, if any		N/A
f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any		N/A
g.	Any other information required to be given		N/A
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)		The selected candidate is a very sincere and dedicated party worker and he is presently MP of Jamshedpur Lok Sabha.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)		As a dedicated party worker, he had an edge over other individuals, considering the fact that whatever charges were alleged in the FIR has no substance and were purely with a vindictive approach

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Jamshedpur Lok Sabha**  
Name of the Candidate- **Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato**  
.....and so on

\* In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name is Constituency,

Signature of office bearer of the Political Party

Name and Designation **Aditya Prasad, General Secretary BJP Jharkhand**





## Group condemns searches by security at Barcelona stadium

**AP ■ PARIS**

The director of a group that advocates for female sports fans says she and other Paris Saint-Germain supporters were subjected to "abusive" searches while entering Barcelona's stadium for a Champions League match earlier this week.

Anoush Morel, the director of Her Game Too France, told L'Equipe and RMC Sport that her breasts, buttocks and groin were touched by a female security officer during a pat-down at the Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium on Tuesday night. Other women reported similarly aggressive searches, she said.

Paris Saint-Germain won the match 4-1 and advanced to the Champions League semifinals.

In a letter Thursday, the organization

condemned the practice and called on "relevant authorities" to take action. "It's unacceptable that spectators, fans and women in general were particularly targeted by these intrusive and humiliating searches that constitute sexual aggression," the letter read.

The group said there have been similar complaints at other stadiums in Europe, usually impacting visiting fans. It called on teams, organizers of the games and stadiums to ensure their security protocols avoid the "unfair treatment" of supporters.

It asks UEFA to provide answers on whether visiting fans in particular are being subjected to more aggressive searches.

A request for comment from UEFA sent on Thursday evening was not immediately answered.

## Olympic organisers to use AI in sports

**AP ■ LONDON**

Olympic organisers unveiled their plans Friday to use artificial intelligence in sports, joining the global rush to capitalize on the rapidly advancing technology.

The International Olympic Committee outlined its agenda for taking advantage of AI. Officials said it could be used to help identify promising athletes, personalize training methods and make the games fairer by improving judging.

"Today, we are making another step to ensure the uniqueness of the Olympic Games and the relevance of sport. To do this, we have to be leaders of change," IOC President Thomas Bach said at a press event at the former London Olympic Park, which hosted the Summer Games in 2012. "We are determined to exploit the vast potential of AI in a responsible way," Bach said.

The IOC revealed its AI strategy as it gears up to hold the Paris Olympics, which are set to kick off in just under 100 days.

The IOC's AI plans also include using the technology to protect athletes from online harassment and to help broadcasters improve the viewing experience for people watching from home. The IOC earns billions of dollars through the sale of broadcast rights for the games.



## Andy Murray back on practice court

**AP ■ LONDON**

Three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray has returned to the practice court after confirming that he's not going to have surgery on his injured ankle.

The 36-year-old Murray tore ligaments in his left ankle during a match at the Miami Open last month.

Murray's team said this week he's "out of the walking boot," wouldn't be having surgery, and was "hoping to start hitting again on court soon."

A short video on Murray's Instagram account on Friday showed the former world No. 1 hitting forehands on an indoor court.

There was no timeline for his return announced.

The two-time Wimbledon champion, who has said he's unlikely to play past this summer, has been hoping to compete for Britain again in the Paris Olympics.

## Punia, Sujeet to miss Asian qualifiers

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

In a huge setback for the Indian Wrestling contingent at the Asia Olympic Qualifiers in Bishkek, two of the country's best wrestlers, Deepak Punia and Sujeet Kalakal, will miss the continental event as they could not report for the weigh-in on time as their flight arrived late in the Kyrgyzstan capital owing to bad weather in Dubai.

While both Punia and Kalkal eventually managed to reach Bishkek after being stranded at the Dubai international airport due to incessant rain and flooding, they could not report for the mandatory weigh-in on time, according to sources.

The sources added that the organisers did not allow late weigh-in despite request from the Indian coaches.

Punia (86kg), who had come close to winning a medal at the Tokyo Games, and Sujeet (65kg), were on their way to Bishkek to participate in the Asia Olympic qualifiers - the second-last qualifying event for Paris Olympics - when a majority of the flights leaving Dubai got cancelled or delayed because of the flooding of the airport.

The duo, accompanied by Russian coach Kamal Malikov and physio Shubham Gupta, were forced to sleep on the floor and had no access to proper food due to the rain-induced crisis in Dubai.

"They were stuck at the Dubai airport since April 16 and it seems the chance of qualifying for Paris Olympics is slipping out of their hands as they are scheduled to compete tomorrow. They are not getting any flights to Bishkek. I am worried about them," Dayanand Kalakal, Sujeet's father, had told PTI on Thursday.



