

# Kejriwal stir chokes Central Delhi

### resignation

#### SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

he national Capital on Tuesday witnessed I massive protests led separately by the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). While AAP

workers attempted to 'gherao' the Prime Minister residence in Lutyens' Zone, seeking release of their supremo Arvind Kejriwal from the Enforcement Directorate's custody, the BJP organised protest demanding that the arrested Chief Minister step down from his post.

Kejriwal, who was arrested on March 21 and subsequently remanded to ED custody till March 28 by a Delhi court, faces charges of direct involvement in a conspiracy related to the formulation of the excise policy favouring specific individuals.

The protests led to massive traffic jams in the Central and New Delhi areas and as preventive measures the Police Delhi issued directions to shut down the entry and exit gates of the Lok Kalyan Metro Station from where the PM's residence is nearby.

The Delhi Police beefed up security in several parts of the national Capital,

AAP workers during their protest outside Patel Chowk metro station in New Delhi on Tuesday

BJP workers protest on Tuesday in Delhi demanding resignation of Ranian Dimri/Pioneer Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer Arvind Kejriwal after his arrest by the ED

including around the PM's residence and Central Delhi, by deploying its personnel and those of paramilitary forces.

Prohibitory orders under section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure were imposed in the Patel Chowk area.

A senior police officer said they cannot allow anyone to gather and added that in view of this, "we have to clear this area".

"We will not allow anybody to gather here," he said. Deputy Commissioner of Police of New Delhi Devesh Kumar had earlier warned that those who gather at the chowk to demonstrate would be detained immediately.

### Kavitha remanded in iudicial custody till April 9

### PTI 📕 NEW DELHI

Acourt here on Tuesday sent BRS leader K Kavitha to judicial custody till April 9 on a plea made by the Enforcement Directorate that the "highly influential" arrestee, if released, is likely to influence witnesses

and tamper with evidence. The 46-year-old leader was arrested by the Central probe agency on March 15 in a Delhi excise policy-linked money

laundering case. The federal probe agency's application seeking 15-day jail custody was filed before Special Judge Kaveri Baweja, saying an investigation into economic crimes was more complex than ordinary crimes as economic offenders were influential, resourceful and committed the crime meticulously. The plea sought her judicial custody on the ground that "the arrestee is highly influential and there is every likelihood the arrestee will influence the witnesses and tamper with the evidence if released, (and) it may hamper the ongoing



# **BJP** to go solo in Punjab

RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

fter days of parleys with Athe Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), the BJP on Tuesday announced that it will contest the upcoming Lok Sabha polls on its own in Punjab, with the announcement coming amid 'hints' from its ex-ally SAD that the latter could go solo in the border State.

With this development, the border State will see а fourcornered contest in the general elections. Punjab is the latest State after the BJP and Naveen Patnaik-led BJD alliance did not

work out despite days of deliberations and both announced to go solo in Odisha. The BJD last month had

supported the Rajya Sabha candidature of Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

were the natural ally of the BJP since year until SAD broke ranks from the NDA after the controversial farm laws which however now stands repealed. The SAD's latest decision is a major shift from late Parkash Singh Badal's 24-

Both the SAD and the BJD

year policy of "unconditional support" to vear the BJP from 1996 to 2020. The two parties had formed an alliance in 1996

and had been fighting elections together. In 2019, they won two Lok Sabha seats each in Punjab. This will be the first Lok Sabha poll

since 1998 which the BIP and SAD will contest alone. In the first Assembly poll they fought separately and both suffered jolts with the BJP winning two and Akalis 3 seats out of 117 and AAP sweeping with 92.

### **Efforts on to find** stolen vehicle of JP Nadda wife

### STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has launched an L operation to find the stolen luxury car linked to BJP National president JP Nadda. A Toyota Fortuner, belonging to Nadda's wife Mallika Nadda, was stolen while it was taken for servicing on March 19. Despite CCTV footage showing the vehicle registration number HP-03-D-0021 registration number heading towards Gurugram with a Himachal Pradesh registration, efforts to locate it remain futile.

### **US comments on AAP chief arrest**

### PNS NEW DELHI

 $A_{\text{States of America}}^{\text{fter Germany, the United}}$ Government on Tuesday said they are closely watching the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and support a fair, transparent, and prompt legal process. "We encourage a fair,

In a statement, Germany's transparent, and timely legal foreign affairs spokesperson process for Chief Minister expressed hope that the Kejriwal," news agencies quoted a US State "standards regarding the independence of

**Majestic cats** 

continue to perish

saying.

arrest.

The

US



judiciary and fundamental democratic principles" would be upheld in Kejriwal's case. ...Like anyone facing accusations, Kejriwal is entitled to a fair and impartial trial, this includes he can make use of all available legal avenues without restrictions. The presumption of innocence is a central element of the rule of law and must apply to him [sic]," the spokesperson

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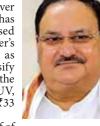
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investigation?



According to the report, the vehicle was brought to

Govinpuri after servicing by its driver Joginder. An FIR has been lodged based on the driver's complaint, as authorities intensify efforts to recover the seven-seater SUV. valued between ₹33 lakh to ₹51 lakh. Mallika is the chief of



'Special Olympics Bharat', a national sports federation registered under the Indian Trust Act 1882 in 2001. Recognised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, the organisation works to develop sports for persons with intellectual disabilities. In the past, the Delhi Police has demonstrated swift resolution in cases involving prominent figures and leaders. For instance, in the 2019 incident where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's niece Damayanti Ben had her purse snatched in Delhi's Civil Lines area, the Delhi Police mobilised 700 personnel and meticulously reviewed 200 CCTV recordings to apprehend the perpetrators.

This accounts to nearly one tiger death every alternate day, underlining the multifaceted threats confronting these

The recent discovery of carcasses of two tiger cubs in Madhya Pradesh's

Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve and a tigress

in Uttar Pradesh's Kheri forest division

has brought the total tiger death toll to 39

even as the third month of this year is yet

ARCHANA JYOTI NEW DELHI

to concl

majestic animals, particularly territorial majestic animals, particularly territorial fights given that out of the total deaths, majority ie 22 occurred within tiger reserves, while 17 were reported from non-protected areas. The other threats encompass habitat loss, territorial disputes, human-wildlife conflicts, poaching, and other illicit activities. This alarming rate equates to nearly one tiger death every alternate day and highlights the various threats faced by tigers, including habitat loss, territorial fights, human-wildlife conflict, poaching, and other illicit activities. At least 22 perished inside the tiger reserves while 17 in non-protected areas. Fateh Singh Ninama, the sub-divisional forest officer from Madhya Pradesh said the carcasses of the cubs, both less than a year old, were found in separate locations within the Panpatha and Khitoli ranges of the

Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve. He said while one cub died as a result of a territorial fight, investigations are on to find the reason behind the death of another young tiger whose body was found deceased near Gadhpuri village in the Khitoli range in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve which has already lost five majestic cats till date this year.

Kanha Tiger Reserve in the State has recorded three tiger fatalities. Overall, the top tiger State i.e. Madhya Pradesh has

Mumbai surpasses Beijing as billionaire hub



Representative Imag

lost 12 big royal cats so far till March 26, 2024.

In a separate incident in the South Kheri forest Division of Uttar Pradesh, a tigress was discovered dead. Sanjay Biswal, divisional officer of the South Kheri forest division, said the tigress was found dead on Monday, with all vital organs intact, suggesting no involvement of poachers.

The data shows that the royal predators have been unsafe not only in nonprotected areas but also inside reserves. given that many deaths have occurred outside the tiger reserves. Overall while Madhya Pradesh reported highest tiger death at 12, followed by Maharashtra at seven fatalities while Karnataka lost five felines. Last year, a total 181 majestic cats had died as per the NTCA data while according to figures compiled by non-profit Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), India lost a record 204 tigers from January 1-December 25, 2023.

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#### PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

India's financial hub Mumbai has emerged as "Asia's billionaire epicentre" for the first time, surpassing Beijing, as per the Hurun Global Rich List 2024.

According to the list, Mumbai now boasts 92 billionaires, edging past Beijing's count of 91. While Mumbai added 26 new ultra-rich to the club, Beijing lost 18. "Mumbai was fastest-growing the billionaire capital in the world, adding 26 in the year and taking it to third in the world and Asia's billionaire capital. New Delhi broke into



that Mumbai has

Reliance

with

the Top 10 for the first time," said the report read. emerged as Asia's billionaire India has ranked third in the capital, list of the world's richest Industries chairman Mukesh people, with 271 billionaires, Ambani occupying a key spot in the list. Globally, Mumbai as per a new global list, which

billionaires after New York, which has 119 and London 97, as per Hurun's list. Industries that the report attributed India's growth in rank to were Pharmaceuticals (39) and Automobile and Auto Components (27).

now ranks third in terms of

As per the list, there are 3.279 billionaires in the world today, with 167 of them added in the previous year. The United States added 109 billionaires, maintaining its lead with a total of 800 billionaires, while China, despite a decline of 155 billionaires, retained its position as the world's leader with 814 billionaires.

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# 5 dead, 2 missing- 66 road accidents on Holi

#### PNS DEHRADUN

At least five people died missing during the festival of Holi on Monday. Besides this, 66 road accidents were also reported on the occasion. Three people died in Haldwani on Monday morning. According to the officials, a car from

Delhi with four people was being driven to Kathgodam

from Lalkuan when it went off

the road and hit two senior

citizens who were taking a

morning walk. Both men

Jagjivan Singh (68) and Pu-

ranchand Sharma (60) died at

the spot along with Sanyam Kumar (25) who was driving the car. The three people in the car sustained serious injuries and were admitted to the hospital for treatment. The officials said that they are yet to ascertain the cause of the accident. They have sent the

bodies for post-mortem. In

Dehradun's Vikasnagar area

on Monday, a utility vehicle

driver hit a man Vikram Singh

(32) on a motorcycle who died

on the spot. The officials said

that the driver fled from the

another

accident

in

spot and was reportedly rash driving when he hit the motorcycle, as per the local peo-

The police are looking for the driver, they added. In Haridwar, a man Ajay (22) drowned in the Gangnahar on Monday and died

The officials said that Ajay had come from Roorkee with his friends to take a bath in Ganganahar. He fell into the canal when his foot slipped during bathing. The police called the search and rescue team of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) that retrieved his body from 15 feet below the canal. Besides

Holi. He said that on a northis, two men from Haryana mal day 15 to 20 calls related to accidents are and Punjab also drowned in the Ganga river in Rishikesh's received by the ambulance Tapovan area on Monday. The service. SDRF conducted a search op-

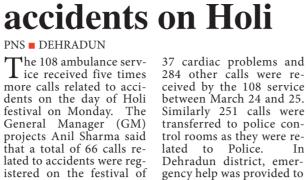
PNS DEHRADUN

He further informed that 237 calls related to pregnancy, 126 road accidents,

**108 ambulance** 

service responds to

66 calls related to



126 people by the 108 ambulance service on Holi.

> It included 24 cases of road accidents, 26 related to pregnancy and cardiac six cases. The service had cancelled the leaves

of its staff and had made arrangements for deployment of security personnel with every ambulance. Additional mobile teams were pressed into service for Holi in all the districts of the state.

### **Transport department** requisitions 13,000 vehicles for LS elections PNS DEHRADUN The Transport department 686 in Bageshwar, 649 in Ut-L has requisitioned about 13,000 vehicles against the requirement of 12,362 vehicles

tarkashi and 524 in Rudraprayag and 456 in Champawat. The RTO further said that the department usually acquires six types of passenger vehicles that work for about eight hours every day during duty. The first two types include an ordinary cab worth less than Rs eight lakh

and a deluxe cab worth more

than Rs eight lakh which will

be paid Rs 1,430 and 2,355

daily respectively. The third

type is a luxury cab worth

over Rs 15 lakh but less than

Rs 35 lakh which will get paid

Rs 3,480 daily. The fourth type is a super luxury cab

worth over Rs 35 lakh which

will be paid Rs 4,825 daily. The

remaining two types are buses

with a capacity of 30 seats or

less and over 30 seats for daily

Drivers will vote through postal ballot

under its vehicle requisition

drive across the State to ensure

the proper conduct of Lok

Sabha elections. Out of about

13,000 vehicles, the depart-

ment has requisitioned about

3,367 vehicles from govern-

ment departments and the re-

maining from commercial

vehicle operators, the regional

transport officer of Dehradun

division (Administration)

Sunil Sharma said. He in-

formed that the department

has requisitioned about 1,829

vehicles in Dehradun, 1,507 in

Nainital, 1,170 in Almora,

1,165 in Haridwar, 1,159 in

Tehri, 1,000 in Chamoli, 968

in Pauri, 867 in Pithoragarh, 851 in Udham Singh Nagar,

PNS 🔳 DEHRADUN

partment is filling out

the required forms to en-

sure no driver is de-prived of their right to

vote. Responding to the claims of delayed pay-ments by the department

after elections, the RTO

said that the cause of de-

layed payments to the

owners of the vehicles is usually due to incom-

plete and delayed infor-

mation provided by the

payments of Rs 2,840 and Rs 3,800 respectively. Besides this, the department also acquires five types of good-carrying vehicles that can carry the weight of at least 3,000 kilogrammes to 16,200 kilogrammes and above. The vehicle owners will be paid from a minimum of Rs 572 to a maximum of Rs 2,576 daily for the

service, Sharma said. He also informed that the department will arrange 4 by 4 vehicles that can be driven in snow and harsh weather in areas like Dehradun's Chakrata if needed. He stated that the smaller vehicles like cars and cabs are usually allotted to Flying Squad Teams (FSTs), observers, zonal and sector magistrates, police and home guards among others as per the requirement. The department has given the responsibility to track the

movement of the acquired vehicle and how much fuel was used by the respective driver to district supply officers. Besides this, the department is also planning to install vehicle location tracking devices on zonal and sector magistrates' vehicles to ensure their vehicles can be monitored easily. It will also help them to convey information to authorities concerned during an emergency.

### **Authorities fail to** find a solution, street vendors continue to jam traffic

### Anti-encroachment drive fails to resolve traffic congestion

### MANSI BHAMBRI 🗖 DEHRADUN

With the Smart City W project turning out to be ineffective in tackling even basic issues like traffic congestion in the heart of Dehradun city, the street vendors and encroachments by shopkeepers continue to perpetuate traffic congestion in the city. The

affected the businesses of the shopkeepers in the market. Due to the anti-encroachment drive, the vendors started roaming around the area, causing further inconvenience to customers and leading to a decline in sales. This has exacerbated the traffic con-

### **Eight candidates file nomina**tion in Garhwal constituency

### PNS PAURI

Bharatiya Janata Party candidate from Garhwal Lok Sabha constituency Anil Baluni filed his nomination in Pauri on Tuesday. A total of seven candidates filed their nomination on the day. A total of eight candidates including the Congress candidate Ganesh Godiyal have filed their nomination in this Lok Sabha constituency so far. Apart from Baluni and Godiyal, the candidates who have filed their nomination from this con-

eration but could not find

their bodies till late on Tues-

day, the officials added.



stituency include independent candidates Arjun Singh, Sonu Kumar, Vinod Kumar Arya of the Uttarakhand Samanta Party, Reshma (SUCI Commu-

nist), Mukesh Chandra Pant of the SSP and Ashutosh Negi of Uttarakhand Kranti Dal, according to the district election offi cer Ashish Chauhan.

### **Closed government schools to be** repurposed for varied purposes

buildings as Anganwadi

### PNS DEHRADUN

I ment has decided to cided to repurpose these build Anganwadi centres, anchavat

### The Education depart- this, the department has de-Bhawans. This initiative

owners. The vehicle aims to ensure the effective owners have been asked to keep all required docutilisation of existing infra-

The Transport departpartment to ensure they get ment is making arrange-ments to ensure drivers of all acquired vehicles can payments on time. Besides this, many have also been approaching the depart-ment citing various reasons cast a vote through postal ballot and do not miss it why they cannot give their during duty. The regional transport officer (Ad-ministration) Sunil Sharma said that the devehicle for election duty.

"We consider cases with relevant reasons as somebody needs it for their wedding. However, the applications with reasons like advance bookings are always de-nied," he added.

### THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE

My father's name has been mistakenly entered as Puran Singh Bisht in the military records. My father's correct name is PURAN SINGH. Army No. 18008643F Rank- Nk RAMAN BISHT unit 8 (i) fd coy C/O 56 APO s/o Shri puran Singh resident of Village BHIMALI PO PANDROLA TEHSIL Jakholi District Rudraprayag Uttarakhand.

Registrar-II, Dehradun in Book No 1, Jild 3986 page 147 to 156 at Sr No My wife's name has been 37 dated 03.01.2012. Despite mistakenly entered as RACHANA searching a lot it could not be found. BISHT in the military records. My

PUBLIC NOTICE I, Praveen Tyagi alias Teetu S/c Late Mahaveer Singh Tyagi address L.I.G 39, M.D.D.A Colony Chander Road, Dalanwala Dehradun, Uttarakhand owner of Property No. D-35, L.I.G. area 71.72 sqmtr situated at M.D.D.A Colony, Chander Road, Dalanwala Dehradun have actually lost the following documents 1. Original sale deed which is duly registered in office of Sub Registrar-II, Dehradun in Book No 1, Jild 7037 page 217 to

244 at Sr No 2346 dated 14.08.2020

and 2. Original sale deed which is

duly registered in office of Sub

सूचना



authorities recently conducted an anti-encroachment drive to prevent traffic congestion but this has had limited effect on the situation on the ground.

A street vendor Nitish Kumar stated that the authorities always tend to restrict the roadside vendors from installing stalls in the roadside area of the market. However, these vendors have families to support and depend on their earnings to make a living. The recent anti-encroachment drive has made it difficult for them to earn a livelihood. As a result, they have started roaming around the market area to avoid being denied a livelihood by the police, he said.

Several street vendors have expressed their concern about the anti-encroachment drives carried out periodically by the State administration which severely affect their livelihood. In order to cope with this situation, many vendors have resorted to wandering around the market area to sell their products.

A local shopkeeper Asif Ibrahim who runs a footwear shop at Paltan Bazaar stated that the presence of street vendors has

gestion in the area and has deterred customers from entering the local shops, he added.

Dwelling on the issue, the president of the Doon Valley Mahanagr Udyog Vyapar Mandal (DV-MUVM) Pankaj Masson said that the street vendors have significantly affected the business of local shopkeepers. Local shopkeepers bear the cost of goods, services, rent and other expenses and are facing financial losses due to the street vendors who sell

"The State administration has conducted antiencroachment drives several times, but these have not yielded any results. Recently, street vendors have begun wandering around the market, reaching customers first and affecting the local shopkeepers' businesses even more," Masson said. He further alleged that traffic congestion and disorder in the market has increased due to these street vendors. He emphasised that the officials must be stricter in dealing with such activities. They must create a special vendor sec-

area, he added.

Bhawans and other facilities in the buildings of government schools which were

closed due to a lack of enough students. The department has received reports indicating a decrease in student numbers across government schools in the State. Consequently, the director general of Education,

Banshidhar Tiwari ha sought informatio about the closed govern ment schools in the Stat from all chief educatio officers in the district Tiwari stated that base on the reports received, total of 1,671 school have been closed and th enrollment in 3,57 schools has dwindled t 10 students or fewer, h said.

He further said that i the Pauri district, a tota of 315 governmer schools have ceased op products at cheaper rates. eration due to insuff cient student enrollmen which is a maximur number of such school among all the districts i the State. Contrastingly in Udham Singh Naga district, about 21 school have been shut down. H further said that variou government schools ha been closed in other dis tricts including 197 i Almora, 53 in Bagesh war, 53 in Chamoli, 13 in Champawat and 12 in Dehradun, amon others.

Commenting on th closure of the govern ment schools, Tiwari sai that the closure of gov ernment schools ha tion outside the market been confirmed in eac district. Considerin

ANM centres, homestays structure, he said. centres and Panchayat

uments with them and present them to the de-

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Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outsta- nding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
	Mehdi Naqvi/ Hina Naqvi (LBDEH00002891222) & 182- H Pocket- 4, Mayur Vihar Phase- 1, New Delhi Delhi- 110091	Flat No. T1-G03, Ground Floor, Block A, Tower T-1, Arcadia Hillocks Project, Situated At Khasra 26/2,75/1,82, 92/3,77/1, 78/1,25, 79,80,91,76, Bakral Gaon Kuthalgate, Near D.I.T University, Mussorie Road, Pargana Parwadoon, Dehradun, Uttarakhand- 248001	04/03/2024 Rs. 48,54,817/-	03/11 2023
	Sandeep Kumar/ Rupa/ Rajendra (LBHWR00004614177) & House No. 442, Near Valmiki Chowk Ghitorni Near Kali Mata Mandir Delhi- 110030	House Built On Part of Plot No. 134, Khasra No. 7/2, Situated At Village Missarpur Musthakam, Pargana Jwalapur Tehsii & District Haridwar, Uttarakhand- 249407	04/03/2024 Rs. 14,44,340/-	04/12 2023
3.	Sangita Bhuyan/ Ram Chandra Bhuyan (LBHWR00004778406) & 161, Gaytri Enclave, Salempur Mahdood- 2, Haridwar Uttarakhand - 249407	Plot No.161, Khasra No.1635, Gayatri Enclave, Village Salempur, Mehdood-2, Pargana Roodkee, Tehsil And District Haridwar, Uttarakhand- 249407	23/02/2024 Rs. 19,72,246/-	09/12 2023
4.	Sangita Bhuyan/ Ram Chandra Bhuyan (LBHWR00004778407) & 161, Gaytri Enclave, Salempur Mahdood-2, Haridwar Uttarakhand- 249407	Plot No.161, Khasra No.1635, Gayatri Enclave, Village Salempur, Mehdood-2, Pargana Roodkee, Tehsil And District Haridwar, Uttarakhand- 249407	23/02/2024 Rs. 5,69,721/-	09/12 2023
5.	Prakashvati Sharma/ Dharampal Sharma (LBKAP00004467966) & C-106 Ward No.3 Naya Avas Vikas, Uttar Pradesh Kashipur- 244713	House No. C-47, New Avas Vikas, Tehsil Kashipur, District Udhamsingh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh 244713	04/03/2024 Rs. 5,15,596/-	04/12 2023
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	Aftab Alam/ Afsana Begam (LBRUD00004557524) & Opposite Mahindra & Mahindra Company Village-Lalpur Tehsil Rudrapur Uttarakhand Udham Singh Nagar - 263149	Khet No 313 Minjumla, Village Lalpur, Tehsil Kichha, District Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand- 263153	04/03/2024 Rs. 17,47,248/-	09/12 2023
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Wife's correct name is RACHANA, Army No. 18008643F Rank-Nk RAMAN BISHT unit 8 (i) fd coy C/O 56 APO s/o Shri puran Singh resident of Village BHIMALI PO PANDROLA TEHSIL Jakholi District Rudraprayag Uttarakhand.

