**WORLD 8** 

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

BIDEN, TRUMP WIN LOUISIANA

Late City Vol.34 Issue 84 \*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH

DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR

**Published From** 

RCB EYE BETTER **OUTING FROM BOWLERS** 12 SPORTS

## Established 1864 ne ploneer

NEW DELHI, MONDAY MARCH 25, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

# Defiant Kejriwal to Work from Jail

NEW DELHI Arow has erupted amid the debate on whether AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal can continue to work as Chief Minister from prison as the national Capital ruling party claimed that Kejriwal has issued his first order to the Government, instructing Water Minister Atishi to solve water and sewer related problems in some areas of the city, while being in Directorate Enforcement Directorate custody. While the BJP remarked that the situation has played a biggest mockery

on the citizens as how can a person holding a Constitutional post "run" a Government being in a custody as an accused in multi crore liquor-gate scam. "I have come to know that a few areas of Delhi have been facing problems related to water and sewerage, that is why I am worried because I am in jail and because of that people of Delhi should not face any problem. Summer is also coming...where there is a shortage of water, deploy water tankers in sufficient quantity and give orders to the Chief Secretary and officers so that the public does not face any trouble. Immediate and appropriate solution should be taken to address the public's problem," Kejriwal said in a note to



ZERO-WATER DAY IS

NIGH IN BENGALURU



According to jail manual, an help him be a part of the inmate can only hold two Delhi Government's day-tomeetings in a week, which would make it difficult for Kejriwal to carry out his Directorate responsibilities as Chief cognisance of Delhi minister Minister. The only measure that could facilitate Kejriwal's governance from within the confinement was if he was put under house arrest. The Lieutenant to water and sewerage, Governor has the power to convert any building into a prison, and if Kejriwal can convince him to put him under house arrest - it would

Delhi Govern... day functioning. Enforcement

taken Atishi's statement that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal sent her directions from the agency's custody to initiate public welfare works related official sources said on Sunday. Sources the ED will conduct an investigation to ascertain if these directions from the arrested chief

minister were in line with the special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court's order issued to the ED and Kejriwal during his custody period. AAP has maintained that there will be no change in the leadership, even if that means Kerjriwal functions as the Chief Minister from jail.

AAP leader and Delhi Minister Atishi praised Kejriwal for issuing directions pertaining to the Delhi Government's water department while being in

ED custody. Later addressing a press conference, Atishi said the directions, received late on Saturday, brought tears to her eyes with Kejriwal showing concern for the people of Delhi despite his own plight.

"Arvind Kejriwal ji has sent me a letter and a direction."

me a letter and a direction. On reading it, I was in tears. I kept thinking who is this man, who is in prison, but is still thinking about Delhi residents' water and sewage problems. Only Arvind Kejriwal can do this because he considers himself a family member of Delhi's two crore people," she said.

people," she said.
"Who thinks like this even in a situation? Even from jail, he is a person who is thinking about the people of Delhi," she said. The Chief Minister also directed for deploying enough water tankers in areas where there is scarcity to strengthen supply ahead of the approaching summer months, Atishi said.

Taking a dig at Kejriwal and Atishi, Delhi BJP MP Manoj Tiwari hit out at Kejriwal, calling his instruction from ED custody to the Water Minister scripted and his arrest a cause of celebration for the people of the city.
"In ED's custody there is a

culprit and taking his reference today a script has been written that water and sewer-related facilities in Delhi are disorganised." Continued on Page 2

## **INDIA** Bloc set to rally for Delhi CM

SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

Demonstrating the strength and unity of the Opposition, INDIA alliance parties—Congress, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the left parties—have announced to hold a "maha rally" at Delhi Ramlila Maidan on March 31 against Maidan on March 31 against the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal to "safeguard the country's interests and democracy" "We will hold a 'maha rally' at Ramlila Maidan on March 31 against what is happening in the country. happening in the country. The top leadership of the INDIA bloc will participate in the event," Delhi Minister and AAP's Delhi convenor Gopal Rai during a press conference on Sunday said. The Minister asserted that The Minister asserted that India's democracy is in danger following the arrest of kejriwal in the alleged excise policy-linked moneylaundering case Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday night from his official residence.

Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) block leaders country are in danger. All the INDIA bloc parties will

hold this 'maha rally' to safeguard the country's interests and democracy," Rai added. The Congress' Delhi unit chief Arvinder Singh Lovely alleged that Opposition parties are not being given a level playing field and highlighted the freezing of his party's accounts and the arrest of the Delhi CM as

which show

elections time. Calling the rally as a call to Party. "Democracy and the safeguard the country's

hampering democracy and

stifling Opposition during

events

democracy, Lovely added, "The March 31 'maha rally' will not only be a political one but a call to save the country's democracy and raise voices against the BJP-led Centre." The Opposition leaders from the INDIA bloc have also met Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar regarding the issue ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections 2024. The delegation comprised leaders from the Congress, the TMC, the CPM, the Aam Aadmi Party, DMK, NCP, SP and Samajwadi

Continued on Page 2



Former IAF chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria, former MP Varaprasad Rao join BJP in the presence of Union Minister Anurag Thakur Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer Jindal joins BJP on Sunday



Former Congress MP Naveen

## Further fissures in Oppostion alliance against BJP

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA NEW DEI HI

With the campaigning for the Lok Sabha polls peaking up, Congress "Big attitude in the crucial States — Bihar and Maharashtra— has hit a roadblock in the seat sharing stakeholders of Opposition alliance INDIA

bloc. Congress is reluctant to "accept" the "diktat" of RJD offers of merely six/seven seats in the 40 Parliamentary constituencies of Bihar. "This is perennial problem in Congress which is not ready

to accept its diminishing size. Nitish Kumar (JDU leader and Bihar CM), Mamata Banerjee (TMC supremo and West Bengal CM) exited from the INDIA bloc all due to Congress big brother attitude. Had the alliance worked it would have been in a position to hold the juggernaut of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi. We are yet to finalise the seats and others have started extensive

campaigning. The only hopes of INDIA bloc of doing good were from Bihar and Maharashtra,' Parliamentarian rued. RJD and Congress are stuck

Bihar, with several Congress leaders expressing unhappiness while RJD has expressed uneasiness for the grand old party decision to include former party MP Pappu Yadav in the party. Yadav merged his Jan Adhikar Party (JAP) with the Congress last week. He is husband of Congress Rajya Sabha MP Ranjeet Ranjan. In 2015, the RJD expelled him after he kept on targeting Lalu Prasad Yadav over the question of

succession in the party. RJD, which is also planning to as against its demand of bring in one of the daughter more than ten tickets. In



electoral politics, has already 19 constituencies, Congress announced its candidates for candidates were in the fray four seats where polling is scheduled in the first phase on April 19. Both Congress and RJD insiders said the Lalu-led party was not willing to give Congress more than five to six seats of its suprmeo Lalu in 2019, while the RJD contested

from nine. The rest of the seats went to the RLSP Upendra Kushwaha,

Vikassheel Insaan

Party (VIP) of Mukesh Sahani, and Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) of Jitan Ram Manjhi. Both Kushwaha and Manjhi are now part of NDA.

Former Bihar president Anil Sharma and former party MP Nikhil Kumar also taken on the RJD chief over the "unilateral seatsharing decision" for firstphase seats and he also objected to incumbent BPCC chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh's decision to invite Lalu to the Patna. Another decision of the RJD that is said to have rubbed the Congress the wrong way is to allocate Begusarai to the CPI. CPI general secretary D Raja who recently met Lalu and TejashwiYadav has announced Awadhesh Rai's candidature from the seat. Similarly in Maharashtra too, the INDIA bloc which held a massive show of strength in Mumbai last week where all its alliance top leaders — Rahul Gandh, Sharad Pawar, Tejashwi Yadav, Farooq Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti were present.

Continued on Page 2

### **BJP** electoral army **Party Announces 5th list: Naveen Jindal, Former**

Fresh soldiers join the

### IAF Chief RKS Bhadauria, Kangana, Arun Govil

RAJESH KUMAR

Bollywood actress
Kangana Ranaut, Actor
Arun Govil who played
Ram in popular TV serial
Ramayan, former judge of Calcutta High Court, Justice Abhijit Ganguly, and Industrial Navin Jindal (who resigned from the Arun Govil Congress today) are figured in the BJP's fifth list of candidates for seats in 16 States for the Lok Sabha elections, released on

Sunday.