**Format C-7**  
(for political parties to publish in the newspapers, social media platforms & website of the party)

Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.

(As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in contempt petition(C) no. 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) no. 536 of 2011)

**Name of Political Party: BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**  
**\*Name of the Election: General Election of the Lok Sabha, 2024 Name of State/UT: Jharkhand**

(1) Name of the Constituency- Godda - Lok Sabha  
Name of the Candidate- Shri Nishikant Dubey

Sl.No.	Criminal antecedents		
1.	a.	Nature of the offences	1 Sec. 171 (G) IPC and 123 (3), 125 RP Act 2 Sec. 323, 504, and 506 IPC 3 Under Sec. 153B(1C), 166, 290, 336, 341, 342, 427, 504, 506 IPC 4 Sec. 147, 149, 447, 188, 34 IPC 5 Sec. 323, 504 IPC 6 Sec. 147, 148, 188, 353, 332, 109, 427, 323 IPC
	b.	Case no.	1 Godda PS Case no. 96/19 2 Baba Baidyanath Mandir PS Case no. 02/20 3 Mohanpur PS Case no. 281/23 4 Budhai PS Case no. 30/2021 5 Godda PS Case no. 4/2021 6 Dhurwa Case no. 107/23
	c.	Name of the Court	1 SDJM Dumka Cum MP/MLA Court 2 SDJM Dumka Cum MP/MLA Court 3 SDJM Dumka Cum MP/MLA Court 4 SDJM Dumka Cum MP/MLA Court 5 SDJM Dumka Cum MP/MLA Court 6 Smt. Nutan Ekka Spl. JMFC, Ranchi
	d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	YES NO NO YES NO NO
	e.	Date of conviction, if any	N/A
	f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	N/A
	g.	Any other information required to be given	N/A
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)		The selected candidate is a very sincere and dedicated party worker and he is presently MP of Godda Lok Sabha.
			As a dedicated party worker, he had an edge over other individuals, considering the fact that whatever charges were alleged in the FIR and Charge sheet have no substance and were purely with a vindictive approach and personal vendetta being waged by his political enemies. That total-01 case is pending and protested, and the FIR is registered with reason of waging public protest, and the party believes that there will be no adverse outcome against the alleged accused.

(1) Name of the Constituency- Godda Lok Sabha  
Name of the Candidate- Shri Nishikant Dubey  
..... and so on

\* In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name is Constituency,

Signature of office bearer of the Political Party  
Name and Designation Aditya Prasad, General Secretary BJP Jharkhand

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**Name of Political Party: BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**  
**\*Name of the Election: General Election of the Lok Sabha, 2024 Name of State/UT: Jharkhand**

(1) Name of the Constituency- Chatra - Lok Sabha  
Name of the Candidate- Shri Kali Charan Singh

Sl.No.	Criminal antecedents		
1.	a.	Nature of the offences	1 Sec. 13 of JMMC Act 2017, 21, 21 of MMDR Act 1957, 37 and 38 of Air Prevention and Control of Pollution Act 1981
	b.	Case no.	1 Sadar PS Case no. 195/2022
	c.	Name of the Court	1 CJM Chatra
	d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	NO
	e.	Date of conviction, if any	N/A
	f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	N/A
	g.	Any other information required to be given	N/A
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)		The selected candidate is a very sincere and dedicated party worker.
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)		As a dedicated party worker, he had an edge over other individuals, considering the fact that whatever charges were alleged in the FIR has no substance and were purely with a vindictive approach and personal vendetta being waged by his political enemies. That total-01 case is pending and protested, and the FIR is registered with reason of waging public protest, and the party believes that there will be no adverse outcome against the alleged accused.

(1) Name of the Constituency- Chatra - Lok Sabha  
Name of the Candidate- Shri Kali Charan Singh  
..... and so on

\* In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name is Constituency,

Signature of office bearer of the Political Party  
Name and Designation Aditya Prasad, General Secretary BJP Jharkhand





# RISHABH PANT SET FOR EMOTIONAL HOMECOMING

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An emotional homecoming awaits Rishabh Pant when he leads Delhi Capitals out at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here, hoping to halt the marauding run of Pat Cummins' Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday and continue the resurgence which has come to define his life both on and off the field. The last time Pant was seen at the refurbished stadium, he needed crutches to walk but that now seems a distant memory given how remarkably well he has managed to come back both as a wicketkeeper and batter after enduring a life-threatening car accident in 2022. Capitals have had a mixed season so far, but a couple of impressive wins against Lucknow Super Giants and Gujarat Titans have put them back in the mix. In all, they have three wins and four defeats in seven outings so far. Placed fourth in the IPL points table, Sunrisers Hyderabad have set a different template altogether with two of the