I Army no. JC 749112 W sub/Homy Sub Maj. Kamal singh Rawat R/O H.No 430 Lane No-4 Vivekanandgram (Phase-1) Jogiwala, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. My daughter's name spelling KUMARI MINAXI has been Wrongly entered in my military records, correct name is MEENAKSHI RAWAT. It should be updated.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

My land account khatauni number 676 (1399 to 1404 crop) khasra number 185/2 min. A pre-sale deed dated 23.12.2009 relating to a part of Mauza Arcadia Grant Pargana Pachhadun, District Dehradun, having area 382.74 sq.m., which was executed by Mrs. Savita Sharma, wife of Mr. Pankaj Sharma and daughter of late Mr. Subhash Chand Bhatia, resident of Wing No. 6, Premnagar, Dehradun, in favour of Mr. Anil Kumar, son of Mr. Rajjan Singh, resident of C-133, Tons Colony, Dakpathar, Vikas Nagar, Dehradun. and which was registered in Sub-Registrar's Office, II, Dehradun, in Book No. 01, Volume 2893, pages 369 to 386, at Serial No. 7332, dated 23.12.2009, was in my bag. The said bag fell somewhere or the way while going from Premnagar market to my house and could not be found even after a lot of searching Mr. Dheeraj Kumar, son of Mr Radheshvam, resident of 92, Smith Nagar Premnagar, Dehradun.

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# uttarakhand 03





# **Congress candidate Gunsola files nomination** papers from Tehri LS

PNS DEHRADUN

 $T_{\mathrm{from \ Tehri \ Lok \ Sabha}}^{\mathrm{he \ Congress \ candidate}}$ constituency Jot Singh Gunsola filed his nomination papers on Tuesday. Large number of party workers and leaders were present on the occasion to extend their support to Gunsola.

Before filing his nomination papers, Gunsola ar-rived at the Congress headquarters in the morning with a large number of his supporters. He was greeted there by the Pradesh Congress Com-mittee (PCC) president Karan Mahara, former chief minister Harish Rawat, his son and Congress candidate from Haridwar Lok Sabha

**AAP leader Amrendra Bisht joins Congress party** 

### PNS DEHRADUN

The State spokesperson of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the party candidate from Dhanaulti assembly constituency Amrendra Bisht joined the Congress party along with his supporters on Tuesday. AAP leader Dinesh Tomar, Kishan Nautiyal, Gulshan Kavi, Anil Dutt and others also joined the Congress party. Bisht and other leaders were inducted into the Congress party by the PCC president Karan Mahara and party candidate from Tehri Lok

Sabha Jot Singh Gunsola. It is pertinent to mention here that Bisht has considerable hold in Dhanaulti area and was elected district panchayat member for two consecutive terms from Nainbagh. He contested from Dhanaulti assembly constituency on AAP ticket in the election of 2022. Welcoming Bisht, the PCC president Mahara said that the party will get strengthened by the presence of a young leader such as Bisht.



Virendra Rawat, former PCC president Pritam Singh, former cabinet minister Hira Singh Rawat and other senior

#### people are eager to throw the leaders of the party. BJP out of the power in the Lok Sabha elections. He appealed to the party workers to work dedicatedly at the ground level to ensure the victory of the Congress can-

Former PCC president Pritam Singh said that the huge turnout in the nomination rally of Gunsola has proved that the people have made up their mind for change. The people are reeling under the anti people policies of the BJP government. Singh exuded confidence that the Congress candidates will secure victory in all the five Lok Sabha seats in the State. The Congress candidate from Tehri Gunsola expressed his gratitude to the party workers for coming in large numbers for his

nomination.

Addressing

didates.

the

workers the PCC president

Karan Mahara said that the

### **Cong candidates** from Haridwar, **Garhwal**, Nainital and Almora to file nominations today

### PNS DEHRADUN

ongress party candidates from the Garhwal, Haridwar, Nainital- Udham Singh Nagar and Almora Lok Sabha constituencies will file their nomination papers on Wednesday.

The Congress candidate from Garhwal Lok Sabha, Ganesh Godiyal will file his nomination papers at the Pauri collectorate at 11 am on Wednesday. Many senior leaders of the party are expected to accompany him. After filing his nomination, Godiyal will address а public meeting Ramlila ground of

Pauri. In a message, Godiyal appealed to the people to attend his nomination rally in large numbers to boost his morale. In Garhwal Godiyal is pitted against Anil Baluni of BJP who filed his nomination papers on Tuesday.

The party candidate from Haridwar Virendra Singh Rawat will file his nomination papers on Wednesday. Former Chief Minister Harish Rawat and other senior leaders of the party including MLAs of the party will remain present at

the time of filing of nomination. In Haridwar Virendra Rawat is locked in a battle with former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat. The MLA from Khanpur assembly constituency Umesh Kumar is also in the fray in Haridwar.

The veteran leader of Congress party Pradeep Tamta will also file his nomination paper from Almora (SC) constituency on Wednesday. The Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Karan

Mahara and other senior leaders of the party will accompany Tamta who is pitted against Ajay Tamta of BJP. Interestingly it will be the fourth contest between the two leaders in

Almora. In the election of 2009 Pradeep Tamta of Congress won from the seat while in the elections of 2014 and 2019 Ajay Tamta of BJP defeated Pradeep Tamta with comfortable margins.

In Nainital the party candidate Prakash Joshi will file his nomination papers on Wednesday. He will challenge the union minister of State Ajay Bhatt who is in fray as the BJP candidate from the constituency.

### **BJP's Tehri and Garhwal** candidates file nomination

### PNS DEHRADUN

Anil Baluni and Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah filed their nomination papers as Bharatiya Janata Party candidates from Garhwahl and Tehri constituencies respectively on Tuesday. The party's State election incharge Dushyant Kumar Gautam said that on the basis of the hard work of the party workers the party candidates are sure to win the

and Rajya Sabha member Naresh Bansal accompanied the procession of the candidate. Members of the general public and musicians welcomed the procession at various spots along its route. Dhami wished Shah in advance for her (expected) victory from the Tehri constituency. Interaction with the media, Shah said that the public are happy with

constituency. Later in the day, Dhami and Union minister Smriti Irani along with the party's State in-charge Gautam addressed a rally held in Pauri in support of the Garhwal candidate Anil Baluni. Addressing the gathering, Dhami said that considering PM Modi's leadership the party is bound to win with a greater margin than it did in 2019.



election by a margin of five lakh votes each. The Tehri candidate of BJP filed her nomination first accompanied by a crowd of supporters and party workers. Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, BJP State president Mahendra Bhatt and the party's election management committee convenor

the works done by the government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. She said that the BJP had given her yet another opportunity to serve the public as Modi's representative. Shah said that under Modi's leadership, she will attempt to facilitate unprecedented level of development in her

The CM informed the gathering about the various infrastructural development and other works executed in Uttarakhand under Modi's leadership. He also spoke about the major steps taken by the State government including the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code in Uttarakhand.

## **Voters suffer as candidates march** to vie for a chance to serve public

### PNS DEHRADUN

Several roads in Dehradun witnessed traffic jams in different areas due to rallies of political leaders who filed nominations for the Lok Sabha elections on Tuesday. The traffic police had also d theti

school to going to the office. I do not understand why such events are not organised during less busy hours. All politicians seem unsympa-

vere traffic jams than it actually would if people will just remain in their lanes on roads and follow traffic rules. Police

that the traffic police are continuously monitoring traffic conditions in Dehradun. The police will make necessary

# EC to provide voting from home facility to 10,390 voters above 85 yrs in Uttarakhand

### PNS DEHRADUN

▲ total of 10,390 people that the State has 80,330 Per- phase will be done after April palanquin. Apart from them, sons with Disabilities (PWD

said tha

verted several routes that made the situation worse. Despite the presence of two or more personnel on main roads and junctions like Clock Tower, Paltan Bazaar, Haridwar Road, Buddha Chowk, Dilaram Chowk and Survey Chowk among others, traffic jams remained bad there till afternoon. Many locals blamed the increased movement of political leaders and their supporters on roads for their sufferings. Some also stated that the police should have made proper arrangements to streamline the traffic considering the expected crowd during rallies. "Such chaotic movement on roads and heavy traffic jams are not new during elections but it is still a huge inconvenience for us. It affects our whole schedule from dropping our kids at miseries," Patelnagar resident Mayank Sharma said. A homemaker Navya Singh said that the police should make also suitable arrangements to ensure people follow trafrules. "People using two-wheelers arriving from one side insert their vehicle

to the other side in the hope that they will reach ahead fast rather than remain stuck behind a car. The vehicles opposite their lanes fail to cross the road. This leads to more se-



also neglect this behaviour during the chaotic hour when such people should actually be punished," she added. The Dehradun senior superinten dent of police Ajai Singh said

changes in plans accordingly to prevent traffic jams on main roads during elections, he added.

BJP workers ride a bullock cart in a nomination rally for a Lok Sabha candidate in Dehradun on Tuesday Mangesh Kumar/Pioneer photo

who are above. age have requested the election commission to provide the voting facility from their home in the State. The State has 65,0160 such voters who are more than 85 years of age and are eligible for the voting from home facility. The additional chief electoral officer (ACEO) Uttarakhand, Vijay Kumar Jogdande said that application forms were provided to all the senior citizens who are more than 85 years of age regarding availing the vote from home facility. He added

PNS DEHRADUN

Minister

voters and out of them 5,576 have applied for voting by postal ballot. He said that March 25 was the last date for applying for the postal ballots and now the district election officers will provide the facility of the postal ballots to the eligible voters. The officers will visit the homes of the voters with postal ballots between April 8 to April 10 in the first phase. The second phase of the activity for the voters who were not available in their homes in the first

Voters have shown they

favour Modi, claims BJP

arrangement of minimum facility is made in all 11729 polling booths in the State. The facility of ramp is available in 94 per cent while facil-ity of drinking water, furniture and shade is available in 97-98 per cent of booths. The EC has provided the facility of Saksham App to all the PwD and 85 plus age group voters. In this App 1524 applications for wheelchairs have been received while 994 such voters have requested for the facility of

such voters have applied for the facility of volunteers The ACEO Uttarakhand added that free and cashless treatment facilities will be provided to the personnel deployed on election duty. A booth level health management plan has been set in place in which information about the nearest health facility is being provided. Jog-dande said that a total of 9,318 complaints have been received so far in the C-Vigil App and 8,930 complaints have been disposed of.

### **BSP** changes its ticket in Haridwar, fields Ahmed

Lon Tuesday, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSPP) cancelled

the party ticket given to Bhawna Pandey from Harid-

war Lok Sabha seat. The party has now fielded Maulana Jamil

### PNS DEHRADUN n a dramatic turn of events

hand, he said. On the other hand, the BJP government in the State had facilitated 30 per cent horizontal reservation for women

former chief minister Harish Rawat, Gautam said that the nepotism which the Congress is undertaking in Delhi is being perpetuated by Rawat in Uttarakhand.

in government jobs, in addition to various other schemes being executed by the gov-ernment in the interest of women. Referring to Congress candidate Virendra Rawat, the son of

Ahmed from the seat. The BSP took this decision after Pandey decided to extend her support to BJP candidate and former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat. It is pertinent to mention here that Pandey had joined BSP last week. The new candidate of BSP Ahmed is a former MLA from Mirapur assembly constituency of Muzaffarnagar seat of Uttar Pradesh.

### आभार

महासु देवता की असीम कृपा व आप सभी की दुआओं के फलस्वरूप श्री हरि चंद्र सेमवाल को नया जीवनदान मिला है। मा० मुख्यमंत्री जी, मा० मंत्रीगणों सहित आप सभी के प्रति समस्त सेमवाल परिवार कृतज्ञता प्रकट करता है। निर्मला सेमवाल पत्नी श्री हरि चंद्र सेमवाल ग्राम जखनोग, खत लखवाड

### Bharatiya Janata Party national general sec-retary and State election in-charge Dushyant Kumar Gautam said the Dushyant considering the atmos-phere during the filing of nomination by party candidates, it is clear that the people have de-cided to fulfill Prime Narendra Modi's aim of the

BJP/NDA winning more than 400 seats in the Lok Sabha ways to uplift and empower women, leaders of the Conelections. Talking to the media gress and the opposition are after accompanying party can-didates who filed their nomiinsulting women. The manner in which Congress spokes-woman Supriya Shrinate nation, Gautam said that the statement made by the Con-gress spokeswoman about BJP made a denigrating comment on Kangana Ranaut on socandidate and actor Kangana cial media is despicable and Ranaut is objectionable and exposes the attitude of the an insult to women. While a Congress towards women. Congress spokeswoman is The Congress national presdenigrating a BJP candidate, the Congress did not field ident Mallikarjun Kharge should suspend this spokeseven a single woman candi-date in Uttarakhand, he said. woman." Gautam further accused the Congress of Addressing the media at the party's State media centre on spreading misinformation on issues related to women, Tuesday, Gautam said that the adding that it had been exeffect of the works done by posed by its selection of Lok Sabha candidates. The Con-PM Modi and chief minister gress had not selected even Pushkar Singh Dhami are evident to all. He said, "At a time one woman candidate for when PM Modi and CM any of the five Lok Sabha Dhami are working in various constituencies in Uttarak-



# nation 04

### Varun absence from BJP list stirs up political speculation Modi calls Sandeshkhali survivor and **BJP Lok Sabha candidate** BISWAJEET BANERJEE LUCKNOW

the pioneer

DEHRADUN | WEDNESDAY | MARCH 27, 2024

### PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday called up the BJP's Lok Sabha poll candidate from Basirhat, Rekha Patra, who had highlighted Patra, who had highlighted the plight of women in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali, and lauded her as "Shakti Swaroopa, BJP leaders said. Patra, who had raised her voice against the alleged atroc-ities by local Trinamool Congress (TMC) strongman Shajahan Sheikh and his cronies, was picked by the BJP as its candidate from Basirhat Lok Sabha seat, under which the village falls.

Modi spoke to her about her campaign preparations and the support for the BJP among voters and other issues, while she narrated the ordeal of Sandeshkhali women.

Patra told Modi she feels good that he is standing by them and said, "It is like Ram ji is with us". She said she has not voted since 2011 due to the situation in the area, to which Modi assured that the Election Commission will hold free and fair elections and ensure evervone can vote. Patra also said that the TMC

supporters around her initial-



opposed her candidature from the BJP, but are supporting her now. She said she has

no enmity with anyone. She also said that she hails from a poor family and her husband works in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. "I will do something so that no one has to go so far for work. They will get employment here only," she said. PM Modi hailed her as "Shakti Swaroopa". Shakti is a Hinduism term associated with goddesses like Durga and Kali. You fought the battle in Sandeshkhali, you are 'Shakti Swaroopa'...," PM Modi said. He also said that she should take the message to the mass-

"Work in the midst of people, take the message to them that the TMC government is creating problems for the people, they do not allow implementation of the BJP (union) government schemes in West Bengal. Tell people that they are indulging in corruption, and changing names of schemes," the prime minister was quoted as saying by a BJP leader.

state

Basirhat, one of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal, is currently represented by the TMC. Sheikh, who has been suspended by the TMC, and some of his associates have es about how the Trinamool been arrested in connection with attacks on ED officials Congress government is working against the people of the and are in CBI custody.



has a connection with the Gandhi family. This is why the BJP denied him a ticket (for Lok Sabha polls). I think he should come (join the Congress), we will be very happy," Chowdhury, the leader of the Congress party in the outgoing Lok Sabha, said.

Varun and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi are cousins. Varun, a two-term Lok Sabha MP from Pilibhit, has often aired views deemed critical of his party's governments at the Centre and in Uttar Pradesh.

Senior Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury too However, the BJP has renomextended an invitation to him inated his mother Maneka to join the grand old party. Gandhi from Sultanpur. Chowdhury described Varun Varun has been substituted as a "dabang neta (strong with former Congress memleader)" and said he is a ber Jitin Prasada to run for learned man with a clean the Pilibhit seat in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Uttar "He is a dabang neta and a Pradesh. Renowned for his candid

very educated man. He has a clean image. Varun Gandhi opinions, Gandhi has been a

vocal opponent of several key initiatives of the Modi government, including its agricultural policies, retirement schemes, and employment programs. His dissenting stance has resonated with opposition factions, amplifying discussions on contentious issues and injecting vigor into political discourse. The SP's offer of a seat to Gandhi has added an intriguing dimension to the unfolding narrative. Party leaders, including national President Akhilesh Yadav and national general secretary Ram Gopal Yadav, have hinted at a possible induction if the BJP fails to nominate him. However, Gandhi's response to this overture remains uncertain, given his longstanding association and ideological alignment with the BJP.

recent comment by Akhilesh Yadav indicating the SP's open-door policy for

Gandhi underscores the potential for a realignment of political allegiances. Meanwhile, Bhagwat Saran Gangwar has been announced as the SP's official candidate for Pilibhit, though he has expressed willingness to step aside if Gandhi joins the fray. In a surprising move, the BJP has nominated Jitin Prasada, the Public Works Department Minister in the Yogi Adityanath cabinet, as its candidate for Pilibhit, replacing Varun Gandhi. Additionally, Meneka Gandhi, Varun's mother, has been tasked with contesting from Sultanpur, the constituency she successfully represented in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The Gandhi family's stronghold over the Pilibhit parliamentary constituency has been undeniable for over three decades. Beginning with former Union Minister Maneka Gandhi's victory in the 1989 elections, the family has maintained a formidable presence in the region. Varun Gandhi succeeded his mother in representing Pilibhit, solidifying the family's legacy in Indian politics. However, the decision to deny Varun Gandhi a ticket for the upcoming elections marks a significant departure from tradition. In 2014, he was shifted to Sultanpur while his mother contested and

from Nonetheless, Gandhi reclaimed the seat in 2019, securing a decisive victory by a staggering margin of over 2.5 lakh votes, reaffirming the family's enduring dominance. Gandhi's commentary on social and political issues has often made headlines. In December 2021, he criticized the government's handling of job opportunities and recruitment processes, highlighting the plight of millions of unemployed youth. Similarly, his response to the withdrawal of the contentious agricultural laws and his condemnation of communal narratives in the aftermath of the Lakhimpur Kheri violence showcased his willingness to challenge prevailing narratives.Moreover, Gandhi's advocacy for government employees' rights and his call to reevaluate pension schemes have underscored his commitment to social justice and

equitable governance. As the political landscape evolves and alliances shift, Varun Gandhi's exclusion from the BJP ticket raises questions about the party's internal dynamics and its approach to dissenting voices within its ranks. It also presents Gandhi with a pivotal decision regarding his political future and ideological alignment.

### Congress leader post on Kangana sparks row Jaishankar visits Indian Coast Guard ship Samudra

### PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DEI HI/CHANDIGARH

 $E^{very \; woman, \; irrespective}_{of \; her \; background \; and}$ profession, deserves dignity, actor Kangana Ranaut said on Tuesday as Congress leaders' comments on Mandi from where she is contesting the Lok Sabha elections snowballed into a massive political row.

Ranaut, who makes her polit ical debut as a BJP candidate from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, said she was particularly pained by the derogatory comments on the constituency that is often referred to as "Chhota Kashi" the world over.

The Congress has been in the crosshairs after demeaning remarks on Ranaut and Mandi were posted on the social media handles of its leaders Supriya Shrinate and HS Ahir. The party has always believed there is no place for such language in public discourse and the matter should end with Shrinate clearing the s leader Sand Dikshit told reporters at the AICC headquarters. "Whatever be the profession of a woman, be it teacher, actress, journalist, politician or sex worker, all of them deserve dignity. I'm pained especially because of the deplorable comments made about Mandi... All of us who



come from Mandi have been Shrinate said in her defence hurt by the comments," on Monday, when the con-Ranaut told reporters outtroversy erupted, that many side the Chandigarh airport. people have access to her Asked whether she plans to take any action against the Facebook and Instagram accounts and one of them two Congress leaders, the made the inappropriate post. She also said she had deleted "Queen" actor, often in the news for her controversial the post and will take action comments on a range of issues, said she had been against a parody account that is using her name. But that called to Delhi by BJP presihad little impact. dent J P Nadda and would "If your account is posting respond only after meeting what a parody account posts, him. "I have to maintain the then it simply means that

top leadership of the Congress must apologise.

criticisms of Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's policies have

caused discomfort among

party higher-ups, resulting

in his exclusion from the

The decision has fueled con-

jecture about Gandhi's poten-

tial political maneuvers, with

speculation rife regarding his

possible candidacy as a

Samajwadi Party (SP) nomi-

nee or as an independent

candidate. Such a move could

potentially disrupt the BJP's

aspirations to secure all 80

seats in Uttar Pradesh.

image.

electoral lineup.

"Such derogatory words were used for someone who is India's daughter and a woman. This is very shocking, and has shown the mentality of the Congress. The top leadership of the Congress should apologise for this," she said

Thakur added in a statement that the remarks would be legally examined and the BJP was moving towards registering a case. Shrinate, he said, had made a "big mistake" as people of faith come to Mandi, which is known as "Chhoti Kashi" and is an abode for over 300 temples. "It is unfortunate that being a woman herself, the Congress spokesperson has made such remarks against another woman and now she is trying to retract by saying that someone has used her other account," Thakur said. Union minister Smriti Irani

Nothing left of Congress ideology with the Rahul-Congress gang. 'Nari Nyay' is nothing but an empty slogan by a bunch of hypocrites!" Former diplomat Lakshmi Puri termed the remarks against the actor "despicable, derogatory & condemnable". "That it should come from another woman politician is all the more galling - how can

we as women become transmitters of toxic patriarchy & demeaning slurs & insults that scrape at the bottom of the barrel of indignity!" she posted on X. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera took up cudgels on his colleague's behalf. "Anybody who has known colleague mv @SupriyaShrinate will vouch for the fact that she can never resort to such objectionable language ever." Dikshit added that Shrinate had said she will find out who has done it. "Supriya ji has said whoever has done it, and BJP's Chandigarh MP Kirron Kher have also added it's a mistake. She has their voice to the chorus of explained and the matter

PNS NEW DELHI  $E_{\rm Jaishankar}^{\rm xternal~Affairs~Minister~S}$ Coast Guard ship Samudra

Paheredar, a specialised Pollution Control Vessel, which is in Manila Bay in the Philippines as part of an overseas deployment to the EAN countries, and said the civilizational imprint of India's long and distinguished maritime tradition is still visible in the region. The ICG ship arrived at Manila Bay on March

25 on a three-day visit. The ship is equipped with spe-cialised marine pollution concialised marine pollution con-trol equipment and a Chetak Helicopter in pollution response configuration designed to contain and recov-er spilled oil and augment the operation, officials said on Tuesday.