BJP sitting MPs Varun
Gandhi, Union Ministers
General VK Singh (Retd),
Anant Kumar Hegde and Ashwini Chowbey are among those who have been dropped for the Lok Sabha polls. There has been no announcement

embattled MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the former chief of the Wrestling Federation of India. Industrialist and former

Congress MP Naveen Jindal, who joined the BJP today, has been fielded from the Kurukshetra seat in Haryana. Jindal who quit the Congress and joined the BJP on Sunday, represented Kurukshetra constituency in Lok Sabha between 2004-14 as a Congress MP, said he wants to contribute to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

temple in Ayodhya has also been realised. Actor Arun Govil, who played Ram in popular TV serial Ramayan, has been

Jindal further stated that the





fielded by BJP from Meerut Lok Sabha seat. The BJP named Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut as the party Lok Sabha candidate from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh.

After Ranaut's name announced from Mandi, she said she was elated officially join the party. "My beloved Bharat Bhartiya Janta own party, Bharatiya Janta Party

had my has always agenda of "Viksit Bharat". unconditional support, today the national leadership has announced me as their Lok Sabha dream of having a Ram candidate from my birth place Himachal Pradesh, Mandi (constituency), I (constituency), I by the high abide

command's decision on contesting Lok Sabha polls. I feel honoured and elated to officially join the party. I look forward to be a worthy karyakarta and a reliable public servant," Kangana Ranaut posted on X.

In 2022, Ranaut said she has a keen interest in politics but has no plans to enter it professionally. The news of Ranaut taking the political plunge comes months after she hinted at entering electoral politics when she offered prayers at Gujarat's Dwarkadhish temple in

November 2023. As part of the fifth list, a total of 111 candidates have been fielded for seats in Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Guiarat. Haryana, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Sikkim, Odisha, Mizoram,

Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh. The party gave Lok Sabha ticket to former judge of Calcutta gh Court, Justice Abhijit Ganguly, from

Tamluk. He is the first retired judge to join electoral politics, moving away from the way the judiciary has so far distanced itself. Arjun Singh and Tapas

Roy, who recently rejoined the BJP from the TMC, will contest the Barrackpore and Kolkata North seats respectively. Senior leader K Surendran will contest against Rahul Gandhi from Kerala's Wayanad.

Continued on Page 2

## Dogs conjure up images while following verbal commands

PTI NEW DELHI

 $K_{\text{command words such as}}^{\text{nown to respond to}}$ "sit", dogs have now been found to conjure up mental representations when they hear known words referring to objects such as a ball, according to a new research that analysed their brain activity. The researchers said it did not matter how many object words a dog understood -known words activated mental representations anyway.

This suggested that the ability is generally present in dogs and not just in some exceptional canines knowing the names of many objects, they said. "Your dog understands more than he or she shows signs of," said Lilla Magyari from Hungary's Eötvös Loránd University and co-first author of the study published in the "Current Biology" journal.

"Dogs are not merely learning a specific behaviour to certain words but they might actually understand the meaning of some individual words as humans do," Magyari said.



understand words referential manner, as humans do, can reshape the way scientists think about humans' uniqueness in using and understanding language, the researchers said. It also has important implications for theories and models of language evolution, they said. For the study, the researchers recruited 18 dog owners and had them say words for toys that their dogs knew. The dogs were then presented with

objects -- sometimes matching

the word their owner said and

brain's electrical activity was measured. The brain activity recordings showed differences in patterns when the dogs were shown

matching objects against those when shown non-matching ones, the researchers said and added that this was evidence of dogs understanding words. They also found a greater difference in the brain activity patterns for words that the dogs knew better. While the team also thought that dogs' ability

to understand words depended on them having a large vocabulary of object words, the results showed otherwise. "Because typical dogs learn instruction words rather than

object names, and there are only a handful of dogs with a large vocabulary of object words, we expected that dogs' capacity for referential understanding of object words will be linked to the number of object words they know; but it wasn't," said Magyari.