highest-ever totals of 277/3 and 287/3, which will require a lot of heart and skill to counter. Hence, 'Captain Pant' will have to use his resources with extreme caution and guile on a track which will have good bounce and carry for a change. Travis Head (235 runs) — IPL's foreign flavour of the season — will be keen to build on his 39-ball century and his partner Abhishek Sharma (211 runs) is no pushover either. Both have a penchant for taking the aerial route during powerplay. Head and Abhishek's intimidating strike rates of 199 and 197 respectively will pose a serious challenge for the pace trio of Ishant Sharma, Khaleel Ahmed and Mukesh Kumar. Adding to the threat is Heinrich Klaasen, who is also striking at 199, who is one of the best finishers in international cricket with propensity to hit balls out of the stadium, which gives SRH's batting a scary look. But Kuldeep Yadav's (economy of 6.06) left-arm wrist spin could well prove to be a game-changer and in Tristan Stubbs, Pant has got an ideal third spin



option alongside Axar Patel (6.75). Pant, who is himself getting back to the top of his game, wouldn't mind if he can win the toss and opt to bat. But David Warner's knuckle injury is a cause for concern for Pant and head coach Ricky Ponting although Jake Fraser-McGurk has impressed one and all in his first two matches. While SRH's batting has been top-notch on belters, their bowlers have suffered a lot on those tracks with only skipper Cummins (7.87) having an economy rate of less than eight runs per over, which is considered good in T20. However, the seasoned duo of

Jaydev Unadkat (11.35) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (10.45), have both been average while the tweakers — wrist spinner Mayank Markande (11.23) and left-arm spinner Shabbaz Ahmed (ER 12.44) — have been sent on a leather hunt. The best option for Pant would be to open the batting and go for the jugular against SRH, putting a scoreboard pressure on the rampaging 'Orange Army. In case Capitals have to chase, the idea would be to keep SRH down to 210-220 which would be chaseable against an attack which may not be able to hold its own on a good batting track.

**TEAMS (FROM):**  
**Delhi Capitals:** Rishabh Pant (c&wk), David Warner, Abhishek Porel, Ricky Bhui, Yash Dhull, Shai Hope, Prithvi Shaw, Tristan Stubbs, Kumar Kushagra (wk), Swastik Chikara, Ishant Sharma, Jhye Richardson, Rasikh Dar Salam, Vicky Ostwal, Anrich Nortje, Mukesh Kumar, Kuldeep Yadav, Praveen Dubey, Khaleel Ahmed, Sumit Kumar, Axar Patel, Mitchell Marsh, Lalit Yadav, Jake Fraser-McGurk.  
**Sunrisers Hyderabad:** Pat Cummins (c), Abdul Samad, Abhishek Sharma, Aiden Markram, Marco Jansen, Rahul Tripathi, Washington

Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Sanvir Singh, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, T. Natarajan, Anmolpreet Singh, Mayank Markande, Upendra Singh  
 Yadav (wk), Umran Malik, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Shabbaz Ahmed, Travis Head, Jaydev Unadkat, Akash Singh, Jhathavedh Subramanyan

**NOTICE**  
 Notice is hereby given to the public that the Property more particularly described in Schedule hereunder written is being regularized in the name of Md. Aftab Alam, S/o Late Md. Ilyas against BSL letter Ref. No. TA/LRA/2024/1830 Dated 12.04.2024. All persons having any claim in respect thereof by way of Sale, Exchange, Gift, Mortgage, Charge, Trust, Inheritance, Possession, Lease, Lien or otherwise are requested to inform the same in writing to the CGM (TA), Bokaro Steel Plant, within 30 days from the date hereof failing which the claim or claims if any of such Person or Persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and the transfer shall be completed. Detail of property- Shop No. NH-7 in Sector-2D, Bokaro Steel City, Jharkhand, 827002. Regards, Md. Aftab Alam, S/o Late Md. Ilyas, Shop No. NH-7 in Sector-2D, Bokaro Steel City, Jharkhand, 827002, Contact No. 9835398089.