"Pleased to visit the Indian Coast Guard Ship Samudra Paheredar during its port call to Manila. My visit and the deepening India-Philippines relations. India's long and distinguished Indian maritime tradition's civilizational imprint is still visible in this region. Our Act East policy and Indo-Pacific vision will continue giving it a more contemporary form," the External Affairs Minister (EAM) posted on X



on Tuesday. The Union minister is on an official visit to the Philippines.

The Defence Ministry earlier in the day said the ICG ship is on an overseas deployment to theEAN countries -- the Philippines, Vietnam and Brunei -- from March 25 to April 12. "The visit of a spe-cialised Pollution Control Vessel is part of a broader initiative aimed at demonstration of the ICG's marine pollution se capabilities and shared concern and resolve towards marine pollution in theEAN region besides bolstering bilateral cooperation with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)," the ministry said. "The deployment is the third in a row by the Indian Coast Guard to theEAN countries.

Earlier in the year 2023, ICG Pollution Control Vessels visited Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia as part of the initiative," it said.

During this deployment, the ship is also scheduled to make port calls at Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam) and Muara (Brunei). The demonstration at visiting ports includes pollution response training and a practical display of various equip-Additionally, the ship has also embarked 25 cadets of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) to participate in the Indian government's initiative Puneet Sagar Abhiyan' and provide it an international outreach in coordination with partner nations, the officials said.

walk before it. I have to walk with them and follow their instructions," the 37-year-old said.

A host of BJP leaders, including Bansuri Swaraj, Amit Malviya and former Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur, spoke up on the issue. Congress spokesperson

same. One has to be self conceited, to the point of being deranged, to do so. Also the admins must have very low opinion of you to post such offensive stuff and get away," Malviya said. Bansuri Swaraj, daughter of the late Sushma Swaraj and the party's candidate from New Delhi, said the

a former TV actor, Kher continues to be a prominent face in Hindi films. There were others who backed Ranaut. Targeting Shrinate, former Congress leader Sharmistha Mukherjee said, "She's saying 'access', not hacked! One gives access to SM accounts only to known & trusted people.

ıld end th The party's Srinivas BV agreed that the remarks against Ranaut from Shrinate's account were "absolutely derogatory". However, he also raked up Ranaut's past controversial statement in which she had called actorpolitician Urmila Matondkar a "soft porn star".

### BJP urges EC to take actions ECI issues advisory for voter safety against heatwave against poll code violations

#### PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday raised the issue of objectionable comments by Opposition leaders, including Tamil Nadu Minister Anitha Radhakrishnan, against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the lack of action against him, as it urged the Election Commission to take stringent measures on its own against poll code violations.

A BJP delegation flagged the "differing" approaches of poll officials in various States to similar infractions by politicians and claimed that not much is done against the errant leaders in states like Karnataka, Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. All these states are ruled by the BJP's rival parties.

A BJP delegation, including Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and its general secretary Vinod Tawde, met the poll watchdog to highlight this "discrepancy".

Opposition leaders are continuously "abusing" Modi and denigrating women power and Indian culture, Tawde told reporters later.

The poll process has just started and the EC should take "suo moto action" against any violation of the poll code, he said.

He said while action was rec-

### निर्वाचन सदन NIRVACHAN SADAN भारत निर्वाचन आयोग **ELECTION COMMISSION** OF INDIA look into the issue," he said.

ommended against Union minister Shobha Karandlaje, BJP leaders Om Pathak and who is contesting the Lok Sanjay Mayukh were also part Sabha polls from Karnataka, of the delegation. for her controversial com-The BJP's written submission ments against Tamils, objecto the EC was in reference to tionable remarks of a Tamil Radhakrishnan's alleged use of profanities against the prime minister during an Nadu minister and DMK leader have not drawn any censure.In this context, Tawde election rally. also highlighted Shiva Sena The party demanded that the (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut's comparison of Prime Minister poll body bar him from the campaign and direct the DMK leader to tender an Narendra Modi with Mughal apology. An FIR should also king Aurangzeb, considered by many a religious zealot. be registered, it said. Its complaint also highlight-ed the alleged insult of Indian While action was called for in the case of Shobha Karandlaje, poll officials are culture and personal attacks by DMK leaders, including seen to be having a different stand in other states, he said. former Union minister A 'We urged the Election Raja. Raja had said that Tamil Commission to take stringent Nadu will never accepts action at the right time and phrases like Bharat Mata and we were assured that it will Jai Shri Ram, the BJP noted.

RAJESH KUMAR 
NEW DELHI

With the seven-phase Lok Sabha poll occurring at the peak of the summer amid warnings of above normal temperature and heat wave conditions by the India Meteorological Department ( IMD), the Election Commission ( EC) issued an advisory to States and Union Territories and sought "strict compliance" of its directive of providing assured minimum facilities on the day of polls at polling stations for voters as well as polling personnel, including drinking water, shade and medical kit, ramp, polling states at ground floors, proper lighting and electricity, furniture's and proper signages at polling stations.

The Commission has also shared with its state chief electoral officers a set of 'dos and don'ts' issued by the National Management Disaster Authority (NDMA) to minimise the impact of the impending heat wave.

The commission has cited IMD to note that there is a high probability of above normal temperatures during summer season, "which may translate into stronger and longer spells of heatwave especially during months of March to June, 2024". The Meteorological Scientists have advised political parties to factor in the



impacts of rising temperatures while campaigning outdoors and conducting big rallies.

The NDMA in its do's and don'ts advised to avoid going out in the sun, especially between 12.00 noon and 3.00 p.m; Drink sufficient water and as often as possible, even if not thirsty; Wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose, and porous cotton clothes. Use protective goggles, umbrella/hat, shoes or chappals while going out in sun, avoid strenuous activities when the outside temperature is high. Avoid working outside between 12 noon and 3 p.m.

The April 19 to June 1 polls are likely to witness an above-normal number of heatwave days in most parts of the country, barring a few pockets in the western Himalayas, north-east and peninsular India.

Traditionally, polls in India used to happen either in the winter or in the spring until 2004, when the then-prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, decided to dissolve the Lok Sabha eight months in advance

and went to polls in April-May. Subsequently, four Lok Sabha polls were held amidst the heat and dust.

With the Indian subcontinent emerging as a "hotspot" of extreme heat waves owing to global warming, studies have documented the deaths of thousands due to extreme heat events. In cities, there is an additional contributor in the form of "urban heat island" effects.

In a letter sent out to its Chief Electoral Officers, the Commission reminded them about its earlier set of instructions on assured minimum facilities at polling stations. According to the June 2023 instructions on assured minimum facilities, which have been circulated afresh, during summer, every polling party shall be supplied with oral rehydration salts (ORS) for their own use as well as for any voter needing the same due to heat-stroke.

"A hand bill on 'Dos and Don'ts' in case of heat stroke may be prepared and supplied to each of the polling parties. An appeal to the electors may be issued to carry wet towels to protect themselves against dehydration and also advise women electors to avoid bringing children along with them to polling stations during hot weather conditions," the instruction said.

### Pets in peril due to humans: Study

### ARCHANA JYOTI NEW DELHI

A midst the common prac-tice of culling animals to curb the spread of diseases to humans, a study has brought to light a startling reversal: It is pets that are in more peril due to humans.

After analysing 12 million viral genomes, the scientists from University College London (UCL) found that humans pass

on more viruses to domestic and wild animals than the other way around. The researchers whose study is published in the journal Nature Ecology & Evolution have called for better understanding and monitoring of viral transmission between animals and humans to prepare for future outbreaks and aid conservation efforts.

Generally speaking, the majority of emerging and re-emerg-ing infectious diseases are attributable to animal viruses. When these pathogens transmit from animals into humans (a process called zoonosis), it leads to disease outbreaks and epidemics such as Ebola and new flu strains. Considering the tremendous impact zoonotic diseases can have on public health, humans have historically been seen as a "sink" for viruses rather than a source. In other words, humanto-animal transmission of viruses usually gets far less attention.



Moreover, as the study noted that even more animal-to-animal host jumps that didn't involve humans at all. "We should consider humans just as one node in a vast network of hosts endlessly exchanging pathogens, rather than a sink for zoonotic bugs," said study co-author Professor Francois Balloux (UCL Genetics Institute).

"By surveying and monitoring transmission of viruses between animals and humans, in either direction, we can better understand viral evolution and hopefully be more prepared for future outbreaks and epidemics of novel illnesses, while also aiding conservation efforts."

On average, viral host jumps show an association with an increase in genetic changes, or mutations in viruses, relative to their continued evolution alongside just one host animal. Study authors say this reflects how viruses must adapt to better exploit new hosts.

# nation 05





# **BJP** fields four Congress turncoats for Assembly bypolls in Gujarat

### PTI AHMEDABAD

Fleader of opposition Arjun Modhwadia, and an independent legislator, all of whom resigned from the Gujarat assembly membership in the last few months, were on Tuesday fielded by the ruling BJP for bypolls in five constituencies.

These five seats - Vijapur, Manavadar, Porbandar Khambhat and Vaghodia fell vacant after their sitting MLAs, four from the Congress and one independent, resigned between December 2023 and March 2024 and subsequently joined the BJP. An official list

declaring them to be BIP

the party here.

candidates for the bypolls to these five seats was issued by The Congress MLAs who resigned were CJ Chavda (Vijapur), Arjun Modhwadia (Porbandar), Arvind Ladani (Manavadar) and Chirag Patel

(Khambhat). Apart from them, independent MLA from Vaghodia, Dharmendrasinh Vaghela, had also resigned as legislator and joined the saffron party. Now, the BJP has chosen these five former MLAs to fight the bypolls on the to fight the bypolls on the party's symbol from their respective seats. They all were elected as legislators after seat, defeating BJP candidates in the assembly polls held in

December 2022, in which the saffron party won 156 of the 182 seats. The Congress is yet to announce its candidates for

these five assembly seats. The by-elections for five out of six vacant assembly seats in Gujarat is scheduled on May 7, when voting would take place for all the 26 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state. The Election Commission has not declared bypoll on the Visavadar seat because a case about the election of its former MLA Bhupat Bhayani is pending before the Gujarat High Court. Bhayani, who won as the AAP candidate from the also resigned in December and later joined the

### office, he claimed. Referring to the statements made by Vijayan during the anti-CAA rally in Malappuram on Monday, the BJP leader said these were the arguments made by Mohammed Ali Jinnah while demanding two nations decades ago. "The CM said that Muslims were second-grade citizens in the

PTI PALAKKAD (KERLA)

them.

The BJP on Tuesday demanded the registration of a sedition case against Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan over his recent speeches on the Citizenship Amendment Act, alleging they aimed to instill insecurity in the Muslim community and create "extreme religious blindness" among them

Senior BJP leader P K Krishnadas accused the Marxist veteran of trying to create division in society and promote enmity among religious groups through his speeches against the CAA,

Vijayan on the topic were in violation of constitutional norms and the oath of office, and thus he lost the legal right to continue in the

speeches against the implemented by the Centre.

country, and the Union government, the BJP, and the RSS were trying to drive them away into Pakistan by suspending their citizenship, Krishnadas said.

His words were a reflection of the ideology of Jinnah, who had also said that Muslims were secondgrade citizens and insecure in India, and so there should be a separate nation for them.

"Vijayan was reiterating what Jinnah had said ... His words were antinational. So, a case of sedition



should be registered against him," he said

Kerala CM for speeches on CAA

He also accused Vijayan of paving the way for a "religious riot" by creating division between Muslims and Christian and Hindu communities.

"Vijayan's speeches aimed to instill insecurity in the Muslim community and create "extreme religious blindness" among them,"

religious bindness among them, he further alleged. The BJP leader also rubbished Vijayan's statement in Malappuram that the BJP and RSS might not know that the slogans like "Bharat Mata ki Jai" and "Jai Hind" were first raised by two Muslims and would they obridon them as they were they abandon them as they were coined by those belonging to the minority community.

Seeking to counter Vijayan, Krishnadas asked whether he and the other Left leaders would be ready to raise the slogans as they were coined by Muslims.

He also claimed that the CAA has nothing to do with the 18 crore Muslims in the country. The saffron party's scathing attack

against the Chief Minister came in the wake of the Left veteran recently addressing four consecutive rallies organised by the CPI(M) in the northern part of Kerala against the controversial Citizenship

During the rallies, Vijayan had attacked the BJP-led Union attacked the BJP-led Union government over the implementation of the CAA and accused it of attempting to give citizenship on the basis of religion. Reaching out to the minority community in Muslim-dominated Malappuram district on Monday, the veteran CPI(M) leader said Muslim rulers, cultural icons and officials had played a significant role

officials had played a significant role in the country's history and independence movement. He said Sangh Parivar leaders and

activists advocating the extradition of Muslims from India to Pakistan ought to be acquainted with this historical context.

Along with others, Muslims also played a crucial role in the country's freedom movement, the chief minister pointed out.

# BJP demands sedition case against ZPM trying hard to join **BJP led NDA:** Zoramthanga

### PTI 📕 AIZAWL

MNF president Zoramthanga on Tuesday claimed that ZPM was "trying hard" to join the BJP-led NDA at the Centre. Addressing a rally in Saitual town in northeastern Mizoram, Zoramthanga alleged that Chief Minister Lalduhoma had approached Assam CM Himanta Biswas Sarma before the assembly polls so that the ZPM could become a part of the NDA. "The ZPM suddenly got more money in its hand before the assembly polls because it had already sold itself to the BJP," he said. The ZPM wanted the MNF to sever ties with

The ZPM wanted the MNF to sever ties with NDA to pave the way for it to be part of the alliance, he added.

Zoramthanga, the former CM, claimed that his party has constantly opposed the NDA government at the Centre on issues affecting the interest of minorities and Mizoram despite being in the alliance.

being in the alliance. "The NDA sees the MNF as a nuisance because we often oppose it from within on issues affecting Mizoram. Like MNF, the ZPM wouldn't be able to oppose the NDA," he said. Zoramthanga claimed that Union Home Minister Amit Shah "stopped pushing" him to withdraw Mizoram Police from the inter-state border during the dispute with Assam when he warned that he would resign as the chief minister. Earlier, Lalduhoma had said that his party will remain independent of any alliance at party will remain independent of any alliance at the Centre.

He had said that a regional party can't put forward its view and take independent decisions on important issues as long as it aligned with either of the two blocs, one led by the BJP and the other by the Congress, at the Centre.



# Manipur Education Minister to contest LS polls as BJP candidate

PTI 📕 IMPHAL

The BJP on Tuesday Education Minister Thounaojam Basantakumar Singh from the Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat, dropping sitting MP and Union Minister Rajkumar Ranjan Singh. The contestant, aged 59, is the son of former Union minister Thounaojam Chaoba Singh. The former IPS officer is now an MLA from the Nambol assembly constituency in Bishnupur district. The announcement comes two days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh claimed that the BJP would win by a huge margin in the state. BIP candidate Thounaoiam Basantakumar Singh is pitted against Congress nominee Angomcha Bimol Akoijam in the Inner Manipur seat. The saffron party has decided not to contest from the Outer Sabha Manipur Lok constituency and extended its

### support to ally Naga People's Front nominee Kachui Timothy Zimik, a retired venue

## Local outfit GGP first list of 10 LS picks out in Chhattisgarh

### PTI RAIPUR

The Gondwana Gantantra Party (GGP), a regional outfit with pockets of influence in Chhattisgarh, on Tuesday released its first list of candidates for 10 of the 11 Lok Sabha seats in the state, a party leader said.

Candidates for 10 Lok Sabha seats in Chhattisgarh have been announced and discussion on the

nominee for the remaining one seat Kanker (Scheduled Tribe reserved) was underway, the party's president and MLA Tuleshwar Singh Markam told PTI. As per the list, Dr LS Uday has been fielded from Surguja (ST) seat, Madan Gond from Raigarh (ST), Manharan Lal Bhardwai Bhardwaj from Janjgir-Champa (Scheduled Caste reserved), Shyam Singh Markam from Korba, Nandkishore Raj from Bilaspur, Naresh Kumar Motghare



Thakur from Durg, Lalbahadur Yadav from Raipur, Mohd Fareed Kureshi from Mahasamund and Tikam Nagvanshi from Bastar (ST), he said.

The GGP has not yet won a Lok Sabha seat in the state. Polls will be held in three phases in the Naxal-affected state on April 19, April 26 and May 7 and votes will be

counted on June 4. contested The GGI

alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), but the outfit is going it alone in the Lok Sabha polls. It managed to win just one seat — Pali Tanakhar — its first victory since the formation of the state in November 2000, in the last assembly polls, while the Mayawati-led party drew a blank. The BSP has so far announced candidates for two Lok Sabha

candidates for two Lok Sabha seats — Janjgir-Champa and Bastar. The Naxal-hit Bastar constituency alone will witness polling on April 19 in the first phase for which filing of nominations started on March 20. Three constituencies, Kanker (ST), Rajnandgaon and Mahasamund, will vote on April 26 in the second phase, while the remaining seven seats — Surguja (ST), remaining seven seats — Surguja (ST), Raigarh (ST), Janjgir-Champa (SC), Raipur, Durg, Korba and Bilaspur — will witness polling on May 7 in the third and



Highway dacoity case cracked in Palghar; four held

(Amendment) Act (CAA).

officer.

The Inner Manipur seat and some areas of the Outer Manipur constituency will vote in the first phase on April 19, while the remaining segments of the Outer Manipur seat will go to poll in

phase 2 on April 26. Those living in camps in violence-hit Manipur will be allowed to vote from their temporary settlements, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said on March 16, the day the Lok Sabha poll schedule was announced. Ethnic clashes between the Meitei and tribal Kuki communities in the northeastern state since May last year have resulted in the loss of over 200 lives.

According to officials, over 25,000 people have been rescued by the security forces, while around 50,000 are living in camps following the unrest.

from Rajnandgaon, Manharan Singh Chhattisgarh assembly elections in last round.

### Lanka waging undeclared war against TN fishermen: Stalin

### PTI THOOTHUKUDI (TN)

Thief Minister M K Stalin Con Tuesday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's is merely witnessing attacks against Tamil Nadu fishermen by Sri Lanka, "which is waging an undeclared war" against the state's fisherfolk.

Addressing an election rally here, Stalin demanded to know why Modi is "hesitant" to question Sri Lanka over attacks against Tamil Nadu fishermen. Stalin asked if Modi would be "quiet" if Gujarat fishermen were attacked by Pakistan. The CM asked: "You (Modi) are a big Vishwa guru, cannot you condemn Sri Lanka," for

"Vishwa guru (global guru) or Moun Guru (silent guru)." Fishermen of Tamil Nadu are demanding answers from PM Modi on Sri Lankan attacks on fishers, he said. In the run-up to the 2014 LS polls, Modi had blamed Congress as "weak" for Sri "stickers" Lankan attacks on fishermen,

he is however, a spectator now to attacks, Stalin alleged. Stalin wondered how Modi sought votes from Tamil Nadu fishermen, "for whom he has done nothing?

On farmers issues, he asked if treating ryots like "enemies is

attacks on TN fishermen. Mocking Modi, Stalin, also the

president of the ruling DMK, asked whether PM Modi is

Modi model." Hitting out at PM Modi for what he called "sticker campaign," the CM said the Centre's housing scheme was named Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, but Tamil Nadu contributed 60 per cent to it. In one of his rallies in Tamil Nadu, Modi had recently attacked the DMK regime for taking credit for Central schemes and for affixing its on Union government initiatives. Stalin asked: "Has PM Modi

fulfilled any of his promises made for Tamil Nadu," he asked. Years ago, Modi had said Rameswaram will be made a world-class destination. "Has it been world-class done?" he asked.

Following heavy rains and floods in December 2023, Stalin said Modi had conveyed to him over phone that he was deputing Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to assess the damage.

The Prime Minister had told him that funds will be allocated towards relief following initiatives assessment. Stalin alleged however, Modi had only "lied" to him. "It was Modi who lied to me, a person elected as Chief Minister by the people. Training his guns on AIADMK

chief Edappadi K Palaniswami, Stalin said the leader of opposition did not even pretend to attack Modi in his poll campaign.

FIR was filed under relevant Police have cracked a highway dacoity case involving Rs 5.5 crore in cash IPC sections including 395 (dacoity), 363 (kidnapping) and 419 (cheating by in Palghar district with the personation) at the Mandvi arrest of four persons, a senior police station. official said on Tuesday.

The incident in question occurred on March 17 when three employees of a Gujarat-Babu company were transporting Rs 5.5 crore in cash from Surat to Mumbai in said Ballal. assistant of police

(crime) Madan Ballal. five At around 9 pm, unidentified individuals, posing as policemen, intercepted the employees' car with a van on a highway near Khanivde toll plaza. After a brutal assault, the victims were thrown out of the vehicle at separate locations, while the culprits fled the scene with the

said

During investigation, the police arrested four persons, Muruganandan Abhimanyu, Moda Swami Manikandan Chalaiyya and Balaprabhu Shanmugam, in connection with the incident,

cash, he said. Subsequently, an

They were remanded to police custody till March 28 by a court in Palghar. Police have recovered a significant portion of the stolen cash amounting to Rs 4,87,50,000, said the ACP.

Preliminary investigations revealed the involvement of one of the arrested suspects, Abhimanyu, in criminal activities, including murder, he said.

# NDA needs to return to power to help Andhra Pradesh development: BJP

### PTI VIJAYAWADA

 $B_{\rm Rao}^{\rm JP}$  leader V Varaprasad music varaprasad it was important for the NDA to return to power at the Centre as it would hold the key for Andhra Pradesh's development.