The researchers now want to know if this ability to understand words through mental representations is specific to dogs or is present in The finding that dogs may have sometimes not -- and their other mammals as well.



## Mamata Government will fall after LS polls: BJP

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA** ■ KOLKATA

Amid rising decibel of electoral drum-beats ahead of the parliamentary elections, the Bengal BJP has guaranteed the collapse of the Trinamool Congress Government in the

Reminiscent of what Home Minister Amit Shah predicted months ago from a rally at Suri in Birbhum district Bengal BJP president Sukanta Majumdar has said that the TMC Government would not last its full term of five years and that it would collapse well before 2026 when its term will come to an end.

When asked to comment on a

recent media interview that whether the saffron party was confident of seeing the back of the TMC before 2026, he said, "it is not the question of whether the BJP is confident or not ... it is the question of fact and the fact is the TMC is crumbling from within ... they will not last its full term if they fail to win more seats than we

Earlier he told agencies that his party was confident about winning 35 out of 42 seats, a target that has been set by Shah. We are confident about winning 35 seats ... and if we can win more seats than the TMC then this Government will not last its full term ... it will collapse way before that," he said. In 2019 the saffron outfit sprung a surprise in Bengal winning 18 seats sweeping into its pocket almost the entire votes that the Left Front earlier got. The TMC got 22 while the Congress won in 2 seats. Earlier, Shah had told at a rally in Birbhum that there would be no TMC Government in Bengal after 2024. "In 2024 we will win and after that in 2025 the TMC Government will collapse," he said. On whether the BJP was trying to do a Maharashtra in Bengal Majumdar said that it would not be the BJP but the so-called "dynastic politics" within the TMC that would



lead to the fall of Chief Minister responsible for the collapse of Mamata Banerjee's empire. Maharashtra Government "Don't think that the BJP was rather it was the dynastic pol-

itics that brought down the Government their ... it was the love of (NCP chief) Sharad Pawar for his daughter and (Shiv Sena president) Uddhav Thackeray's affection for his son that led to the collapse of that Government," Majumdar said apparently indicating at the old-versus-new debate in the

Bengal ruling outfit.
While the 'old generation' lobby is represented by the Chief Minister and her confidants like party veterans like Saugato Roy and Sudip Bandopadhyay et al the new generation faction is reportedly led by Banerjee's nephew and party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee. Majumdar said that in Bengal

too "a leader's love for her Bhaipo (read nephew) bring about the downfall of the

The BJP presently has 74 MLAs in the Bengal Assembly and the TMC has 229 legislators. This means that the BJP will need another 74 legislators to form the Government which was very much possible in the State, a former TMC minister said. "Truth to be told there is no rift in the TMC ... a narrative of rift is being scripted by the powers that be in Delhi ... all with the consent of Mamata Baneriee ... because she cannot withstand the might of Narendra Modi and the onslaught of ED and CBI ruption her family is sunk in ... after the elections she ... rather her nephew will have to choose between splitting the party and joining the BJP or follow in the footsteps of Arvind Kejriwal or Hemant Soren which he does not have the courage to do," the former minister said adding Majumdar had only dropped a hint of what was going to come after this elections.

CPI(M) too said that "when Ajit Pawar could not withstand the pressure of central agencies how this small boy (read Abhishek) will do that ... they simply will have to handover Bengal to BJP or go to

## Mahua writes to ECI after agency raids

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

 $F^{ormer\,Trinamool\,Congress}_{\text{MP Mohua Moitra has}}$ written to the Election Commission of India against the Central agencies alleging how they conducted raids in her properties in disregard of the model code of conduct in the run up to the general elec-

A day after the Central agencies conducted raids at four properties linked to Moitra and her family members in Kolkata and Nadia, the Trinamool Congress' candidate for the Krishnagar Lok Sabha con-stituency wrote to Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, "despite knowing about my candidacy, the Čentral Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has deliberately chosen to conduct four consecutive raids



on four of my separate prop-

"This was done with the sole intention of hindering my campaign process and creating a negative perception about me in the run-up to the poll day. It is pertinent to mention that the so-called search and seizure operations conducted by the CBI resulted in absolutely zero fruition as the CBI admittedly went back emptyhanded."