**आवश्यकता**  
 1. पदनाम (संख्या): संदेशवाहक (2), सहायक (3)। 2. शैक्षणिक योग्यता: संदेशवाहक (मैट्रिक), सहायक हेतु- (स्नातक एवं न्यूनतम 6 माह का कम्प्यूटर कोर्स तथा हिन्दी/अंग्रेजी टाइपिंग का अनुभव)। 3. परीक्षा शुल्क- रु. 500.00, 4. वेतनमान: सहायक- रु. 9500 मात्र (एकीकृत प्रतिमाह), संदेशवाहक- रु. 8000 मात्र (एकीकृत प्रतिमाह)। 5. पद की स्थिति: 1 वर्ष तक परीक्षा अवधि, संतोषप्रद सेवा होने पर समिति द्वारा नियमित किया जा सकता है। 6. आवेदन की अंतिम तिथि: 30.04.2024 तक। 7. साक्षात्कार तिथि: आवेदन सत्यापन के एक सप्ताह के अंदर आवेदक को साक्षात्कार की सूचना ईमेल के माध्यम से दे दी जाएगी। 8. आवेदक पूरे बायोडेटा (ईमेल, मोबाइल नंबर सहित) के साथ शैक्षणिक प्रमाण पत्रों की छाया प्रति, 2 पासपोर्ट साइज फोटो, डोमीसाईल प्रमाणपत्र के साथ 500 (पाँच सौ) रुपए का डिमांड ड्राफ्ट BSE (T/AM/ED/MAT) CCS Ltd. के नाम से Payable at Bokaro संलग्न कर निम्न पते पर प्रेषित करेंगे।  
 पत्राचार का पता: श्री शशांक शेखर, समन्वयक, कमरा संख्या-29, भूतल, प्रशासनिक भवन, बोकारो इस्पताल संयंत्र पर दिनांक: 30.04.2024 तक अवश्य भेज दें। नोडल अधिकारी/संपर्क अधिकारी: श्री सुरेन्द्र पांडेय, सचिव, बीएसई (टीए/मेडि/मेटे)सो सा० समिति लि०, मो. नं- 8986873051 / 8986870412 नोट: पदों की संख्या आवश्यकतानुसार घट-बढ़ सकती है अथवा प्रक्रिया रद्द भी की जा सकती है।

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**Name of Political Party: BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**  
**\*Name of the Election: General Election of the Lok Sabha, 2024 Name of State/UT: Jharkhand**

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Singhbhum Lok Sabha**  
 Name of the Candidate- **Smt. Geeta Kora**

Sl.No.	Criminal antecedents		
1.	a.	Nature of the offences	1 Under Section 276 of the Income Tax Act, 1961
	b.	Case no.	Complaint Case no. 2/2012 Lalpur PS
	c.	Name of the Court	Shri K.K. Mishra CJM Ranchi
	d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	NO
	e.	Date of conviction, if any	N/A
	f.	Details of punishment undergone, if any	N/A
	g.	Any other information required to be given	N/A
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)	She is presently MP and she is very popular in her constituency.	
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	She had an edge over other individuals, considering the fact that whatever charges were alleged in the FIR and Charge sheet have no substance and were purely with a vindictive approach and personal vendetta being waged by his political enemies. That one case is pending and protested, and the FIR is registered with reason of waging public protest, and the party believes that there will be no adverse outcome against the alleged accused.	

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Singhbhum Lok Sabha**  
 Name of the Candidate- **Smt. Geeta Kora**  
 ..... and so on

\* In the case of election to Council of States or States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name is Constituency,  
 Signature of office bearer of the Political Party  
 Name and Designation **Aditya Prasad, General Secretary BJP Jharkhand**

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**Name of Political Party: BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**  
**\*Name of the Election: General Election of the Lok Sabha, 2024 Name of State/UT: Jharkhand**

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Kodarma Lok Sabha**  
 Name of the Candidate- **Smt. Annpurna Devi**

Sl. No.	Criminal antecedents		
1.	a.	Nature of the offences	1 Sec. 130 (E) People of Representation Act 1951 2 Under Sec. 147, 148, 188353, 332, 109, 427, 323 of IPC 3 Sec 269/270/34 IPC
	b.	Caseno.	1 Kodarma PS 66/19
			2 Dhurwa (Ranchi) PS Case no. 107/23
			3 Dhanbad PS case no. 454/21
	c.	Name of the Court	1 MP/MLA Spl. Court Hazaribagh
			2 Smt. Nutan Ekka Spl. JMFC, MP, MLA, Civil Court Ranchi
			3 CJM Dhanbad
d.	Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	1 YES	
		2 NO	
		3 NO	
e.	Date of conviction, if any	1 28.04.2023 ( in connection with Koderma PS Case no. 66/19)	
		1 200 rs. fine appeal is admitted before ASJ cum MP/MLA Court Hazaribagh and the same is pending for final hearing.	
f.	Detail of punishment undergone, if any	1	
		1	
g.	Any other information required to be given	N/A	
		N/A	
2.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate,	The selected candidate is a very sincere and dedicated party worker and she is presently MP of Kodarma Lok Sabha.	
	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	As a dedicated party worker, she had an edge over other individuals, considering the fact that whatever charges were alleged in the FIR and Charge sheet have no substance and were purely with a vindictive approach and personal vendetta being waged by his political enemies. That total-3 case is pending and protested, and the FIR is registered with reason of waging public protest, and the party believes that there will be no adverse outcome against the alleged accused.	

(1) Name of the Constituency- **Kodarma Lok Sabha**  
 Name of the Candidate- **Smt. Annpurna Devi**  
 ..... and so on

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