Rao, one of the three candidates chosen by BJP to contest the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh, along with C M Ramesh and K Geetha, thanked the party leadership for choosing them and underlined the importance of NDA coming to power for the development of the state. Rao, candidate from Tirupati Lok Sabha seat, said he is very happy to be fielded in the elections by a party like BJP

and heaped praise on the seen leadership of Prime Minister devel Narendra Modi. When I was the member of

Parliament between 2014 and 2019, I had seen the dynamism of Modi. How he has been empowering women. How he is trying to local bridge the gap between the rich and the poor," said Rao, on the sidelines of a BJP office-bearers meeting in Vijayawada.

He observed that the Central government under the leadership of Modi has developed several national highways and also helped him in fulfilling various requests pertaining to the Railways, such as granting train halts and others Rao highlighted that he has

seen the proactive development done by the BJP government and was waiting

for an opportunity to work for it.

Further, he noted that the saffron party is a disciplined one which is not interested in politics but development and empowerment.

Meanwhile, Rao said he still doesn't know why he was demoted from being an MP to an MLA by the ruling YSRCP.

Rao, a former IAS officer, who joined the saffron party on Sunday was announced as the BJP candidate from Tirupati (SC) constituency. He was an MP representing the YSRCP from the same constituency between 2014

and 2019.

He also went on to become an MLA from the same party from Gudur segment in 2019. Within a few hours of his joining BJP, his candidature was announced by the party. Echoing Rao's thoughts, the party's Anakapalli candidate Ramesh thanked the BJP's national and state leadership for giving him a ticket to contest the polls. Ramesh said he hoped to help

Ånakapalli develop constituency if he emerged victorious at the hustings. be Geetha, who will contesting from Araku constituency, thanked the party's leadership for giving her an opportunity and recalled that she had carried out several welfare measures

#### between 2014 and 2019 as an MP.

In 2014, Geetha had won from the same constituency on a YSRCP ticket, however, later she switched over to BJP. She alleged that Andhra Pradesh had fallen behind in the past five years under Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy's rule.

Rao, Ramesh and Geetha are three of the six BJP candidates who would be contesting from the state as part of a seat-sharing deal between NDA partners-BJP, TDP and Janasena. Elections for 175 Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh will be held simultaneously on May 13 and the results will be declared on June 4.

### Veterinary student death: Kerala Government suspends three employees for delay

over necessary files to the CBI weeks after the Chief

Minister had assured a

and friends alleged that he

was subjected to ragging by

fellow students, including

state government

(M)'s

activists of CPI

students' outfit, SFI.

### PTI THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

 $T^{\rm he\ Kerala\ government\ on}_{\rm Tuesday\ suspended\ three} \\ {\rm employees\ of\ the\ Home}$ Department alleging "dereliction and unresponsiveness" in handing over documents and details to Central Bureau of Investigation with regard to the investigation into the recent death of a veterinary student.

The staff, Anju, who was serving as an assistant, Bindhu V K, a section officer and Prasantha V K, deputy secretary, were placed under suspension by Home Secretary Bishwanath Sinha. The action was taken by the Pinarayi Vijayan government a day after it faced widespread criticism from opposition Congress and BJP, alleging it was yet to hand announced it would hand over the case to the CBI on March 9 after the incident triggered a huge political row in the state.

In the suspension order, the government made it clear that the order handing over the probe to the Central agency was issued on the same day itself.

But it was only on March 26 that the file was submitted along with the pro forma report and all other necessary documents in this regard.

The delay clearly demonstrates the "lack of diligence, proper and adequate action and dereliction and unresponsiveness" of the officials in dealing with the subject matter in the file, it said.

central agency probe into the death of Sidharthan JS. Besides the opposition, the deceased student's family also came out against the government, alleging that the government was deliberately trying to delay the CBI probe without handing them over the necessary files and by destroying the evidence. The 20-year-old student was found hanging inside the bathroom of the college hostel in Wayanad district on February 18, and his family

The

PTI PALGHAR

based

a car,

commissioner

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

# Much ado about nothing

Arvind Kejriwal governing from jail may look unconventional, but it is not unconstitutional

elhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is keeping his word so far: That he would rule the Capital from behind bars upon being arrested in the multicrore liquor scam. The issuance of Government orders from prison, however, has sparked a controversy. His political opponents, including the BJP, are raising concerns about the influence of criminal elements within the Government apparatus. The saga began when Kejriwal, also the national convener of AAP, was incarcerated following his alleged involvement in the liquor scam. Despite being in jail, he continued to issue orders related to governance matters in Delhi. This is unprecedented as no serving Chief Minister has ever been jailed. While Kejriwal's supporters argue that his actions demonstrate a commitment to his responsibilities, critics point to the broader implications of a jailed politician running a Government. BJP leaders have wasted no time in alleging that this development is emblematic of the pervasive influence of criminal elements. The BJP leaders



assert that allowing individuals facing serious criminal charges to wield power from jail sets a dangerous precedent. Moreover, they argue that it raises guestions about the efficacy of the justice system in curbing such abuses of power.

On the other hand, AAP supporters claim the BJP's allegations are aimed at tarnishing their party's image. They maintain that Kejriwal's actions are within bounds of his duties as Chief Minister and emphasise his commitment to serving the people of Delhi. Furthermore, they contend that Kejriwal's governance from jail reflects the resilience and determination of a leader who refuses to be deterred by legal challenges. In reality, the entire

controversy is unfounded. If the Constitution permits an individual to retain a constitutional position while under judicial custody, it logically follows that they have the right to govern from wherever they are. Given its lack of prudence, it might appear unconventional, but it aligns perfectly with the constitutional framework of India's political system. Unlike Laloo Yadav and Hemant Soren, Kejriwal chose not to comply with the establishment's expectations by resigning and instead remained in his post. Additionally, being in judicial custody alone does not constitute a conviction or indictment, regardless of the strength of the allegations, and thus holds no legal validity. In the wake of the controversy surrounding Kejriwal's governance from jail, the next logical step for him would undoubtedly be to pursue avenues for securing bail. For a sitting Chief Minister to be in jail is an extraordinary circumstance, and Kejriwal's legal team will likely be working diligently to secure his release at the earliest opportunity. Amidst the heated exchange of accusations and counter-arguments, the broader implications of this controversy cannot be ignored. It highlights the complex interplay between politics, law enforcement and the justice system in India. As the debate rages on, it remains to be seen how this controversy will shape the political landscape in Delhi and beyond in the days to come.



# A showdown of arch-rivals



KALYANI **Shankar** 

This electoral battle is shaping up to be a multi-party contest, primarily between the ruling BJP-led NDA and the INDIA bloc

ho will win the 2024 Lok Sabha polls? The election scene has become clear after the Chief Election Commissioner announced the poll schedule last week. They will begin next month and end on June 4, when the results will be announced.

It will be a multi-party contest, with the ruling BJP-led NDA alliance and the opposition coali-tion of the INDIA bloc being the primary contenders. Meanwhile, alliances are being built and major parties have announced the candidates. Party hopping and secret deals are also going on. Prime Minister Modi aims to perform a hat trick. Currently, it is a one-horse race, with the BJP dominating and the opposition parties trailing behind.

The Opposition INDIA coalition comprises 26 parties. They have formed a pre-poll alliance to challenge the BJP. It aims to field a single opposition candidate against the BJP in the upcoming elections. The Opposition suffered two consecutive defeats in 2014 and 2019, significantly damaging its image. It needs to connect with voters, including millennials

Congress, leading the Opposition, is a 138-year secular party that used to represent marginalised groups like SCs, STs, OBCs and Muslims. It has been weakened since the eighties, with the rise of regional satraps and today, it is a mere shadow of its former strength. It lacks leadership.

After the 2014 and 2019 defeats, Congress now claims it is committed to social justice and empowering India's poor, oppressed, Dalits, farmers, youth and women with its five guarantees: Yuva Nyay, Bhagidaari Nyay, Naari Nyay, Kisan Nyay and Shramik Nyay.

The Opposition mainly aims to challenge Modi by consolidating anti-BJP votes and offering incentives. This strategy worked for Congress in recent Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and leiangana Assembly polis, which Congress won. Congress hopes to gain from the BJP's anti-incum-immense financial and politbency buffering sops and freebies. They also highlight Rahul doesn't seem to have a solid



Gandhi's recent Bharat Jodo Yatras, which was meant to connect with the people. To succeed, Congress must

raise bread-and-butter issues such as inflation, joblessness and social discord to engage with young voters who play a decisive role in elections. They must show an alternate strategy to appeal to them.

Simultaneously, some powerful chief ministers of state-level parties dominate their states, making it a tough fight for Prime Minister Narendra

Modi in these areas. 2019, the BJP and its allies secured only 45 per cent of the votes. The remaining 55 per cent were up for grabs for the INDIA bloc. Although no national leader matches Modi's popularity, some influential regional leaders can sway voters in their respective regions. This is particularly true for West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. The biggest challenge for the coalition is to project a single leader against Modi. Unfortunately, there is an ego clash among the coalition partners, which makes it dif-

ficult to agree on someone. Secondly, the BJP boasts a ical power. The Opposition

LETTERS **I** ()

and compelling storyline, except for its commitment to safeguarding the Constitution and democratic values. However, voters are more concerned about basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. For instance, Sonia Gandhi's Aam Admi slogan in 2004 res-onated well with the masses. Low-income people generally live paycheck to paycheck and may not relate to abstract political concepts.

The Congress Party is still WITH BOTH SIDES clinging to its glorious past and **RAISING THEIR** failing to acknowledge the current scene. As the second-PITCH, THE 2024 largest Party, Congress automatically expects to lead the ELECTIONS WILL SEE coalition. It has been losing its leaders to the BJP and a steady A NO-HOLDS-BARRED flow of these leaders demor-NEGATIVE CAMPAIGN, alises the Party. The Opposition needs a solid AS THIS WILL DECIDE counter to the BJP's propaganda and religious narrative. THE FUTURE OF THE The BJP has grown since 1980; **OPPOSITION** today, it is the biggest Party in India. It has a strong organisa-AND THE tion with unlimited money

AGGRESSIVE BJP power. The Party seeks votes in the name of the Prime Minister. The BJP has a better chance of winning this time. The BJP's lucky mascot is Modi. His supporters consider him a doer due to the implementation of various measures. These include the Triple Talaq, CAA,

revocation of Article 356 in Jammu and Kashmir and the inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. The BJP highlights its achievements in the last decade and various welfare initiatives to attract voters. The continuity has helped Modi achieve his agenda. Modi has gained international recognition over the past ten years and ensured India's position at the high table, which excites his supporters.

On the negative side, the Opposition claims that the Modi Government has been targeting Opposition leaders and harassing them with Government probe agencies. The BJP poaches on other parties, lawmakers, and leaders. It has absorbed many secondrung leaders who chose to find better prospects in the saffron Party

With both sides raising their pitch, the 2024 elections will see a no-holds-bar negative campaign, as this will decide the future of the Opposition and the aggressive BJP. Modi's secret to success is a divided opposition. As long as this continues, Modi will continue to win. The Opposition must chant the mantra of unity to

win or even improve. (The writer is a popular columnist; views *are personal*)

Devotees carry Seethala Mallikarjuna Swamy's 'Rathotsava' towards Mullayanagiri hill, in Chikkamagaluru

# Water, an elixir of life and an agent of peace



Ineffective water management practices contribute to water scarcity by water loss, inefficient allocation and degradation of water resources

ater is an indispens-able factor in the survival of humanity on this planet. For everything related to humans, we have one or other alternative. But for water, there is no alternative. Water is essential for life, playing a critical role in various bodily functions and processes. Science and religion have a consensus on one point. The first life on the planet originated in water. Water is often referred to as the "elixir of life" because it is essential for all living organisms' existence and survival. Without water, life as we know it would not be possible. All our civilizations and international co-operations have taken place through water bodies. But the recent water shortage

plaguing the silicon city of India, Bengaluru, has sent shocking waves among the city dwellers, who, despite having financial stability, are finding it difficult to get water for their daily use. If it's Bengaluru today, it will be in other cities shortly. According to a recent United Nations report, multiple zones within India's Indo-Gangetic basin have surpassed a critical level



of groundwater depletion, with the entire northwestern region projected to face significantly diminished groundwater resources by 2025

Groundwater depletion occurs when the water extraction rate from aquifers exceeds the recharge rate, leading to a decline in groundwater levels over time. In the Indo-Gangetic basin, excessive groundwater pumping for irrigation, urban water supply, and industrial use has resulted in the widespread depletion of aquifers. The conversion of agricultural lands to high-rise commercial buildings also affects proper

recharging. Ineffective water management practices contribute to water scarcity by exacerbating water loss, inefficient allocation, and degradation of water resources. Over-extraction of

gation techniques, leaky distribution systems, and inadequate conservation measures all contribute to the mismanagement of water resources.

Urban planners should leave a "water buffer space" within every 1 km radius for proper

recharging of the groundwater. For this, they should construct beautiful artificial lakes that harvest rainwater and recycled water. Similarly, in every household or high-rise building, the Government should see that they have proper working rainwater

harvesting facilities. Access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation is a basic human right and is essential for preventing waterborne diseases and maintaining health and hygiene. Without sufficient water, people cannot meet their basic drinking, cooking, and sanitation needs, jeopardising their health and well-being. Water is a key driver of socioeconomic development, sup-

porting various sectors such as agriculture, industry, and tourism. Water infrastructure investments, water-based industries, and water-related groundwater, inefficient irri- services contribute to eco-

nomic growth and job creation. In regions where water is already scarce or shared by multiple parties, disputes over water allocation, usage rights, and infrastructure develop-

ment can arise, leading to tensions and conflicts. In India, we have seen severe conflicts over water sharing in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. More such tensions will erupt in future when water scarcity increases.

The developments in science and technology can artificially produce anything related to human life, including food products or even human babies; however, research to date has not made it possible to produce water artificially. Hence, we need to maintain the natural water balance on this planet without disturbing it. In the current pace of urbanisation and environmental degradation being carried out by humans, it would be very difficult to regenerate water if it gets depleted.

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

### **KEJRIWAL CANNOT BE CM**

Madam - Apropos news article "After Kejriwal, AAP Sealed," published on March 24, this is my response. As far as Arvind Kejriwal is concerned, he will have to stay out of politics for a long time. Aam Aadmi Party leaders may claim that Kejriwal will remain the Chief Minister. Still, now it will be almost impossible for Arvind Kejriwal to remain in the post of Chief Minister. Delhi state holds a special position. Here the Lieutenant Governor has unlimited powers. The Lieutenant Governor comes under the Central Home Department. In such a situation, if Arvind Kejriwal does not resign, he will certainly be dismissed in the future. The arrest of Kejriwal will have an impact on the election campaign of Delhi and Punjab. AAP is playing the victim card but the public must repeatedly criticise it.

That means the entire opposition is currently on the defensive on the issue of corruption. Kejriwal has committed a huge strategic and legal mistake by not responding to ED's nine summonses. He has to bear the brunt of this at the time of the Lok Sabha elections. If he had gone to the ED office for questioning in November itself, he would have been arrested today. One does not have to see this day. Even if ED had arrested him in November, he could have got bail after four to five months as it happened in the case of Sanjay Raut. The leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party made serious mistakes in the case of Arvind Kejriwal. Govind Rao Rotti | Vijayapura

### **REGULATE REUSED COOKING OILS**

Madam — In commercial settings like restaurants, it's common practice not to discard oil after a single use. Unfortunately, with deep frying, failure to regularly change the oil can lead to the generation of trans fats through repeated reheating, potentially causing inflammation in the body as per health experts. Unhealthy oils can adversely affect mainly heightening the risk of cardiovascular diseases and type 2 diabetes.

Repeated heating of oil also leads to the

### The parched IT hub

THE EDITOR



propos news article "Zero Water Day Night in Bengaluru," published on March 25, this is my response. Bengaluru is known as the garden city of India. It had more green patches earlier. It had more lakes. Nearly 80 per cent were greenery patches. Now things have changed. Water scarcity was guite unknown to the people of this city since the perennial Cauvery River flows here. Now due to the advent of IT corrider, the city has become a concrete jungle. People have migrated in large numbers to Bengaluru. Also, the change in the climatic conditions and

accumulation of visible and invisible granules, altering the oil's composition and introducing neo-formed compounds (NFCs) over time. This process diminishes the oil's nutritional quality. FSSAI lacks regulations or definitions for reused cooking oils, often leading food safety officials to rely on visual cues such as colour or appearance. Therefore, FSSAI must frame regulations for reused cooking oils.

Vijaykumar H K | Raichur

### MONEY MANAGEMENT IS AN SKILL

Madam — Everyone continually works hard to accumulate wealth and lead a luxurious lifestyle, and money is the source of all these pleasures. Although making money is not a particularly tough chore for everyone, how one manages their finances is what counts. In numerous instances, individuals who were fortunate enough to inherit wealth but lacked financial management skills have become mired in debt;

failure of monsoon rains have resulted in acute water scarcity. Water is more misused here than purposefully used. Even tanker supply by the Corporation is seen as inadequate. Private suppliers fleece the people taking advantage of the situation. The storage in the reservoirs is far below the demand.

Not only in Bengaluru but in other places of the state the situation is grim. Places like Raichur, Bellary and Mysore are reeling under water scarcity. Hyderabad, Chennai, Coumaote, Ooty, Delhi and Gurgaon are no exceptions. The Government should identify water storage lakes and desilt them periodically. Rainwater harvesting should be done on a war footing. Our forefathers saw potable water in rivers and lakes. The next generation saw it in the wells. We now see water in bottles. Our future generation will see it in capsules may ring true if we don't act now. We must sustain judicious water management else the situation will become disastrous

Sravana Ramachandran | Bengaluru

conversely, those who began from nothing and were fortunate enough to possess sound money management skills have seen their wealth increase threefold.

A quotation reads, "Money moves from those who do not manage it to those who do." Money management is very underrated but still, a very crucial skill to be learned although these skills are already built in the people of our country giving the right direction to these skills can add fuel to the fire. People should be taught money management skills like saving, investing and maintaining personal finances. This will help them to enjoy life to the fullest and have emergency funds on hand. It will also help them to become financially independent and lead balanced lives when they move abroad for college or a job.

Lisha Gera | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com DEHRADUN | WEDNESDAY | MARCH 27, 2024

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## **FIRSTCOLUMN LIFE SHOULD BE A PRECIOUS JOURNEY**

In the rush to meet obligations, do we overlook beauty around us?



### RAVI VALLURI

ife is something very precious, a divine gift given to us by God or nature. Do humans realise how high-priced is it? When we wake up in the morning, aren't we in a tearing hurry to accomplish all the unfulfilled tasks of vesterday?

Do we spend some quality time embracing nature, take a few deep breaths, spend moments in solitude and feel the silence encompassing us? Are we grateful for our existence or do we mechanically hit the gym and head for the kitchen to have the mandatory morning cup of coffee?

Yes, for sure morning exercise like a walk, a jog, or executing the chores are essential, but it is equally important to slow down the pace of life and become grateful to the Universe for its vastness and its exquisite grandiose geometry.

Pierce Brosnan, who wielded guns and gals with remarkable felicity once remarked, 'I realise how precious life is, probably because I've seen how it can be taken away.' As the cloud moves across the sky, so do moments in our lives. We need to be in harmony with our thoughts and actions and also realise the ephemeral nature of events.

Once, a student approached his Master and complained that he could not meditate as his body ached, he felt distracted or asleep and was extremely disconcerted. The wise man smiled and merely said that this would pass. After some days, the tutee was in an ecstatic mood and apprised his teacher that the meditation was wonderful and he had had an experiential feeling. He could observe stillness in the mind; see a shimmering light and experience levitation. The Master merely smiled and added that even this would pass.

Life should be treated as a celebration and as a precious gift since it is fleeting and transitory.



The sacrosanct premise of life therefore should be to focus on its truly celebratory nature and savour its prepossessing moments

For all this to happen, we need to increase our prana/energy levels manifold. We derive energy from food, breath and rest provided to the body and by maintaining a calm and meditative mind. These sutras or tenets are imparted during the Happiness Programme of the Art of Living. However, the prana/energy level needs to be sustained to nurture the precious moments of life. Humans have to treat their minds and bod-

# Conspiracy theories abound for terror attack-



analys \$ 07

A cloud of speculation surrounds the Moscow terror attack; allegations range from claims of internal collusion to Ukrainian complicity, supported by the West

n the end, neither these corrupt politicians nor the manifestos of these inhuman actions, but unarmed civilians will have to pay the price. Over a hundred unarmed civilians were mercilessly killed by those brutal assailants, while hundreds more were wounded in Saturday's terrorist attacks on the outskirts of Moscow. Conspiracy theories, as in many other cases, are deepening. Some say it was an inside job orchestrated by certain parties to gain sympathy. Second, Ukrainians planned it with the help of Western intelligence agencies. Third, this was perpetrated by extremists. Consequently, conflicting yet interesting reports are emerging from all sides.

Though these warning messages sound fishy, the amount of intelligence activities in the region certainly emphasises recent detailed reports on CIA activities in Ukraine published by The New York Times, stating that the US and UK were in Ukraine long before the war. "At the end of 2021, Putin was considering whether to launch a fullscale invasion. He met with the head of one of Russia's main spy services, who told him that the CIA, together with British intelli-gence MI6, controlled Ukraine and turned it into a staging ground for operations against Moscow.

However, it is interesting to note that in this brutal attack, terrorists who targeted concertgoers at Moscow's Crocus City Hall not only successfully executed the operation, but also managed to evade capture and attempt-ed to cross the border located over three hundred kilometres away. Later, according to Russian media, all four attackers were apprehended by Russian security forces. A man detained on suspicion of involvement in the Crocus City Hall attack has reportedly confessed to being promised a reward of 500,000 rubles, according to Russian journalist Margarita Simonyan. The alleged killer stated in a video posted by her, 'I shot down people at the Crocus for money; [I was promised] about 500,000?