Moitra had been expelled from the Lok Sabha in December last year for her alleged involvement in a cash-forquery case where she had asked questions on issues related to some business houses and later was found guilty by a parliamentary committee of taking bribes from a rival business interests to ask questions against the former business

Moitra won the Krishnagar seat in 2019 defeating her nearest Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rival by 63,218 votes. The saffron party is likely to nominate a scion of the Krishnagar royal family, insiders said. Krishnagar is named after Maharaja Krishnachandra Roy who was a subsidiary of Nawab of Murshidabad Murshida Ouli Khan and maintained a court of nine gems one of who was Gopal Bhand a legendary equivalent of Tenali Raman of Birbal. Moitra said that the agencies could find nothing in the searches saying: "This is not surprising as such illegal measures have been undertaken by CBI to please their political

masters at the Centre. As the ECI had earlier taken proactive "steps to ensure a level playing field for all politgating agency, which is under the control of the ruling dispensation at the Centre, must be appropriately saddled to ensure that in the name of investigation, they are not carrying out political biddings which favour the party in power at the Centre," Moitra wrote in her letter.

Rejecting her claim BJP's Samik Bhattacharya however said that Moitra had a habit of throwing tantrums and this time round she was afraid of losing the elections which was why she was raising bizarre questions. "This search is the part of an ongoing process and no case was registered after the election was declared ... she (Moitra) knows that she will lose this time round and so she is throwing tantrums,' Bhattacharya said.

## Had no idea who bought bonds for party, says TMC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $E^{\text{ven as the electoral bond}}_{\text{controversy caught wind}}$  in Bengal politics with the Opposition parties like the Left Front beginning to raise such issues in public meetings, the Trinamool Congress said it had no idea as to which parties purchased bonds in its favour. Speaking on the issue party general secretary and spokesperson Kunal Ghosh on Saturday said that the TMC had put drop boxes outside its party office and unknown people had dropped electoral bonds inside it making it impossible for the outfit to know who paid what amount. He would however not reply to



preserved in the CCTV footages.

"Some people are asking about TMC getting hundreds of crores in electoral bonds ... but there was nothing wrong in it as there was a law to that effect in place and like many other parties the TMC had taken advantage of that law to receive funds," he said adding quickly that it was not possible for the party leadership to

was a drop box outside the party office and the donors dropped the bonds in that box... the bond would have no name, only an alphanumeric code. It was not said anywhere, which company or who the donor was." He also said that it was foolish

know who paid what as "there

to bask questions to the TMC leadership because the party was not in a position to assign big contracts to the persons who donated money. CPI(M) central committee

member Sujan Chakrabarty however said that the transactions made through the electoral bonds had made things clear how the TMC used corporate houses to loot the pub-

## Congress, CPM suspect each other as battle line for LS polls drawn in Kerala

 $B_{\text{teams have taken up posi-}}^{\text{attle lines are drawn and}}$ tions in the electoral arena of Kerala. But the question being asked by the general public is "who is taking on whom". Is it a CPI(M) v BJP contest or the Congress-led UDF locking horns with the CPI(M) and BJP combine?

On Sunday, Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly V D Satheeshan alleged that there is a secret deal between the Marxists and the BJP to ensure the defeat of UDF candidates. But the The last few days have seen member of then team that Congress and the BJP were on the same side of Hindutva politics, and the former alone could save secularism, liberalism, pluralism and freedom of thought and expression in the

Referring to Saturday's petition filed by the Kerala Government against President Draupudi Murmu and

Governor Arif Mohammed nitely file a defamation case Khan in the Supreme Court for delaying assent to Bills enacted by the Legislative Assembly, the Congress leader said it was a gimmick and an election stunt. "They want the people in

the State believe that there was no secret dealings between them and the BJP. The CPI(M)'s opposition to the BJP is for public consumption. Had they been serious in the complaint that the President and Governor were delaying assent to the Bills. They could have done it long back," said Satheeshan.