Strangely, Russia was attacked by the Islamic State, or more accurately, according to Western media outlets, by ISKP. The Islamic State-Khorasan Province is a regional branch of the Islamic State terrorist group active in South-Central Asia. At the beginning of this month, on March 7, the FSB stated that it had stopped an ISKP cell from carrying out a terrorist attack targeting a synagogue. "On the territory of the Kaluga Region, a stop was put to the activ ity of Wilayat Khorasan, a cell of the Afghan branch of the international terrorist organisation Islamic State, which is banned in Russia, whose members were planning to commit a terrorist act against one of the Jewish religious institutions in Moscow," the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) said in a statement to the state-run TASS news agency. What is fascinating is that almost all Western countries currently supplying arms, personnel, and other vital support, including precious intelligence, to Ukraine for its fight against Russia, were issuing early warnings about such brutal terrorist attacks. On March 7 and 8, several foreign embassies in Russia warned their citizens about the threat of terrorist attacks in Moscow. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow posted a security alert late on March 7, stating, "The embassy is monitoring reports that extremists have imminent plans to target large gatherings in Moscow, including concerts, and U.S. citizens should be advised to avoid large gatherings over the



next 48 hours." The Finnish Foreign Ministry urged its citizens on Saturday to avoid public gatherings in Moscow over the weekend, following the US warning about possible terrorist attacks in Russia. The US Embassy further stated that it is actively monitoring reports indi-cating that "extremists have immediate intentions to target large gath-erings in Moscow."

After the US warning, the UK issued a similar advisory advising UK citizens to avoid travelling to Russia due to the risks and terror-ist threats. The British Foreign Office recommended against all travel to Russia. Germany, Latvia, and Estonia also urged their citizens and those with dual citizenship not to travel to Russia shortly. These advisories essentially highlight the reliability, effectiveness, and capability of Western intelligence agencies in the region. However, it is important to pay

AFTER THIS attention to the argument made by the Ukrainian Defence Authority on

from unknown sources, a practice strictly prohibited, Haram, according to Islam.

Meanwhile, in his address to the nation, President Putin asserted, "All perpetrators, organisers, and masterminds of this crime will face fair and inevitable punishment, whoever they may be and whoever directed them. I emphasise once more: we will identify and bring to justice every individual who stands behind these terrorists, those who orchestrated this atrocity, this assault

against Russia and our people." Whatever the conspiracy theories or any other ground reports that came to the public domain after this horrific terrorist attack, one thing is certain: Russia indeed has internal security loopholes, and enemies are capable of sneaking through their system. It is clear that, according to Western pre-warnings of the attacks leading us to presume that these brutal attacks were pre-planned to execute during the recently concluded election where Putin marked the highest percentage of any elections since 2000. This signalled which side the majority of Russians were standing on, while the West kept repeating the same mantra of authoritarianism. On the other hand, can the Ukrainian President go for an election and prove the same, despite remaining in power by manipulating the constitutional clauses? However, Ukrainians, alarmed by the election, launched a risky invasion to halt voting in Russian border areas, particularly in Belgorod city and its region. During the threeday operation, Ukraine killed 11 civilians with drones and rockets and injured 82, including nine critically. Among the casualties were an election official and a thirteenyear-old girl, whose father was fect democracies". This paradox can only please a mind accustomed to duplicity but will never overcome common challenges such as nor-malising the global supply chain and achieving peace while mitigating the burning risk of a possible nuclear attack. The most powerful nations, despite engaging in dirty politics to reaffirm their supremacy, will never hesitate to engage in anything contradictory to their

preaching. Nevertheless, determining whether this attack was carried out by ISKP or another group influenced by various integrated parties is a matter that requires verification. However, this attack has the potential to inspire other terrorists in countries facing genuine threats from IS, ISKP, and other extremist factions. We cannot underestimate the importance of security in the forthcoming Indian elections and ISKP's direct threats against China and its investments in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other laces. Ir early September 2022, the ISKP published its most comprehensive critique of China to date, belittling the Belt and Road Initiative and calling on Muslims to take up arms against "red atheists whose hands are soaked with the blood of innocent Uyghur Muslims." Ironically, the tone of these threats is very similar to how the United States evaluates its competitors. Should we take lightly what the Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump repeatedly referred to as the president as 'Obama and Hillary Clinton are as ISIS cofounders'? Sometimes, political jokes, rhetoric and blabbering play a very important role in understanding the context of our day-today life and its reality. (The writer, a journalist, expresses personal views which are independent of any institutional affiliations)

#### ies as sacred.

Early morning blues can be combatted with warm lime water laced with honey. It is efficacious for the human body to have a few glasses of this elixir of life. A sattvic diet helps in increasing prana levels and also in meditation. The purpose of yoga is not just performing physical exercises but to ultimately do pranayama and meditation. This helps assuage the mind so that we are in a position to recognise and appreciate life's precious journey.

Physical sciences, till recently, were all about matter and particles. However, newer studies reveal the mysteries of science have transcended the boundaries of matter and dwelled on waves and their patterns. Waves connect us to science and also to people.

While acknowledging the precious nature of life, we need to harness the potential further by choosing a passion. This is an outlet from the dreary ho-hum of life and we can appreciate the droplets on the petals, a nest built on our roof or a koel bird singing mellifluously.

In this age of a wired world, humans need to break the chains of tech bondage and develop a harmonious dwelling place where people care and share making life a truly momentous journey.

(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)* 

HORRIFIC TERRORIST ATTACK, ONE THING IS CERTAIN: **RUSSIA INDEED** HAS INTERNAL SECURITY

WHATEVER THE

THEORIES OR ANY

OTHER GROUND

**REPORTS THAT** 

PUBLIC DOMAIN

CAME TO THE

CONSPIRACY

LOOPHOLES AND **ENEMIES ARE** CAPABLE OF SNEAKING THROUGH ITS SYSTEM

the attack: "The behaviour of the criminals is also an important factor. They fled, although such attacks are characterised by suicides with the victims and the voicing of demands, or at least reasons. Accordingly, the criminals wanted to survive. But how did they cover a distance of more than 300 kilometres without being noticed? Why, having prepared so thoroughly, did they not do the simplest thing—buy a few spare cars to change on the way? Was it because they were guaranteed security by the Russian special services?" These questions are undoubtedly

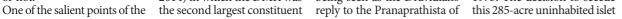
crucial not only for unravelling the mysteries behind the attack but also for preventing its recurrence. This distinctive IS attack contradicts its previous behaviours; typically, IS members launch attacks to become martyrs. However, in this instance, they attacked to obtain "money"

seriously injured. Ironically, most Western nations with imperfect democracies expect their enemy countries to be "per-

# Controversial issues reignite India-Lanka relations

The contentious issues of Katchatheevu and Sethusamudram resurface amid Tamil Nadu's election fervour

he schedule for the General Election 2024 L has been announced and the State of Tamil Nadu is full of rattle and brouhaha over non-issues. The ruling DMK which has been maintaining silence over issues like the provision of drinking and irrigation waters and the fate of the State's fishermen arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy have dusted and taken out age-old topics for use as campaign materials in the election. A cursory glance over the election manifesto of the DMK drafted under the chairmanship of M K Kanimozhi, the late Karunanidhi's daughter by his third wife Rajathi, makes the reader doubt whether Tamil Nadu is a part of India or not.



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

DMK's election manifesto is to make Tamil Nadu a NEET-free State. This means that admission to the undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the State's medical colleges would be free of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test, the selection system ordered by the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court. It was the to same Maa Sita from the cus-UPA Government (2004tody of the Ravana. This is 2014) in which the DMK was being seen as the Dravidian's

that brought the NEET into the Ram Temple at Ayodhya practice. Similarly, the DMK held in January. The DMK has would revive and resume the declared its mission to destroy works of laying a canal Sanatana Dharma once and forever. Udhayanidhi Stalin, through the Palk Strait known as the Sethusamudram heir apparent to the DMK Channel. The project work has throne and the chief ministerbeen put on hold following directives by the Supreme ship in the eventuality of Stalin leaving Tamil Nadu for an Court based on the fact that it early rendezvous with his s neither economically susfather M Karunanidhi and ideological father Ramasamy tainable nor commercially Naicker, have declared time and again that Sanatana viable. The only motivating factor behind the revival of Sethusamudram Channel is Dharma is more dangerous that the DMK Government than Covid and Cancer and should be banished from the would be able to demolish the face of the earth. Ram Sethu, a stone structure believed to have been built by Yet another promise made by the army of Lords Ram to the DMK is the retrieval of cross the sea in their mission Katchateevu, a small islet

handed over to Sri Lanka by

the Government of India in

1975. The decision to secede

to Sri Lanka in 1975 was taken after a series of discussions involving top-level diplomats of Sri Lanka and India including G Parthasarathi, a close aide of Indira Gandhi.

ited islet in the Palk Strait. The islet once used for pearl farming was strategically important for fishing activities and was owned by the Raja of Ramnad and later became part of the Madras Presidency after the delimitation of Gulf of Mannar and Palk Strait during British rule between the then Governments of Madras and Ceylon. In 1921, both Sri Lanka and India claimed this piece of land and the dispute remained unsettled.

Bhandarenaike in 1975 and 1976 says that with the establishment of the Exclusive Economic Zones by the two countries, India and Sri Lanka will exercise sovereign rights over the living and non-living resources of their respective zones. The fishing vessels and fishermen of India shall not engage in fishing in the historic waters, the territorial sea and the Exclusive Economic Zone of Sri Lanka, nor shall the fishing vessels and fishermen of Sri Lanka engage in fishing in the historic waters, the territorial sea and the Exclusive Economic Zone of India, without the express permission of Sri Lanka or India, as the case may be, according to the agreement. The agreement made it clear that Katchateev belongs Lanka counterpart Sirimao to the territory of Sri Lanka. Boundary Line and fished in

From 1976 to 2008, the DMK and its leader Karunanidhi were silent over Katchateevu. It was a case filed by AIADMK general secretary J Jayalalithaa in 2008 that made Karunanidhi take up the issue as part of his political oneupmanship. When the case came up for hearing, the then chief justice R M Lodha asked Mukul Rohatgi, the then attor-ney general, what were the possibilities of retrieval of Katchatheev. "If you want Katchatheevu back, you will have to go to war to get it back," Rohatgi told the Court. In another development, the Coast Guard in an affidavit filed by it in Madras High Court said that it was the Tamil Nadu fishermen who violated the International Maritime

Sri Lankan territorial waters. Sinha Ratnatunga, a respected editor of a popular newspaper in Sri Lanka said that more than 600 fishing boats from India cross over the IMBL and carry out bottom trawling in the island's territorial waters violating all norms. The bottom trawling using purine nets destroys the entire marine wealth in the Sri Lankan waters. The demand for the retrieval of Katchatheev is with an ulterior motive. The Dravidians do not want a cordial relationship between India and Sri Lanka. Should Lanka too end up as the Maldives? asks R R Wijayabalan, who is one of the best friends of India in the island nation. (The writer is special corre-

spondent with the pioneer; *views are personal)* 

Katchatheevu is an uninhab-

The agreement signed by Indira Gandhi and her Sri



# Assange's extradition on hold until US rules out death penalty

### AP LONDON

British court ruled on A Tuesday that Julian Assange can't be extradited to the United States on espionage charges unless US authorities guarantee he won't get the death penalty, giving the WikiLeaks founder a partial victory in his long legal battle over the site's publication of classified American documents. Two High Court judges said they would grant Assange a new appeal unless US authorities give further assurances within three weeks about what will happen to him. The ruling means the legal saga, which has dragged on for more than a decade, will continue - and Assange will remain inside London's highsecurity Belmarsh Prison, where he has spent the last five years. Judges Victoria Sharp and Jeremy Johnson said the US must guarantee that Assange, who is Australian, "is afforded the same

First Amendment protections as a United States citizen, and that the death penalty is not imposed". The judges said that if the US files new assurances, "we will give the parties an opportunity to make further submissions before we make a final decision on the application for leave to appeal". The judges said a hearing will be held May 20 if the US makes those submissions. The US Justice Department declined to comment on Tuesday. Assange's supporters say he is a journalist protected by the First Amendment who exposed US military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan that was in the public interest. Assange's wife Stella Assange

said the WikiLeaks founder "is being persecuted because he exposed the true cost of war in human lives". 'The Biden administration

should not issue assurances. They should drop this shameful

case, which should never have been brought," she said outside the High Court in London.

The ruling follows a two-day hearing in the High Court in February, where Assange's lawyer Edward Fitzgerald said American authorities were seeking to punish him for WikiLeaks' "exposure of criminality on the part of the US government on an unprecedented scale", including torture and killings.

The US government said Assange's actions went beyond journalism by soliciting, stealing and indiscriminately publishing classified government documents that endangered many people, including Iraqis and Afghans who had helped US forces. The judges rejected six of

Assange's nine grounds of appeal, including the allegation that his prosecution is political. They said that while Assange "acted out of political conviction ... it does not follow however that the

request for his extradition is made on account of his political views".

The judges also said Assange could not appeal based on alle-gations, made by his lawyers, that the CIA developed plans to kidnap or kill Assange during the years he spent holed up in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London to prevent him from trying to flee. The judges said "plainly, these are allegations of the utmost seriousness", but concluded they had no bearing on the extradition request. "Extradition would result in him being lawfully in the custody of the United States authorities, and the reasons (if they can be called that) for rendition or kidnap or assassination then fall away," the ruling said. They accepted three grounds or appeal: the threat to Assange's freedom of speech, Assange's claim that he faces disadvantage because he is not a US citizen, and the risk he could receive the death penalty.

# key bridge, causing collapse

container ship rammed into Aa major bridge in Baltimore early Tuesday, causing it to snap and plunge into the river below. Several vehicles fell into the chilly waters, and rescuers searched for survivors.

It was also not clear what caused the cargo ship to crash into the Francis Scott Key Bridge long before the busy morning commute in what one official called a "developing mass casualty event" in a major American city just outside of Washington.

Two people were rescued, and it was not clear how many more might be in the water. The ship crashed into one of the bridge's supports, causing the structure to snap and buckle at several points and tumble into the water in a matter of seconds a shocking spectacle that was captured on video and posted on social media. The vessel



Cargo ship collides with Baltimore's

Parts of the Francis Scott Key Bridge remain after a container ship collided with one of the bridge supports on Tuesday AP/PT

tragedy.

caught fire, and thick, black smoke billowed out of it. Never would you think that you would see, physically see, the Key Bridge tumble down authorities "may be looking for upwards of seven people" but said that number could change and other officials wouldn't give figures. It was not clear if the two rescued were included in the seven cited by the fire chief. Authorities said a crew of unknown size was working on the bridge at the time of the collapse and that sonar had detected cars in the water, which is about 50 feet (15 meters) deep. The water temperature was about 47 degrees Fahrenheit (8 degrees Celsius) before dawn Tuesday, according to a buoy that collects data for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Earlier, Kevin Cartwright, director of communications for the Baltimore Fire Department, told The Associated Press that several vehicles were on the bridge at the time of the collapse, including one the size of a tractor-trailer truck.

bid to ban

from polls

Zuma's party

Johannesburg (AP): A South

African court on Tuesday dis-

missed the ruling party's case

demanding a rival opposition

party be deregistered and banned

Chief James Wallace said

world 08

### South Africa's Israel, Hamas dig in as international pressure builds for Gaza cease-fire ANC fails in "The message delivered to

### AP 📕 RAFAH

Hamas has rejected the lat-est proposal put forward by international mediators for a cease-fire and hostage release, and Israel has blasted a UN Security Council resolution that called for both without linking them.

As the war in Gaza grinds through a sixth month, each side has publicly insisted that its own idea of victory is in reach, and late Monday they rejected the latest international efforts to stem the blood-shed.Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel can achieve its aims of dismantling Hamas and returning scores of hostages if it expands its ground offensive to the southern city of Rafah, where over half of Gaza's population has sought refuge, many in crowded tent camps. Hamas has said it will hold onto the hostages until Israel agrees to a more permanent cease-fire, withdraws its forces from Gaza and releases hundreds of Palestinian prisoners,



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, right, receives German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, left, at his office in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Monday.

including top militants. It said There is no end in sight to the late Monday that it has rejectwar, which has killed over 32,000 Palestinians, according ed a recent proposal that fell to Gaza's Health Ministry. The short of those demands which, if fulfilled, would allow fighting has left much of the Gaza Strip in ruins, displaced it to claim an extremely costly victory. most its residents and driven

a third of its population of 2.3 million to the brink of famine. An Israeli strike late Monday on a residential building in Rafah where three displaced families were sheltering killed at least 16 people, including nine children and four women, according to hospital records and relatives of the deceased. An Associated Press reporter saw the bodies arrive at a hospital.

On Monday, the Security Council finally managed to pass a resolution calling for a cease-fire as the United States abstained instead of vetoing the measure, angering Israel in a major escalation of tensions between the two close allies. The resolution calls for the release of all hostages held in Gaza but does not condition the cease-fire on it.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz told Army Radio on Tuesday that the resolution had emboldened Hamas by signalling that international pressure would end the war without it having to make any concessions

Hamas yesterday ... is that you don't have to hurry," Katz said. The war began on October 7, when Hamas-led militants stormed across the border and attacked communities in southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250 others. It is still believed to be holding about 100 hostages and the remains of 30 others, after most of the rest were freed in November in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners. The United States, Qatar and Egypt have spent several weeks trying to negotiate another ceasefire and hostage release, but those efforts appeared to have stalled. Hamas said in a statement late Monday that it has informed the mediators it will

stick to an earlier position. Hamas said Israel has not responded to its core demands of a "comprehensive ceasefire, an (Israeli) withdrawal from the Strip, the return of displaced people and a real prisoner exchange."

Hamas has previously pro-posed a phased process in which it would release all the remaining hostages in exchange for a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the opening of its borders for aid and reconstruction, and the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, including top militants serving life sentences

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected those demands as unrealistic. He has vowed to resume Israel's offensive after any hostage release and keep fighting until Hamas is destroyed, saying it's the only way to prevent a repeat of the October 7 attack. But he has provided few details about what would follow any such victory and has largely rejected a postwar vision outlined by the US.

That approach has brought him into increasingly open conflict with President Joe Biden's administration, which has expressed mounting concern over civilian casualties

while supplying Israel with crucial military aid and backing Israel's aim of destroying Hamas. The US had vetoed previous UN resolutions calling for a cease-fire.

like that. It looked like some-

thing out of an action movie,"

said Baltimore Mayor Brandon

Scott, calling it "an unthinkable

The White House has urged Israel not to undertake a major ground operation in Rafah, warning that it could cause a humanitarian catastrophe. The administration was set to brief visiting Israeli officials on an alternative approach, but Netanyahu called off their visit in response to the US abstention at the UN.

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant is in Washington on a separate trip, however, and is to meet with US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin on Tuesday. On Monday, Gallant vowed to

continue the offensive until Israel's aims are met.

We will operate against Hamas everywhere - including in places where we have not yet been," he said. "We have no moral right to stop the war while there are still hostages held in Gaza.

from participating in the upcoming election. The Electoral Court said the ruling African National Congress party's objection to how the Independent Electoral Commission handled the uMkhonto weSizwe Party's registration had no merit, adding it should have addressed the Electoral Commission before filing a court case. Former South African President Jacob Zuma, who headed the country from 2009 to 2018 when he was removed amid wide-ranging allegations of corruption, parted ways with the ANC in December and is now leading the uMkhonto weSizwe Party, or

MK Party. His popularity — especially in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal, expected to be a key battleground in this year's elections — has helped MK Party emerge as a potentially significant contender in the upcoming polls. The party is named after the former military wing of the ANC, which was disbanded at the end of white minority rule and racial

### Kennedy Jr. expected **Farmers block Brussels to** to announce his VP protest EU pick for WH bid policies AP DAKAR Brussels (AP) Dozens of trac-

Senegal's president-elect pledges to fight corruption after stunning victory rebuilding our institutions," he reform and anti-corruption tank, adding that a promise to

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. plans to announce his running mate Tuesday as he races to secure a place on the ballot for his independent campaign for president. In advance of an event Tuesday in Oakland, Kennedy and his aides have circulated the names of several contenders, including celebrities with no political experience. Those names include NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers and "Dirty Jobs" star Mike Rowe as well as former Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura. Speculation most recently has centred on Nicole Shanahan, a lawyer and philanthropist who bankrolled a Super Bowl ad for Kennedy.

AP OAKLAND

"This announcement is really going to shake up the political establishment," Kennedy said in a video he posted on social media last week.

Kennedy's campaign has spooked Democrats, who are fighting third-party options that could draw support from President Joe Biden and help Republican former President Donald Trump. As they head into a 2020 rematch, Biden and Trump are broadly unpopular with the US public and will compete for the votes of people who aren't enthusiastic about either of them.

Without the backing of a party, Kennedy faces an arduous task to get on the ballot, with varying rules across the 50 states. He's picking a running mate now because about half of the states require him to designate one before he can

apply for ballot access. The requirement is already bedeviling Kennedy's ballot access effort in Nevada, where Democratic Secretary of State Francisco Aguilar said in a March 7 letter to independent candidates that they must nominate a vice presidential candidate before collecting signatures. The letter came days after Kennedy's campaign announced he'd collected enough signatures in the state. If Aguilar's opinion



survives a likely legal chal-lenge, Kennedy will have to

start again in collecting just over 10,000 signatures in the state.

"This is the epitome of cor-ruption," said Paul Rossi, a Kennedy campaign lawyer, in a statement Monday, accusing Aguilar of doing the bidding of the Democratic National

Committee. Kennedy has secured access to the ballot in Utah. He and an allied super PAC, American Values 2024, say they've collected enough signatures to qualify in several other states, including swing states Arizona, Nevada and Georgia, but election officials there have not yet signed off. Kennedy is a descendant of a

storied Democratic family that includes his father, Robert F. Kennedy, who was a US senator, attorney general and presidential candidate, and his uncle former President John F. Kennedy. He began his campaign as a

primary challenge to Biden but last fall said he'd run as an independent instead. Kennedy was a teenager when

his father, known as RFK, was assassinated during his own presidential campaign in 1968. RFK Jr. built a reputation of his own as an activist, author and lawyer who fought for environmental causes such as clean water.

Along the way, his activism has veered into conspiracies and contradicted scientific consensus, most infamously on vaccines. Some members of his family have publicly criticised his views.

streets close to European Union headquarters where the 27 EU agriculture ministers were planning to discuss the crisis in the sector that has led to months of protests across the bloc. The farmers were protesting anything from what they see as excessive red tape to increased environmental measures, cheap imports and unfair trading practices.

"Let us make a living from our profession," read one billboard on a huge tractor blocking a

main thoroughfare. Even if smaller than previous demonstrations, the impact on the Belgian capital was sizable

during the morning rush hour, and authorities asked commuters to stay out of Brussels and work from home as much as possible.

With protests taking place from Finland to Greece, Poland, and Ireland, the farmers have already won a slew of concessions from EU and national authorities from a loosening of controls on farms to a weakening of pesticide and environmental rules Earlier this month, the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, proposed weakening or cutting rules in areas like crop rotation, soil cover protection and tillage methods.

Small farmers, representing some two-thirds of the workforce and the most active with in the continent-wide protest movement, will be exempt from some controls and penalties under the new rules.

Environmentalists and climate activists say the change in EU policies under the duress of protesting farmers is regrettable. They say the short-term concessions will come to haunt the bloc in a generation when climate change will hit the continent even harder.

Politically, the bloc has moved to the right over the past year. The plight of farmers has become a rallying cry for populists and conservatives who claim EU climate and farm policies are little more than bureaucratic bungling from elitist politicians who have lost any feeling for soil and land.

Ja new president-elect, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, a former tax inspector and political newcomer who was released from prison just weeks ago and had inspired voters, many of them unemployed youth, with a vow to fight corruption and reform the economy.

Faye was catapulted into a presidential campaign after popular opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, who was barred from running due to a prior conviction, had backed him. As he gave his first speech as president-elect on Monday evening, it represented a dramatic rise for the 44-year-old who is due to be the youngest leader of the West African nation.

"I pledge to govern with humility and transparency, and to fight corruption at all levels. I pledge to devote myself fully to

unspecified form of cancer.

to a more active schedule grad-

leaders from across the UK.

Palace said.

Cenegal woke up Tuesday to While official results of Sunday's vote were not yet available, the other front-runner — the former prime minister who was backed by incumbent President Macky Sall — had conceded defeat. Sall followed with congratulations, also naming Faye as the winner.

The election followed months of unrest ignited by Faye and Sonko's arrest last year, and concerns that the president would seek a third term in office despite constitutional term limits. The violence shook Senegal's reputation as a stable democracy in a region that has seen a wave of coups. Rights groups said dozens were killed in the protests, while some

1,000 people were jailed. Considered the anti-establishment candidate, Faye's campaign messages of economic

### King Charles III to attend Easter service

London (PTI): Britain's King gather to celebrate Easter and Charles III will attend the traare annually photographed ditional royal Easter service at walking into the service at St. St. George's Chapel in Windsor George's Chapel. However, unlike in the past, Prince William and his family on Sunday, Buckingham Palace said on Tuesday, confirming the

75-year-old monarch's first will not be joining the service major public appearance as he after his wife Kate Middleton revealed she is undergoing preundergoes treatment for an ventative chemotherapy follow-The King had taken a back seat ing her cancer diagnosis. from public-facing duties since The family, including children

Princes George and Louis and Princess Charlotte, are privatehis cancer diagnosis was made public last month. But in a sign ly spending the school Easter that he intends to begin a return holidays this year.

The latest palace announceually, Charles also took part in ment comes as the King met an audience at the palace in London with community faith faith leaders from the Windsor Leadership Trust at Buckingham Palace. "In February 2024, 18 influential "Their Majesties The King and Queen [Camilla], accompanied leaders from the Muslim, Jewish by other members of the royal family, will attend the Easter and Christian faiths were invit-Mattins Service at St. George's ed to St. George's House, Chapel, Windsor Castle on Windsor Castle, by the Windsor Leadership Trust for the Faith Easter Sunday," Buckingham Leaders' Forum," the palace

Several royal family members said. ple are unemployed with thousands risking their lives on dangerous journeys in search of obs in the West.

said, restating promises made resonated with the youth. move away from former colo-

Faye has vowed to improve Senegal's control over its natural resources by promoting national companies to prevent the country from falling into what his campaign called "economic enslavement." His manifesto promised to renegotiate Senegal's oil and gas contract and introduce a new currency. On Monday night, Faye outlined some early foreign policy priorities, which included reforming the troubled West African regional bloc known as ECOWAS.

"A win by the opposition also means major changes ahead in domestic and foreign policies," said Rida Lyammouri of the Policy Center for the New South, a Morocco-based think

the foreign policy of the country's new government.

The election was largely peaceful and early counts showed voters turned out overwhelmingly in favor of the opposition. Sonko had promised a resounding victory on his YouTube channel. By Monday evening in Dakar, Faye had been declared the winner and celebrations erupted in neighbourhoods around the capital where supporters danced, played music and set off fireworks.

Faye's roots lie in a small town in central Senegal. He is a practicing Muslim and has two wives. Ahead of Sunday's election, Faye published a declaration of his assets, and called on other candidates to do the same. It lists a home in Dakar and land outside the capital and in his hometown.

known as apartheid.

On Wednesday, the ANC will launch another court bid against Zuma's party, challenging its right to use the name and trademark of the now-defunct organization.

South Africa's 29 May elections are expected to be highly contested with the ANC, once led by anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela, under pressure to remain in power following declining support in successive elections as the country faces stagnant economic growth, high levels of poverty among its Black majority, and an unemployment

rate of over 32 per cent. According to recent polls, the ANC may dip below 50 per cent of the national vote for the first since it came into power in 1994 when Mandela became the country's first democraticallv-elected leader.

## UK police share family tribute to Indian student killed in collission

### PTI LONDON

The Metropolitan Police in London on Tuesday officially named a former NITI Aayog employee Cheistha Kochhar as the 33-year-old woman who was killed in a road collision in north London while she cycled back home from London School of Economics (LSE).

There have been no arrests a week after the incident, police said. The police said Kochhar, who was pursuing her PhD in behavioural research at the LSE, died following a collision involving a refuse lorry on Clerkenwell Road near the junction with Farringdon Road on March 19 evening.

The force said enquiries into the circumstances of the collision are ongoing as officers continue to appeal for witnesses and for any road users with dashcam footage from the scene to come forward.



Cheistha was cycling when she was involved in a collision with a refuse lorry - the lorry stopped at the scene and the driver is helping police with their enquiries. There has been no arrest and enquiries into the circumstances continue," the Met Police said. The police also released a statement on behalf of Cheistha Kochhar's family, which praises her "deep intelligence" and "sprightly demeanour" which

won her many friends. "She always had a hug to spare for anyone and she lived her life with the principle that it was more important to be the kindest person in the room, than to be the smartest person in the room. In the short span she had on this planet, she touched tens of thousands of people in extremely meaningful ways and the magnitude of this loss is incomprehensible," the family tribute reads. Cheistha was born in Bareilly in 1990 and graduated high school from the Convent of Jesus and Mary, New Delhi. After graduating from Delhi University with a BA in Economics and Mathematics in 2008, she went on to finish the PGP in Liberal Arts as a Young India Fellow from Ashoka University and then did another post-graduation from the University of Chicago in International Development and Policy (MAIDP).



incident.

# **5 Chinese among 6 killed IN Pak suicide attack**

### PTI ISLAMABAD

t least five Chinese Anationals were among the six persons killed on Tuesday when an explosives-packed vehicle rammed into their bus in Pakistan's troubled province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, officials said, in the second suicide attack on the personnel working on the China-backed hydropower project since 2021.

The Chinese were working on the Dasu hydropower project, which is about 300 km to the north of Islamabad. The 4,320 MW project is being con-structed by the China Gezhouba with funding from the World Bank. In Tuesday's attack, several others were injured in the incident that occurred in the Bisham area of Shangla district of the province when a bus, escorted by a five-vehicle convoy, en route from Islamabad to Kohistan was hit by a vehicle coming from the opposite direction in the hilly terrain, police said. The incident occurred around 1 pm.

One of the vehicles of the 13vehicle convoy caught fire and fell into a ravine, follow-

ing the attack, China's Xinhua here announced taking all news agency said, quoting

necessary measures to protect the sources. the Chinese citizens, institu-Senior police officer tions and projects in Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Gandapur and to ensure such incidents confirmed the incident and will not happen again. This is the second such attack that the death toll, adding that has killed Chinese nationals apparently, it was a suicide attack. "Five Chinese nationsince 2021. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif als and their Pakistani driver and Interior Minister Mohsin were killed in the attack," Naqvi rushed to the Chinese Gandapur told the media. No group has so far claimed embassy here and met responsibility for the attack.

Chinese ambassador Jiang The police and officials of Zaidong. Naqvi offered condolences and also assured the envoy other security agencies rushed to the scene of the attack and that the Pakistan government launched a probe into the would bring the perpetrators The Pakistan Army said that to justice.

President Asif Ali Zardari strategic projects and sensitive strongly condemned the sites vital for Pakistan's ecoattack and said, "Anti-Pakistan nomic progress are being targeted as a conscious effort to elements will never succeed in damaging Pak-China friendretard progress and sow disship." Chief Minister Khybercord between Pakistan and its strategic allies and partners, Pakhtunkhwa province Ali Amin Gandapur also has conmost notably China. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry demned the suicide attack and sought a detailed report said the attack was "orchestrated by the enemies of from the provincial police

chief into the attack on the Pakistan-China friendship Chinese vehicle. and added that "Such dastard-Meanwhile, the Pakistan ly acts cannot dent the resolve Army said that the recent of Pakistani nation to fight

against the scourge of terrorincidents of terrorism in Pakistan, notably in Gwadar, ism." The Chinese Embassy

Turbat, and Besham on Tuesday were dastardly acts aimed at destabilizing the internal security situation. While the first two attempts were successfully thwarted by the armed forces, the latest incident at Besham claimed six innocent civilians including 5 Chinese nationals," the army said in a statement, condemning the incident. "Certain foreign elements are complicit in aiding and abet-ting terrorism in Pakistan, driven by their vested interests. Despite the veneer of innocence, these elements are being continuously exposed as sponsors of terror," it said.

The army declared that Pakistan with the unwavering support of the resilient nation and "our iron-clad ally China" will ensure that all those involved in aiding terrorism, directly or indirectly, are held accountable and find their due comeuppance. The Foreign Ministry also

"strongly condemned" what it called as the "heinous act of terrorism" and said it will take all necessary measures to bring the terrorists and their facilitators to justice.

"Such dastardly acts cannot

dent the resolve of the Pakistani nation to fight against the scourge of terrorism. Today's attack was orchestrated by the enemies of Pakistan-China friendship. We will resolutely act against all such forces and defeat them," it said.

"Pakistan and China are close friends and iron brothers. The life and safety of Chinese nationals in Pakistan is of paramount importance. Pakistan will continue to work with our Chinese brothers in ensuring the safety and security of Chinese nationals, projects and institutions in Pakistan," the statement added.

Separately, the Chinese Embassy, in a statement, too "strongly condemned the attack" and expressed "deep condolences" to the victims and sincere sympathy to the bereaved families. The Chinese Embassy and Consulates General in Pakistan have launched an emergency plan immediately, requesting the Pakistani side to thoroughly investigate the attack and severely punish the perpetrators, it said. The embassy announced tak-

ing all necessary measures to protect the Chinese citizens, institutions and projects in Pakistan, and to ensure such incidents will not happen again

It also reminded the Chinese citizens, and enterprises in Pakistan to pay close attention to the security situation, enhance security alerts, strengthen security measures, and make every effort to take safety precautions.

Chinese experts believe the latest attack is a copy of the July 2021 Dasu terror attack in which nine Chinese nationals and four Pakistani people were killed.

This latest case should serve as a wake-up call for Pakistan that it needs to improve the security situation in the country and for China that it should be aware of the terrorist forces that are trying to sabotage the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Chinese security experts told the Global Times. Thousands of Chinese personnel are working in Pakistan on several projects being carried out under the aegis of the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

# 'Pak to seek US waiver for Iran pipeline project'

iect.

Pakistan has decided to plead "vigorously" and seek exemption from potential US sanctions against the planned construction of a multi-billion dollar pipeline to import cheap gas from neighbouring Iran, the petroleum minister has said, asserting that it "can't afford sanctions" on the pro-

Minister for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik said that the government would seek exemption from US sanctions for the multi-billion-dollar Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project, the Dawn newspaper

reported. We will seek exemption from US sanctions. Pakistan cannot afford sanctions in the gas pipeline project," he told journalists during an informal chat on Monday evening.

The development came after US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu said at a congressional hearing that Pakistan had so far not sought exemption for the 1,150-kilometre gas pipeline.

Malik said the government would "plead vigorously" Pakistan's case for the waiver on technical, political and economic grounds at relevant forums, including through lobbying.

He also expressed the hope that the project's construction would begin soon while complying with contractual obligations with Iran. Malik's remarks were in contrast to the stance put forward by the Foreign Office, whose spokesperson told a press briefing last week that there was no room for any discussion or waiver from a third country. An official said the caretaker government had delayed the filing of a request for exemptions from US sanctions due to the changing geopolitical situ-ation, though its draft had been finalised, according to the report.Pakistan and Iran signed an agreement in May 2009 for the supply of 750 million cubic feet per day of gas for 25 years from Iran's South Pars gas

At a weekly press briefing, Lee

urged residents not to defy the

law. "We need to make sure

everyone understands that if

someone was convicted of seri-

ous national security offenses

normally there would not be

remission of sentence," he said

Lee's comments came after

local media, including the

South China Morning Post,

reported that the early release

of activist Ma Chun-man

which had been scheduled for

Monday, was blocked under

the new national security law.

The remission had been grant-

ed due to his good conduct and

the blockage was the first of its

kind, according to the reports,

which cited unnamed sources.

The revised practice is expect-

field. Both countries were required to implement the project in their respective territo-

world 09

The project was initially conceived as an India-Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline, but later, India left it and became a bilateral project between Pakistan and Iran.

According to the agreement, the project was to start supply by January 2015. While Iran has already built over 900 km of the pipeline, the remaining 250 km segment has yet to be

completed. The caretaker government opted to start building an 80-kilometre segment of the gas pipeline, extending from the Iranian border to Gwadar, at an estimated cost of USD 158 million (Rs 44.2 billion) to ward off USD 18 billion potential penalties from Tehran. In August last year, Pakistan temporarily shelved the gas pipeline project, apparently under pressure from the US, which imposed sanctions against Tehran over its nuclear programme. On December 21, 2023, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) served a material breach notice to Pakistan's Inter-State Gas Systems (Pvt) Ltd (ISGS), an entity of the petroleum division, alleging material breach of buyer's warranties. The NIOC gave the ISGS 180 days to remedy the alleged material breach and referred the matter to the coordination committee for resolution. If Pakistan doesn't implement the project, Tehran has the option to move the Paris-based International Court of Arbitration, with potential contractual liability estimated to be USD 18 billion, according to the report.

### Pak PM says cash-strapped country has to seek another IMF bailout Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said his government is planning to approach the IMF for "another programme", days after the cash-strapped country struck a staff-level agreement with the global lender regard-

ing the disbursal of the final tranche of USD 1.1 billion. Shehbaz, who took oath as the country's premier on March 4 for a second time since 2022 amidst staggering economic and security challenges, said, "We have to do another IMF programme and it won't work out without one." "Rome wasn't built overnight," the 72-year-old added while addressing the Tax Excellence Awards in Islamabad, The News

News International reported. Washington-based IMF's global team reached a stafflevel agreement with the Pakistani authorities last week on the second and final review of Pakistan's stabilisation programme supported by the global lender's USD 3

standby arrangemen

### Militants attack Pak naval air base; 4 terrorists killed PTI 📕 KARACHI

rmed Baloch militants Atried to infiltrate one of the main naval air bases in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, but security forces foiled the attack and killed all four terrorists.

The attack on Monday night took place in Turbat, a turbulent district in the sparsely populated province. Makran Commissioner Saeed

Ahmed Umrani told the media that security forces had foiled an armed terrorist attack at the PNS Siddique Naval Air Base which is among the biggest naval air stations in the coun-

"The armed men attacked from three sides of the airport boundary, but security forces responded immediately and foiled their attempt to infiltrate the premises," he said.

Eyewitnesses reported they had heard gunfire and explosions



throughout the night. According to a statement by the army, terrorists on the night of March 25/26 attempted to attack Pakistan Naval Base, PNS Siddique in the Turbat area of Balochistan province. However, it was thwarted due to the swift and effective response by the troops ensuring the safety and security of personnel and assets. "Security forces in the vicinity

were immediately mobilized to support the naval troops. Synergetic and effective response by the armed forces enabled the killing of all four terrorists in ensuing joint clearance operation," the army said. However, during an intense fire exchange, a 24-year-old Sepoy of the paramilitary Frontier Corps Balochistan was killed. A security official said on condition of anonymity that terrorists were unable to cause any damage at the airbase or to aeroplanes.

lations was reported, the official said.

any other terrorists found in the area and Pakistan Armed Forces were committed to eliminating the menace of terrorism from the country at all costs. The banned Balochistan Liberation Army claimed that its Majeed Brigade was behind the attack.

being repulsed by security

town in which at least ten people were killed but attempts to breach the Mach jail were

> Prisoners jailed for national security crimes unlikely to get early release: HK leader Hong Kong (AP): Hong Kong's month.

## Senior PML-N leader rebukes PPP over approach towards coalition government Sanaullah said if PML-N supre-

In the first reported public ing coalition members, a senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has launched a scathing criticism of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) for its "attitude" towards the coalition government at the Centre.

PTI ISLAMABAD



No loss of sensitive naval instal-A sanitisation operation was being conducted to eliminate

This is the third major attack on security forces and installations this year in Balochistan claimed by the BLA with the first two attacks being also

forces Earlier in the year, security forces were attacked in Mach

thwarted by security forces. On March 24, the BLA also claimed responsibility for an attack on the Gwadar Port Authority Complex. Security forces had killed eight militants of the banned separatist group in the gunfire. Balochistan, bordering Iran

and Afghanistan, is home to a long-running violent insurgency. Baloch insurgent groups have previously carried out several attacks targeting the USD 60 billion CPEC proiects.

The BLA accuses China and Islamabad of exploitation of the resource-rich province, a charge rejected by the authorities.

BLA's Majeed Brigade, which was formed in 2011, is a particularly lethal guerilla cell of the BLA.

It has been alleged that the group also maintains sanctuaries in areas along the Pakistan-Iran border.

> NZ joins US, UK in alleging it was targeted by **China-backed** cyberespionage

approved in July last year. Shehbaz, the younger broth-er of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo and three-time former premier Nawaz Sharif, said, "While the programme has some limitations, it is important for ensuring economic stability.

The prime minister, who came to power with the formation of a coalition government supported by the Pakistan Peoples Party and four smaller parties, reiterated that a "route will have to be taken to ensure economic stability as well as focus on the country's growth, provide job opportunities to people and address inflation' Last week, Finance Minister

Muhammad Aurangzeb also maintained that Pakistan will discuss an Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with the IMF in Washington next month the report said.

PML-N leader Rana Sanaullah, while speaking on a Geo News programme, said the "attitude of the PPP will remain the same throughout the tenure of the government". "Look at their reaction to the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) chairman (appointment) issue," he said

The former interior minister of Pakistan said it is clear the Bilawal Bhutto Zardari-led PPP will have their "own position on everything".

"An impression is coming from allies to have the same attitude. However, we will try to move forward," he added. Sanaullah's remarks come after

the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif government's decision to appoint Zafar Mahmood, a retired federal government officer, as the IRSA chairman, The News International report-ed. The PPP termed Mahmood's appointment for a three-year tenure as a violation of constitutional procedures. the PPP strongly objected to Following the party's concerns,

the government backtracked on the appointment with Shehbaz Sharif assuring Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah of retracting the notification regarding the appointment. Sanaullah said the PPP should have approached the PML-N directly before reaching out to the media on the appointment.

he miøl decision had been made and it would be reviewed later". In the February 8 general elec-tions, the Sharifs-led party failed to garner a clear majority, albeit technically, it was the largest party with 75 out of 265

In a surprise move, the elder Sharif stepped back in favour of Shehbaz to allow him to lead the coalition as he is believed to have the knack of taking along diverse groups in the polarised country. The elections saw more than 90

independent candidates backed by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's PTI winning the maximum number of seats in the National Assembly.

The PPP and four smaller parties joined the coalition with the PPP supporting the government from outside in return for PML-N support for the election of its senior leader and former president Asif Ali Zardari as the president.

leader said Tuesday that prisoners convicted for serious national security crimes would not likely be granted early release under the tightened rules of a new national security law, signalling a hardening government stance against jailed political activists.

Chief Executive John Lee said the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance stipulates that people found guilty of endangering national security must not be granted remission unless the commissioner of correctional services believes the move would not be a national security risk. This also applies to inmates who received sentences before the new law was introduced last Saturday, Lee said.

ed to affect other activists who Previously, inmates could have are jailed or undergoing trials under a similar sweeping secu-rity law imposed by Beijing their prison sentences reduced by up to one-third for good four years ago to quell massive conduct under the city's prison rules, provided they were servanti-government protests in ing terms longer than one 2019.

Wellington (AP): Hackers linked to the Chinese government launched a state-sponsored operation that targeted New Zealand's Parliament in 2021, the country's security minister said Tuesday.

New Zealand's allegation comes a day after American and British authorities announced a set of criminal charges and sanctions against seven hackers, all believed to be living in China, who targeted US officials, journalists, corporations and pro-democracy activists, as well as the UK's election watch-

dog. "The use of cyber-enabled espionage operations to interfere with democratic institutions and processes anywhere is unacceptable," Judith Collins, the defense minister responsible for the Government Communications Security Bureau, said in a statement.

#### Multiple victims of Moscow attack in Ukraine ramps up spending on homemade weapons serious condition: Russian officials ly owned factories. They are sprouting up across the country shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, when it illegal-AP KYIV later, they're shipped back and sent to the front.

victims of the Russia concert hall attack that killed more than 130 people remain in serious condition in the hospital, Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said Tuesday, according to state news agency Tass. Two of them are children, it said.

Russia is still reeling from the attack Friday in which gunmen killed 139 people in a concert hall on the outskirts of Moscow. Russian President Vladimir Putin said Monday that the gunmen are "radical Islamists," but despite all evidence pointing to the involvement of Islamic State, Putin repeated his accusation that Ukraine could have played a role. Kyiv has strongly denied any link to the attack. Four men accused of carrying out the attack appeared before a

Moscow (AP): Twenty-two Moscow court on Sunday on terrorism charges and showed signs of severe beatings. One appeared to be barely conscious during the hearing.

> Tajikistan, authorities said, 32;

The men are citizens of

and were named by investigators as Dalerdzhon Mirzoyev,

cials said they detained a

total of 11 people over the

attack. Another of those

detained appeared in court

Monday. Alisher Kasimov, a

citizen of Kyrgyzstan in

Saidakrami Rachabalizoda, 30; Shamsidin Fariduni, 25; and Mukhammadsobir Faizov, 19. They were charged with committing a terrorist attack resulting in the death of others. The offense carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Russian offi-

over renting an apartment to the men accused of carrying out the attack. A senior Turkish security official confirmed Tuesday that two of the Moscow attackers had spent a "short amount of

time" in Turkey before travelling together to Russia on March 2.

One of the attackers, Fariduni, entered Turkey on February 20, checked into a hotel in Istanbul's Fatih district the next day and checked out on February 27, the offi-cial said. The other, Rachabalizoda, checked into a hotel in the same district on January 5, checking out on January 21. The official said Turkish authorities believe the two suspects "became radicalized in Russia" because they were not in Turkey for Central Asia, was charged long.

Ukraine needs any edge it can get to repel Russia from its territory. One emerging bright spot is its small but fast-growing defence industry, which the government is flooding with money in hopes that a surge of homemade weapons and ammunition can help turn the tide.

The effort ramped up sharply over the past year as the US and Europe strained to deliver weapons and other aid to Ukraine, which is up against a much bigger Russian military backed by a thriving domestic defence industry. The Ukrainian government budgeted nearly USD 1.4 billion in 2024 to buy and develop weapons at home - 20 times more than before Russia's full-scale invasion. And in another major shift, a huge portion of weapons are now being bought from private-

and rapidly taking over an industry that had been dominated by state-owned companies. A privately owned mortar factory that launched in western Ukraine last year is making roughly 20,000 shells a month. "I feel that we are bringing our country closer to victory," said Anatolli Kuzmin, the factory's 64-year-old owner, who used to make farm equipment and fled his home in southern Ukraine after Russia invaded in 2022. Yet like many aspects of Ukraine's war apparatus, its defence sector has been constrained by a lack of money and manpower - and, according to executives and generals, too much government red tape. A more robust private sector could help root out inefficiencies and enable factories to churn out weapons and ammunition even faster. Russia controls nearly a quar-

ter of Ukraine and has gained momentum along the 1,000 kilometre front line by showing a willingness to expend large numbers of troops to make even the smallest of advances. Ukrainian troops regularly find themselves outmanned and outgunned, and this has contributed to falling morale. "You need a mortar not in three years, you need it now, preferably yesterday," said Taras Chmut, director of the Come Back Alive Foundation, an organization that has raised more than USD 260 million over the past decade to equip Ukrainian troops with machine guns, armoured vehicles and more.

Kuzmin, the owner of the mortar factory, fled the southern city of Melitopol in 2022 after Russia invaded and seized his factory that mostly made spare parts for farm equipment.

He had begun developing a prototype for mortar shells ly annexed the Crimean "Our dream is to establish a Peninsula. Kuzmin took over a sprawling warehouse in western Ukraine last winter. His longterm goals include boosting production to 100,000 shells per month and developing engines and explosives for drones. He is just one of many entrepreneurs transforming Ukraine's weapons industry, which was dominated by stateowned enterprises after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Today, about 80 per cent of the defeating Russia without massive defence industry is in private support from the West, said Trevor Taylor, a research fellow at the Royal United Services hands — a mirror image of where things stood a year ago Institute, a London-based think and a stark contrast with Russia's tank. "Ukraine is not capable of producing all the munitions

state-controlled defence industry. Each newly made projectile that it needs for this fight," Taylor said. "The hold up of is wrapped in craft paper and carefully packed into wooden USD 60 billion of American help crates to be shipped to Romania or Bulgaria, where are loaded is really proving to be a significant hindrance? with explosives. Several weeks

plant for explosives," said Kuzmin, who is seeking a partner to make that happen. Ukraine's surge in military spending has occurred against a backdrop of USD 60 billion in US aid being held up by Congress and with European countries struggling to deliver enough ammunition. As impressive as Ukraine's defence sector transformation has been, the country stands no chance of



# Sensex, Nifty snap three days winning run

### PTI MUMBAI

enchmark BSE Sensex declined by 361 points on Duesday, snapping its three-day gaining streak due to selling in index major Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank and IT shares amid mixed global trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 361.64 points or 0.50 per cent to settle at 72,470.30 with 20 of its components ending in the red and 10 in the green. During the day, it fell by 468.91 points or 0.64 per cent to 72,363.03 points. The broader Nifty of NSE declined 92.05 points or 0.42 per cent to 22,004.70 as 30 of its constituents dropped and 20 advanced.

Sensex shares, Among PowerGrid fell the most by 2.07 per cent.

Bharti Airtel dropped 1.99 per cent amid its subsidiary Bharti Hexacom announcing the losers. launch of its Rs 4,275-crore IPO on April 3 at a price band of Rs 542 to Rs 570 per share. HDFC Bank declined 1.11 per cent contributing over 106

PTI NEW DELHI

Insurance behemoth Life Insurance Corporation of

India (LIC) has emerged as the

strongest insurance brand glob-

ally, according to a report Brand

The report said that LIC's brand

value remains steady at USD 9.8

billion, accompanied by a brand

strength index score of 88.3 and an associated AAA brand

strength rating. Following LIC, the rankings

highlight Cathay Life Insurance

as the second strongest brand,

experiencing a 9 per cent increase in brand value to USD

4.9 billion, closely followed by

NRMA Insurance, which saw an

82 per cent rise in brand value

to USD 1.3 billion, according to

a statement by Brand Finance

Notably, Chinese insurance

Insurance

Finance Insurance 100 2024.

gainers. points to the total fall in Sensex. Reliance Industries fell

LIC world strongest

points to the fall.



0.88 per cent, adding over 77 its ĪT major Wipro dropped 1.5 per cent, Infosys by 1 per cent and TCS by 0.92 per cent and were a major drag on key indices. Koták Mahindra Bank, ending UltraTech Cement, and Asian Paints were also among the Bajaj Finance, NTPC, Larsen & Toubro, Axis Bank, Tata Motors, IndusInd Bank and Bajaj Finserv were among the

Aligned with global trends, the domestic market sustained

consolidation pattern, continued to experience

ending close to 22,000. While key data such as US GDP and inflation during the week may provide some clues on future rate cut paths, the fiscal yeartruncated week, coupled with reduced trading volumes and monthly expiry, are likely to contribute to volatility. "Generally, midcaps are performing well post the consolidation of the last 2-3 weeks, while the IT sector

sluggishness following weak global IT spending forecasts,"

said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

NSE NIFty

22,075

21,950

09-15

GRAPHIC

22,096.75

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.11 per cent while midcap index climbed 0.71 per cent. Among the indices, teck fell by 0.83 per cent, IT dipped by 0.57 per cent, bankex by 0.51 per cent and financial services by 0.26 per cent.

Services jumped 1.48 per cent, realty climbed 1.45 per cent, industrials (0.95 per cent) and oil & gas (0.84 per cent) were among the gainers

In Asian markets, Tokyo settled lower, while Seoul Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading mostly in the green. Wall Street ended lower on Monday.

TOP GAINERS

Hindalco

198 Britannia

LOSERS

-1.49 Wipro

-2.07 - Power Grid

Bharti Airtel

Kotak Ban

Eicher Motors

TOP

1.76 Adani Ports 1.45 L&T

221 Bajaj Finance

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,309.76 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Equity markets were closed on Monday for Holi.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.17 per cent to USD 86.60 a barrel.



# IRDAI issues series of regulations

review of the regulatory

framework for the insurance

sector. These regulations

encompass pivotal domains

policyholders' interests, rural

products

social

safeguarding

marketplace,

sector

and

and

including

electronic

as

responsibilities,

milestone in

enhancing

statement.

stakeholders,

governance which has replaced

34 regulations with six

regulations and introduction

of two new regulations

coherence in the regulatory

landscape," the IRDAI said in a

The process involved extensive

consultations with diverse

insurers, as mandated under

the Insurance Act, 1938, it said.

Compliance and measurement

of these statutory obligations

have been revised where the

unit of measurement under the

clarity

insurance

insurance

operation

such

and

### PTI NEW DELHI

Insurance regulator IRDAI has notified a host of regulations, including on surrender charges wherein insurers have to disclose such

charges upfront. IRDAI (Insurance Products) Regulations, 2024 merge six regulations into a unified framework aimed at enabling insurers to swiftly respond to evolving market demands, enhancing the ease of conducting business, and boosting insurance penetration.

These regulations promote good governance in product design and pricing, including strengthening the principles governing guaranteed surrender value & special surrender value along with disclosures thereof, IRDAI said in a statement

It also ensures that the insurers adopt sound management practices for effective oversight

These regulations, which will be effective April 1, 2024, stipulate that the surrender value is expected to remain the same or even lower if policies are surrendered within three years of the purchase.

For policies that have been surrendered from the fourth to the seventh year, the surrender value may see a minor

A surrender value in insurance refers to the amount paid by insurers to policyholder upon terminating the policy before its maturity date. If the policyholder surrenders during the policy tenure, the earnings and savings portion will be paid to him or her.

The Insurance Regulatory and rural obligations will now be Gram Panchayat, the scope of social sector has been extended to cover cardholders and beneficiaries under various consolidated regulations, schemes, it said. following the comprehensive Under the Motor Third Party

Obligations, the measurement will be the renewal of insurance coverage to goods-carrying vehicles, passenger-carrying vehicles and tractors, it said.

money 10

IRDAI Besides. the (Registration and Operations Foreign Reinsurers Branches & Llovd's India) Regulations, 2024 consolidate two regulations and aims to the systematic the of reinsurance sector in India by promoting orderly growth and harmonizing the existing legal and regulatory framework.

These regulations seek to streamline the operations of entities engaged in reinsurance operations, it said.

By promoting transparency and stability, these regulations aim to create a conducive environment for the growth and expansion of the reinsurance sector, ultimately benefiting both insurers and policyholders in India, it said. At the same time, the IRDAI (Protection of Policyholders' Interests and Allied Matters of Insurers) Regulations, 2024 consolidate eight regulations into a unified structure, focusing on several key objectives aimed at ensuring fair treatment of prospects during solicitation and sale of insurance protecting the interests of policyholders throughout their

These regulations emphasize the adoption of standard procedures and best practices channels to fulfill their obligations towards policyholders, including grievance redressal and policyholdercentric governance, it said.

Additionally, it said, the regulations aim to promote prudent practices in risk related management outsourcing activities insurers.



and HDFC Life Insurance led the private sector with new business premium collections of Rs 15,197 crore and Rs 10,970

crore, respectively. In recent developments, the government approved a 17 per cent wage revision for LIC employees, effective from August 2022, benefiting over

110,000 employees. LIC's shares also reached an all-time high of Rs 1,175, making it India's most valuable PSU company and reclaiming its status as the fifth most valuable Indian listed company, surpassing SBI

# all new models in India

apanese auto major Nissan Motor Co Ltd plans to launch three all-new models in India by fiscal year 2026 and make the country a hub for exports under its new global business plan to drive value and strengthen competitiveness, according to a company statement.

Under the new plan, which is split into mid-term imperatives for fiscal years 2024 through 2026, and mid-long-term actions to be carried out through 2030, the company is targeting additional 10 lakh unit sales compared to fiscal year 2023. Globally, Nissan plans to launch 30 new models over the next three years, of which 16 will be electrified, and 14 will be ICE (international combustion engine) models, to meet the diversified customer needs in markets where the pace of electrification differs, the company said. It plans to launch a total of 34 electrified models from fiscal

vear 2024 and 2030 to cover all

segments, with the model mix of

electrified vehicles expected to

account for 40 per cent global-



ly by fiscal year 2026 and rise to 60 per cent by the end of the decade. In India, the company said it would "launch three allnew models and become a hub for exports, at a level of 1,00,000

units The company on Monday launched 'The Arc', its new business plan to drive value and strengthen competitiveness. 'The Arc plan shows our path to the future. It illustrates our continuous progression and ability to navigate changing market conditions. This plan will enable us to go further and faster in driving value and competi-tiveness. Faced with extreme market volatility, Nissan is taking decisive actions guided by the new plan to ensure sustainable growth and profitability," Nissan President and Chief

and due diligence, it said.

increase, it said. the

Development Authority of India (ÎRDAI) at its meeting cusuit principle-based consolidated remutiti

Amazon invested \$1.2 billion

Executive Officer Makoto Uchida said.

of foreign reinsurance branches, as well as aspects of registration, foster actuarial, finance, investment development and corporate governance. This comes after notification of the the first consolidated regulation on Expenses of Management of insurers in January 2024. 'It marks a significant regulatory

policies and engagement with insurers and distribution channels.

by insurers and distribution

by



brands maintain dominance in the global rankings, with Ping An leading with a 4 per cent USD 1.6 billion increase in brand value to USD 33.6 billion, followed by China Life Insurance and CPIC defending their 3rd and 5th



AXA from France retain their spots in the 2nd and 4th positions to complete the Top 5, it said.

significant growth in brand value, NRMA Insurance from Australia stands out with an 82 per cent increase to USD 1.3 billion, along with Denmark's Tryg, which saw a 66 per cent rise to Additionally, LIC India achieved

positions, respectively, it said. Allianz from Germany and

the highest first-year premium collection of Rs 39,090 crore in FY23, while SBI Life Insurance in market valuation.

# Nissan to launch three

Change -92.05

22,004.70

### Zee identifies verticals for critical assessment

### PTI NEW DELHI

7ee Entertainment has decided to have a L"critical assessment" of some of its business verticals to reduce losses and enhance performance levels to achieve key performance metrics.

The company has formed a Monthly Management Mentorship, called 3M Program, which will guide and enable the management team to achieve key performance metrics, including a targeted 20 per cent EBITDA margin, as proposed by its MD & CEO recently, said a statement from Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL).

The 3M Program Special Committee has identified business verticals such as Margo which offers internet Networks, connectivity under the brand name 'Sugarbox', Teleplay (showing theatre play), and Zindagi, a general entertainment channel which broadcasts short-run programming, rather than ongoing, indefinite serials. The list also includes the movie app Weyyak and the English Cluster of Linear TV Business.

"The Special Committee has advised that the identified business verticals will need to substantially reduce losses and enhance their performance levels," it said.

To drive the 3M Program, the ZEE board has formed a Special Committee



comprising its Chairman R Gopalan and Chairman of the Audit Committee U P Agarwal to review the business performance and provide the required directional guidance, it said. Besides, 3M Program Special Committee

has also reviewed the music Business of Zee and advised enhancing the monetisation avenues and subsequently increase the vertical's contribution to the company's bottom line.

"It has also advised that the Music Business should focus on further optimising its costs, without losing its leadership position in the market," Zee said.

It has also conducted a detailed analysis of the Technology and Innovation Centre (TIC), which had incurred an expenditure of approximately Rs 600 crore last year.

The Committee has advised to "reduce the expenditure at the TIC by 50 per cent, for the financial year 2024-25 and utilise its

services to enhance the company's content distribution development, and

monetisation approach. Though TIC has developed a substantial level of technology and tools, it needs to focus on return on investment.

The Committee has advised the management to "stay focused on its core expertise, ethos and DNA i.E. Content" and to utilise the services of TIC to enhance its content development and distribution process

"It has also advised that the management should leverage the TIC's Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) tools to gain a deeper insight into the consumer profiles," it said.

Earlier this month, in an investor's conference call, Zee Chairman had said since 2020 ZEEL's performance has been impacted due to industry-wide macro slowdown, transitory issues, and management bandwidth constraints due to merger activities.

The board has also decided to closely monitor the business model and plan presented by the MD & CEO of the company, wherein he has provided the roadmap to improve the performance and efficiency of each of the businesses to achieve higher EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization).

# in 2023 to tackle counterfeit

### PTI NEW DELHI

Online marketplace Amazon invested more than USD 1.2 billion and hired about 15,000 experts in 2023 to protect the brand, its sellers, and customers from fraud and counterfeit, according to the Amazon 2023 Brand Protection Report.

Amazon said when a customer purchases from the store, they trust they will receive an authentic product, and when businesses choose to sell in the store, they trust Amazon to provide a great selling experience free from competition with bad actors. 'In 2023, Amazon invested more than USD 1.2 billion and employed more than 15,000 people, including machine learning scientists, software developers, and expert investigators, who were dedicated to protecting customers, brands, selling partners, and our store from counterfeit, fraud, and

amazon

other forms of abuse," it said. Amazon said it uses document forgery detection, advanced image and video verification, and other technologies to confirm the authenticity of government-issued identity documents guickly and whether they match the individual applying to sell in the marketplace.

These technologies, it said, coupled with continued innovation in its machine learning-based detection, are deterring bad actors from attempting to create new Amazon selling accounts. "In 2023, Amazon stopped more than 700,000 bad actor attempts

to create new selling accounts, stopping them before they were able to list a single product for sale in our store. This is down from 6 million attempts by bad actors to create new Amazon selling accounts in 2020," the report said. It added that Amazon identified, seized, and appropriately disposed of more than 7 million counterfeit products worldwide in 2023, preventing them from harming customers or being resold elsewhere in the retail supply chain. It added that since its launch in

2020, Amazon's Counterfeit Crimes Unit has pursued more than 21,000 bad actors through litigation and criminal referrals to law enforcement.

Since 2020, it said, while the number of products available for sale in the store has grown significantly, the platform saw a more than 30 per cent decrease in the total valid notices of infringement submitted by brands



Rupee jumps 33 paise to close at 83.28 against US dollar

### PTI MUMBAI

The rupee recovered from all-time low level and appreciated 33 paise to close at 83.28 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday on decline in the US dollar and positive Asian currencies.

Forex traders said weak domestic markets and surge in crude oil prices capped sharp gains for the local unit.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.33 against the greenback. The unit hit an intra-day high of 83.26 and a low of 83.37.

The local unit finally settled at 83.28 (provisional) against the dollar, higher by 33 paise from its previous close.

On Friday, the rupee depreciated 48 paise to settle at an all-time low of 83.61 American the against currency.

Forex and equity markets were closed on Monday on account of Holi. Market analysts said, for the domestic unit, record forex reserves provide a cushion, enabling the Reserve Bank to mitigate the rupee's downside.

BUSINESS BRIEF **LAUNCH PAD 2024** 650+

#### VIT-AP HOLDS VLAUNCHPAD 2024

AMARAVATI: The third Annual National level Business Plan Competition. VLaunchPad 2024, held its Grand Finale and Award Ceremony on March 23. Organised by VIT-AP School of Business (VSB) in collaboration with the Innovation Incubation and Entrepreneurship Cell (IIEC) of VIT-AP University, the event aimed at promoting creativity, entrepreneurship, and innovative ideas geared towards the development of our nation · Viksit Bharat @ 2047. VLaunchPad 2024 attracted registrations from across India, with over 650 teams representing 72 universities, including prestigious institutes such as IITs, IIITs, IIMs, NITs, and others

# Shapoorji Pallonji Group sells Gopalpur port to Adani Ports

PTI NEW DELHI

The Shapoorji Pallonji Group on Tuesday announced the sale of its brownfield Gopalpur Port to Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd for an enterprise value of Rs 3,350 crore, as part of its deleveraging strategy with planned asset monetisation. The under-construction Gopalpur Port in Odisha was acquired in 2017 by the SP Group.

Currently, it is capable of han-dling 20 MTPA. The port had recently signed up with Petronet LNG for setting up a greenfield LNG regasification terminal, adding predictable long-term cash flows for the port, the group said in a state-

ment. The sale of the Gopalpur Port is the second port divestment in the last few months from the SP Group, a diversified construction and infrastructure, real estate and energy conglomerate.

It had earlier divested its Dharamtar Port in Maharashtra to JSW Infrastructure Ltd for an enterprise value of Rs 710 crore. The group had acquired the Dharamtar Port in 2015 and had successfully turned around port operations, increasing

capacity from less than 1 MTPA, when it took over to an expected capacity to handle 5 MTPA in FY24."The planned divestments of Gopalpur Port and Dharamtar Port, at a significant enterprise value, demon-

strate our group's ability to turn-around assets and create stakeholder value in a relatively short period of time, capitalising our core strengths in project development and construc-tion," a Shapoorji Pallonji Group spokesperson said. The spokesperson further said,

These divestments are key milestones in our roadmap to reduce group debt."

## **SpiceJet shares** climb four per cent

pact will allow the airline to clear major liabilities, leading to a comprehensive revitalisation of the airline's balance sheet, SpiceJet said in a statement on Tuesday. Under the agreement, SpiceJet will acquire full ownership of 13 EDC-financed Q400 cent to settle at Rs 61.06 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it

aircraft, bolstering the airline's operational capabilities and fleet management, it said. will SpiceJet

comprehensive settlement amount to resolve outstanding liabilities amounting to close to USD 91 million, the airline said.

PTI 📕 NEW DELHI aircraft. The terms of the settlement Shares of SpiceJet on Tuesday Jumped 4 per cent after the

jumped 7.23 per cent to Rs 63.

In terms of volume, 93.12 lakh

shares of the company were traded on the BSE during the

The liabilities stem from a loan

acquired by the airline in 2011

for the procurement of 15

dav

company said it has signed a pact with Export Development Canada (EDC) to settle liabilities worth USD 90.8 million (around Rs 755 crore). The stock climbed 3.93 per

# sports 11



# **HOCKEY INDIA AWARDS** Sreejesh, Savita, Harmanpreet in contention for multiple honours

#### PTI 📕 NEW DELHI

reteran goalkeepers P R Sreejesh and Savita Punia found themselves in contention for the 'Player of the Year' honours in the men's and women's category respectively as Hockey India unveiled nominees for its annual awards which will be presented here on March 31. Sreejesh, a former captain, and Punia have been among the most consistent performers for India and have also been nominated for the goalkeeper of the year award.

India men's team captain and defender Harmanpreet Singh has also been shortlisted in two categories. He will be in contention for the player of the year as well as the defender of

both categories comes with a prize of Rs 25 lakh each, while the goalkeeping trophy will fetch the winner Rs five lakh. From eight different categories, a total of 32 nominations have made the shortlist for a total prize purse of Rs 7.56 crore, Hockey India said in a press release.

"Notably, the pinnacle of the event, the Hockey India Major Dhyan Chand Lifetime Achievement Award, will carry the most substantial cash purse of Rs 30 lakh, honouring an individual's extraordinary contributions to the sport over the years," the HI added.

The Jugraj Singh Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Men) and Asunta Lakra Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Women), which are the year award. The player of the year award in offers a cash prize of Rs 10

Like Sathiyan, the 25-year-

old Sreeja who won her second WTT singles career

Manika Batra held on to

her 38th spot in the

women's singles rankings

title on Sunday.



lakh each.

The Pargat Singh Award for Defender of the Year, Ajit Pal Singh Award for Midfielder of the Year, and Dhanraj Pillay Award for Forward of the Year come with a prize of ₹five lakh.

"Selecting the nominees proved to be a challenging task, given the outstanding performances showcased by both the men's and women's teams in recent times," said Hockey India President Dilip Kumar Tirkey.

"These awards serve as a testament to the dedication, talent, and passion that our athletes, coaches, umpires, and officials bring to the field day in and day out," added secretary general Bhola Nath Singh.

The Nominees for the Hockey

Goalkeeper of the Year: Mohith HS, PR Sreejesh, Savita Punia, Krishan Bahadur Pathak

Defender of the Year: Deep Grace Ekka, Amit Rohidas, Harmanpreet Singh, Udita

Midfielder of the Year: Salima Tete, Hardik Singh, Manpreet Singh, Navneet Kaur Forward of the Year: Vandana Kataria, Abhishek, Sukhjeet

Singh, Mandeep Singh Upcoming Player of the Year (Women — Under 21): Vaishnavi Viththal Phalke, Deepika, Deepika Soreng,

Sunelita Toppo. Upcoming Player of the Year (Men — Under 21): Uttam Singh, Amir AliVishnukant Singh, Araijeet Singh Hundal Player of The Year (Women): Savita Punia, Salima Tete, Vandana Kataria, Navneet Kaur.

India Annual Awards:

Sathiyan jumps 43 places to reach 60th spot

### Sreeja rises to career-high 40 in ITTF rankings

### PTI NEW DELHI

Teading Indian table Ltennis player G on Tuesday Sathiyan leapfrogged 43 places to be 60 while Sreeja Akula rose to a career-high 40 in the ITTF World Rankings, following their WTT Feeder Series title wins last

week. Sathiyan, who has a careerbest ranking of 24, had dropped out of the top 100 recently. The title in Beirut earned him 125 points. Veteran Sharath Kamal, who has dropped a place to

while Archana Kamath advanced 13 places to be be 35, continues to be the 99 top-ranked Indian. India has already qualified Thakkar for the team events at the Manav and Harmeet Desai also find Paris Olympics. Two singles entries in men's and themselves in the top 100. Manav, who reached the women's singles will be men's doubles final in the decided by the Table Tennis Federation of India WTT Feeder last week, has by May 16 after considering the world moved 11 spots to be 63, while Harmeet has dropped rankings at the time. two places to be 67.

## **BOXING SUB JUNIOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP** Haryana crowned champions

### PTI GREATER NOIDA

Haryana clinched the team titles in both the boys and girls categories with an impressive combined haul of 19 medals at the boxing Sub National Junior

Championship here. Haryana, the reigning champions in the girls section, successfully defended their title after finishing on top of the table with 64 points. They won 10 medals including seven gold, one silver and two bronze. Haryana boxers stamped their authority with a dominating display as six out of seven boxers won comfortably with unanimous 5-0 decisions. Diya (61kg) continued her phenomenal form with a

convincing 5-0 win over Delhi's Yashika. She was also adjudged the best boxer. The other gold medallists for Haryana in the girls category were Bhoomi (35kg), Nischal Sharma (37kg), Rakhi (43kg), Naitik (52kg), Navya (55kg) and Sukhreet (64kg).

Delhi

and



Maharashtra Delhi won one gold, three finished second and third silver and four bronze medals with 34 and 31 points while Maharashtra ended respectively. Boxers from their campaign with a gold,

three silver and two bronze medals.

Bronze medallist Hillang (37kg) of Arunachal Pradesh secured the most promising boxer award in the girls category.

Haryana boxers showcased their might in the boys category as well, winning nine medals which included six gold, two silver and one bronze to secure the first bronze to secure the first

bronze to secure the first position with 62 points. Uday Singh led Haryana's domination with 5-0 victory domination with 5-0 victory in 37kg against S Sujith of Tamil Nadu. Nitin (40kg), Ravi Sihag (49kg), Lakshay (52kg), Naman (58kg) and Anmol Dahiya (64kg) also won their respective finals to give Haryana a perfect end to their impressive campaign. Uttarakhand finished second with 34 points (three gold and three silver medals) followed by UP (one gold, three silver, one bronze medal).

one bronze medal).

The tournament witnessed the participation of 612 boxers, including 337 boys and 275 girls.



# Murray sustains serious ankle injury

AP MIAMI GARDEN

Murray continued. "But I'll be back with 1 hip and no ankle ligaments when the time is

Open that he expects will keep him out for some time. Murray said on an Instagram post Monday he had a "full rupture" of the anterior talofibular ligament (ATFL) and a "near full thickness runture" of the calcaneofibular rupture" of the calcaneofibular ligament (CFL).

He said he will see an ankle specialist to determine what's next.

"Goes without saying this is a tough one to take and I'll be out for an extended period,"

He lost to Tomas Machac 5-7, "I obviously still love competing and still love the game, but it obviously gets harder and harder the older you get to compete with the young guys and keep your body fit and fresh," Murray said in an on-court interview after a win in Dubai last month. "I probably don't have too long left, but I'll do as best as I can these last few months."



Bopanna, Ebden advance to Miami Three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray

right." Murray had hip resurfacing surgery in 2019. said he suffered a significant ankle injury at the Miami

7-5, 7-6 (5) on Sunday.

#### AP SAO PAULO

Brazilian striker Gabriel Barbosa was suspended for two years following a doping fraud investigation. The country's Anti-Doping Sports Court of Justice voted 5-4 to punish Barbosa to April 2025.

He brought attention to himself by his erratic behavior during a surprise test on April 8, 2023, one day before Flamengo played the Bio de Laneiro state Rio de Janeiro state championship. Anti-doping officers who came to test players at the club training ground were largely ignored by Barbosa, who took his test hours after his teammates.

test.

Barbosa's lawyers argued his blood test at the time, which is considered a more effective test, proved he was clean, and added his unfriendly behavior toward the officers



followed the rules of the game did not mean he tricked the

and I never used prohibited "Despite my respect for the court, I stress that I never substances. I have been a subject of dozens of tests, tried to obstruct or fraud any they all came negative, which test. I trust that I will be shows my commitment with found not guilty in my my club and with Brazilian appeal," Barbosa said on his fans.' social media channels. "Since the beginning of my Flamengo said "there was no

fraud, not even an attempted career as a footballer I always fraud.

"The club received the decision with surprise and will help the athlete in his representation at the Court for Arbitration of Sport," it

added in a statement. Nicknamed Gabigol, the 27year-old Barbosa is in the final year of his contract with Flamengo, which has given him national acclaim after failed stints at Inter Milan and Benfica.

The striker was part of Brazil's Olympic gold medal squad at the Rio Olympics in 2016. He left that year for Europe but returned to Santos in 2018, and became one of the most prolific scorers in Brazil.

He moved to Flamengo in 2019 and helped it win two Copa Libertadores and two Brazilian leagues. But he has been benched since former Brazil coach Tite took over at Flamengo last October.

## Open quarterfinals



### PTI MIAMI GARDENS (US)

Indian tennis player Rohan Boppana and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden moved to the men's doubles quarterfinals of the Miami Open with a hard-fought win against Hugo Nys and Jan Zielinski here. Top seeds Bopanna and

Ebden toiled for one hour 39 minutes before pulling off a 7-5 7-6 (3) win over Monegasque Nys and and

Poland's Zielinski in the second round of the ATP Masters 1000 on Monday night.

The 43-year-old Bopanna and Ebden will take on Australia's John Patrick Smith and Netherlands Sem Verbeek. The reigning Australian Open champions hit four aces

and won 84 per cent (37/44) of their first serve points.

The match was contested on an even keel. Bopanna and Ebden broke Nys and Zielinski in the 11th game to take a 6-5 lead. They then fought off a late challenge, saving a couple of break points before taking the 12th

game and the opening set. There was not much separating the two pairs in the second set as well with both of them holding serve till 6-6 to take the match to the tiebreaker.



# Top ranked Iga, Coco knocked out of Miami Open

### AP MIAMI GARDENS (US)

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek and U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff have been knocked out of the Miami Open. Swiatek lost to Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-4, 6-2 on Monday night, hours after the third-seeded Gauff fell in three sets to No. 23 Caroline Garcia 6-3, 1-6, 6-2. In the men's draw, top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz advanced to the round of 16 with a 6-4, 6-2 win over Gael Monfils.

Garcia defeated her second straight Grand Slam

champion to reach Miami's quarterfinals. She ousted

four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka 7-6

Garcia said it had been a

while since she had a

while since she had a victory over a top-10 opponent like Gauff. "You keep working and trying to stay positive about what's coming, that it's going to pay off," she said. "Sometimes, it's very hard. But I'm lucky enough to have very good people

to have very good people behind me to help me and

stay positive when I'm

(4), 7-5 on Sunday.

little reward and keep going in the tournament, she said. Also moving into the quarterfinals was No. 4 seed Elena Rybakina, who

struggling." "It means a lot to have this

defeated 17th-seeded American Madison Keys 6-3, 7-5. Rybakina will next face No. 8 seed Maria Sakkari, who

advanced to her second Miami Open quarterfinal when Anna Kalinskaya, seeded 22nd, withdrew with a right thigh injury. Victoria Azarenka, who's won the Australian Open

twice, made the quarterfinals with a 7-5, 6victory over Katie Boulter.

Yulia Putintseva also advanced, defeating No. 27 seed Anhalina Kalinina straight sets, 6-4, 7-6 (5), and No. 5 seed Jessica Pegula beat Emma Navarro 7-6 (1), 6-3. Alcaraz will next face Lorenzo Musetti, who beat Ben Shelton 6-4, 7-6 (5). Alexander Zverev, the fourth seed, defeated Christopher Eubanks 7-6 (4), 6-3, and No.

# Germany to impose security checks on all its borders during soccer European Championship

#### AP BERLIN

Germany will carry out border controls at all its frontiers during soccer's European Championship in June and July, the country's top security official told local media

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser told the daily Rheinische Post in comments published Tuesday that checks will be carried out at all German borders during the tournament "to be able to prevent possible violent criminals entering." She added that "this is necessary to this protect major international event as best possible?

Authorities' focus is on protection against Islamic and other extremists, hooligans and others, and securing networks against cyberattacks, she said.

comments come Faeser's shortly after the attack on a suburban Moscow concert hall that was claimed by an affiliate of the Islamic State group.

However, the decision to restore border checks during the soccer tournament had long been expected. It has become standard practice for countries in Europe's nominally ID check-free travel Europe's zone known as the Schengen area during big sports events and major summits.



Germany already is carrying out checks on its eastern and southern borders with Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria and Switzerland as a result of

concerns over migration. The European Championship starts June 14, with host Germany playing Scotland in the opening match in Munich. The final will be played in Berlin on July 14. Italy followed France on Monday in stepping up security after the Moscow attack. Faeser's ministry said Monday that while the threat from Islamic extremists remains acute, German authorities' risk assessment hasn't changed so far as a result of the attack







### PTI 📕 HYDERABAD

umbai Indians will aim to land the killer **VI**punch after fluffing an easy run-chase in their opener when they meet a dangerous Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League here on Wednesday.

Five-time champions MI had a lot going for them in their tournament opener against the Gujarat Titans, whether it was the incisive spells from pacer Jasprit Bumrah, Dewald Brevis' impactful knock or Rohit Sharma's fireworks at the top of the order. But MI, who have built a

reputation of slow starters over the years, could not manage 48 runs off 36 balls with seven wickets in hand. With the 10team event being more competitive than ever before, Mumbai cannot afford more such lackadaisical

performances going forward. In his first game as Mumbai captain, Hardik pushed captain, pushed himself down the order at number seven to accommodate the likes of Tim David and Brevis higher up.

Considering he batted much higher for the Gujarat Titans last year, there is a case for him to bat higher up the order. Opener Ishan Kishan, back to action after a long break, could

only last four balls against GT. With the T20 World Cup in mind, his performances will be tracked closely and have added significance. He needs to be at his best with the bat and behind the stumps to make the national squad.

Hardik will also be expecting an improved performance from spinners Shams Mulani and Piyush Chawla. They face SRH on their home

turf and the Pat Cummins-led side showed against Kolkata Knight Riders what they are capable of. The big-hitting Heinrich Klaasen almost got them over the line from a hopeless situation though the rest of the batters put up below par performances.

The opening duo of Mayank Agarwal and Abhishek Sharma has shown promise but would also need to be consistent if SRH are to do well in the competition.

SRH have invested heavily in pinch hitter Abdul Samad and it is high time he delivers on

the promise. The seasoned Bhuvneshwar Kumar was Andre "Russelled" on Saturday night and will look to bounce back strongly. "Tough job in cricket to bowl to someone like him (Russell). It's one of those ones which goes one way or the other. Who would have thought we



would have got that close Unfortunately, a bit too much. Lots to be encouraged by. A couple of points to work on also," Cummins said after the narrow loss at Eden Gardens.

#### SOUADS:

Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Brevis, Dewald Jasprit Piyush Chawla, Bumrah, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan, Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwena Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shepherd, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Vishnu Vinod, Nehal Wadhera, Luke Wood, Suryakumar Yadav. Sunrisers Hyderabad: Pat

Cummins (c), Abdul Samad, Abhishek Sharma, Aiden Head, Markram. Travis Wanindu Hasaranga, Marco Jansen, Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Singh, Sanvir Klaasen, Heinrich Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Т. Natarajan, Agarwal, Anmolpreet Singh, Mayank Markande, Upendra Singh Yadav, Umran Malik, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Shahbaz Ahmed, Javdev Unadkat, Akash Singh, Jhathavedh Subramanyan.

# Mahipal adds depth to RCB batting

### PTI BENGALURU

On a balmy Monday night, Mahipal Lomror gave Royal Challengers Bengaluru two tantalising options — an 'Impact Player' who can yank the match away from the opposition and a potential successor to Dinesh Karthik, their designated finisher who is playing his last IPL season.

Lomror, who replaced Yash Dayal during the chase of 177 as İmpact sub, made an eightball 17 and assisted Karthik (28, 10b) in knocking off 47 runs in 22 balls that powered RCB to a four-wicket win over Punjab Kings. But his maiden foray into the

world of 'Impact Players' taught Lomror how "weird" that role could be, particularly because of its hurried nature.

"To be honest, it (being an Impact Player) was quite weird when I went into bat. The Impact Player rule is suc that you have to be ready as you can get a call at any time to go in," said Lomror in the post-match press conference. However, the 24-year-old said the RCB management had communicated the possibility of him being used as the substitute player against Punjab. "As the name suggests, you have to make an impact on the game from the word go. The management had discussed it last night. They told me: 'If we are chasing, we might use you down the order.' So mentally, I



and Anuj Rawat came in twice he said. as the No. 8 finisher, similar to Lomror has been quietly upskilling himself at nets once what Lomror did against PBKS at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. the RCB top brass conveyed On the other 10 occasions, it their decision. was either a bowler or a top/middle-order batter who order, and that gave me more over the cow-corner for a six alked in as 'Impact Player' balls to bat B w Impact sub, there's not going to However, Rawat could not make the desired impact as he could be many balls to play. So, whenscore only 16 runs off 27 balls ever I'm going into nets, I just in those two games. try and hit boundaries from the Perhaps, that failed experiment very first ball," he offered. prompted the RCB thinktank to But polishing the skills against give that duty to the big-hitting your own teammates or local Lomror in this IPL. trundlers at nets is guite differ-The Rajasthan-born player, who ent from what a batter gets in a joined Royal Challengers ahead real match situation. of IPL 2022 from Rajasthan Lomror, though, aced the test

too with a first-ball boundary off left-arm pacer Curran. But Lomror soon bettered that effort against Arshdeep. On the third ball of the 18th over, "Earlier, I used to bat up the he smoked the left-arm quick

### PTI CHENNAI

Rachin Ravindra started With a bang and Shivam Dube finished with a flourish as Chennai Super Kings posted a commendable 206 for 5 against Gujarat Titans in an IPL match here on Tuesday.

Rachin made full use of the Powerplay, racing to 46 off 20 balls while Dube, a nightmare for spinners, then used his long levers to whack 51 in only 23 deliveries to increase the challenge of GT batters by manifold. Dube's innings had as many as five sizes

as many as five sixes. In between, skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad's chiselled 46 off 36 balls also was a significant contribution in another impactful batting ormance by the team of hard bouncy track that was on offer.



was prepared." During the IPL 2023, RCB had availed the 'Impact Player' option in 12 matches out of 14,

Royals, was ready for the grind too as it was his best chance to get a place in the eleven. 'This is what the team management wants me to prepare for.

They are very clear because we have a really strong batting proposition. He, however, reduced the equalineup, and this is the only tion to 43 off 21 balls and place where they can use me," thereby the pressure on Karthik

and in the next ball pulled him it now as an for a four through backward

square leg. That over had started with RCB needing 36 runs from 18 balls and three balls later it became a more comfortable 24 runs from 14 balls.

Lomror was not hesitant to give a slice of credit to his senior partner Karthik for keeping his

pulse against racing. "I think batting with him makes against proven performers like Arshdeep Singh and Sam things really easy. He has some Curran at a stadium with an 15-17 years of experience in IPL unusually gripping pitch that He was telling me to stay calm and focus on the next ball, not made shot-making a tricky to get overexcited or not to get too aggressive," he said.

The apprentice has certainly left the master a beaming man

Not to forget CSK's Rs 7.60 crore recruit Sameer Rizvi (14 off 6 balls), who pummelled Rashid Khan (2/49 in 4 overs) for two sixes to mark a memorable IPL debut.

Rachin, who has already become a darling of the CSK fans, enthralled all and sundry with his audacious stroke-play. While he missed out again on a half-century but team's 'spiritual skipper' Mahendra Singh Dhoni would be all smiles knowing that his choice was perfect to the T.

The three sixes — a flick

behind the square and one over long-on off the normally profligate Umesh Yadav and one off Azmatullah Omarzai were hit with so much disdain that it did put Gujarat Titans

he

oozed

**Rachin, Dube power CSK to** 

**206/5 against Gujarat Titans** 

in a spot. There were some crunchy cover drives as well as Ravindra let his skipper Gaikwad breathe a little easy at the other end.

Finally, it was GT's 'Go-To' bowler Rashid, who drew the first blood but more because smart work from Wriddhiman Saha, who

becoming Saha's third victim removed the bails in a flash after the Black Caps opener with the gloves, trying to pull Spencer Johnson, only to end lost his balance and moved out of his crease trying to up edging one behind the whip the delivery. stumps. After that it was Dube, who

Saha's next stumping was way easier as Sai Kishore shortened the length and drew Ajinkya Rahane out of his crease for an indiscreet loft. The ball deviated enough and the keeper completed mere formality.

Gaikwad wasn't as fluent as Rachin to begin with but in his five boundaries and a six, class before

### PTI BENGALURU

Not just a marketable name to promote T20 cricket, he's still got the game. This was the subtle message Virat Kohli sent out amid unfounded chatter surrounding his place in the side ahead of the World Cup's debut appearance in the United States.

Kohli, who is back after a twomonth paternity break, scored a match-winning 77 off 49 balls for Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Monday night against Punjab Kings and deservedly walked away with the player of the match honours.

"I know my name is nowadays quite attached to just promoting the game in many parts of the world when it comes to T20 cricket. But, I've still got it, I guess," said the 35year-old father of two in the post-match presentation.

His comments came in the backdrop of never-ending media speculation surrounding the team's composition for the big event to be jointly hosted by the USA and the West Indies starting June 1.

Former players like Kevin Pietersen have asked whether Kohli would make the Indian squad purely on merit or for being a megastar who will pull

# My name these days is attached to just promoting T20 cricket but I have still got it: Kohli

in fans. Kohli averages over 50 in the format and has a strike rate of 138.15.

On Monday night, hallmark of Kohli's classy knock was the way he stepped out to dispatch the fast bowlers over the extra cover boundary

The former India captain has nothing left to prove but he realises the need for constant evolution in T20 format.

'Well I mean you have to (make additions to your game)," he said when asked about going aerial against the pacers on the off-side.

Pacers on the on-side. "People know I play the cover drive pretty well so they're not going to allow me to hit gaps and with guys like KG (Kagiso Rabada) and Arshdeep (Singh) as well, he's tall. So, I mean, if they're hitting length, you have to create some momentum in the ball.

"And once you're closer to the ball, you kind of negate the bounce that's going to happen. You meet it earlier. So, I mean, you have to come up with a game plan here and there and try to keep improving your



TWO MONTHS: Kohli had game," he explained at the post-match presentation. IT WAS SURREAL NOT TO missed the five-match Test series against England as he was overseas for the birth of BE RECOGNISED FOR

his second child. The long break allowed him to spend much needed quality time with his family and not being

recognised on the streets was something that he enjoyed the most.

"We were not in the country.

soaring for a maximum. Dube had the composed Daryl Mitchell for company, who also chipped in with an unbeaten 20-ball 24 in a stand

of 57 runs for the fourth wicket in 5.5 overs

> loud noises and then you're back in it all again.

> just plonked his front-foot

and bludgeoned Sai Kishore

for two monstrous sixes and

also sent Johnson's delivery

"But it was beautiful. It's an amazing experience to just be another person on the road and not be recognised and just carry on about life that normally people would on a daily basis," he said. Kohli is also forever grateful to

the loyal and passionate RCB

fans who keep backing the

team that is yet to win the IPL.

"It's been going on for years

and you know, people talk about a lot of other things

when you play sport. The achievements, the stats, the

We were at a place where people were not recognising us. Just time together as a family, just to feel normal for two months. For me, for us as a family, it was a surreal

experience. "Of course, having two kids, things become totally different from a family perspective. So just the ability to be together, the connections that you make with your older child, it's amazing.

"I mean, I couldn't have been more grateful to God for the opportunity that I got to spend time with my family?

For Kohli, not being mobbed is a luxury and he loved every bit of his time away from the limelight.

"And yeah, just the place that we were in, I was telling the guys (RCB teammates) that when we came back, the voices back home felt that much louder

I couldn't look up because I was just not used to being called my name for two months. And then immediately you hear these

numbers. Look at the end of the day when you look back you're not going to think of the numbers and the stats. "It's the memories that you create. Famously, Rahul bhai (India head coach) in the change room nowadays says exactly the same to us. When you play, you play your heart out because you're going to miss these times when you're with your friends in the

change room playing in front of fans. 'So the relationship that's happened organically over so many years it's something that I can never ever forget. Just the love and the appreciation and the backing I've received for so

many years that's been amazing," Kohli added.