Satheeshan had alleged that the candidate Thiruvananthapuram Rajeev Chandrasekhar and CPI(M) leader E P Jayarajan were business partners. "The duo jointly own Niramaya, an Ayurvedic resort in Kannoor and it is just the tip of the ice berg," said Satheeshan. ' Jayarajan said he would defiagainst the Congress leader for peddling lies which he said was against the norms prescribed by the Election Commission of

Political commentators are of the view that there can be no smoke without fire. "Some of the candidates fielded by the NDA add credence to the allegations of Satheeshan. The NDA candidates at Kottayam and Idukki are unlikely to get back their security deposits," said Sudheer Damodaran, a keen political commentator based in Thrissur who was a

Modi at Varanasi in 2014. Ramesh Chennithala, Congress Working Committee Member, pointed out that the enthusiasm shown by the ED in arresting Kavitha, daughter of former Telangana Chief Minister Chandraseskara Rao and Aravind Kejriwal (chief minister of Delhi) is missing when it comes to Kerala where

under the ED's scanner for financial embezzlement and irregularities. Ramesh pointed out that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his daughter Veena Mohammed Riyaz are being probed by ED in connection with pay-offs received from sand mining companies.

Kevin Peter, founder, Christian Alliance for Social Action (CASA) is of the view that the BJP's decision to go include BJDS, a fringe outfit promoted by the Eezhava community, is sure to boomerang on the party. "BJDS and the SNDP the Church and Christians from the safe shelter offered by the BJP. This has antagonized the Christian community despite the fact that the BJP has been responsive to the suggestio0ns by the Church, The father-son duo of Vellappalli Natesan and Tushar Vellappalli has done lot of damage to the BJP's prospectus," said Peter.

#### Rare Indian felines get international protection ARCHANA JYOTI threats such as habitat loss and poaching. Experts emphasize

Much to the delight of the wildlife lovers, two elusive cats-Palla's, cat also known as the grumpiest feline in the world due to its look, and the Central Asian Lynx cat- both found in India's highest cold zones like in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh have been included in the UN list of migratory species for better conservation.

Having unique characteristics and habitats, their inclusion in Appendix II of the Convention the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) has been much awaited demand from wildlife experts seeking the number of both the cats in India are on decline. This would be a significant step toward their conservation and management, particularly in regions like India where information on distribution and status is limited. Both species, known for their elusive behavior, face various threats, and concerted



efforts are required to ensure

subspecies of the Eurasian lynx, is sparsely distributed in regions such as India's trans-Himalayan area of Ladakh. Sightings of this medium-sized carnivore are rare, and its population appears to be declining. The inclusion of the Appendix II encourages international cooperation for its conservation, leveraging networks established for the protection of species like the snow leopard, with which it shares its habitat.

Similarly, the Pallas' cat,

their survival. The Central Asian lynx, a

primarily found in Central Asia but also recorded in regions like Ladakh, Sikkim, and

the importance of targeted conservation measures for these species, especially in areas like Ladakh where they coexist with threats like free-ranging According to some research, Pallas's cats reproduce more

readily when prey is abundant so increased availability may be linked to their increasing presence, though scientists are uncertain about the linkage. Prey overall is limited but may have increased in certain parts, as per the studies. The CMS listing could facilitate

transboundary cooperation, information sharing, and coordinated actions to address these challenges and ensure the survival of these elusive felids throughout their range, say the wildlife experts. Neeraj Mahar, a project

scientist at the Dehradunbased Wildlife Institute of India (WII), emphasized the significant impact of including the Pallas' cat and the Central

Appendix II for both global and Indian conservation endeavors, stating that both feline species face threats like poaching for their fur. In India, sightings of both the

Pallas' cat and the Eurasian

lynx are rare, and there exists limited data on their distribution and population status. The inclusion in the UN body comes as a responsibility for India, as a signatory to the CMS, to take proactive measures for these species. This includes focusing conservation efforts in their natural habitats within the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan regions, as well as collaborating with neighboring

survival," he said. According to some research, Pallas's cats reproduce more readily when prey is abundant so increased availability may be linked to their increasing presence, though scientists are uncertain about the linkage. Prey overall is limited but may have increased in certain parts,

## **Defiant Kejriwal...**

From Page 1 Earlier, Atishi said Kejriwal directed issue to instructions to the chief secretary and other officers in this regard. He also suggested seeking the help of Lt Governor VK Saxena, if needed, and expects that he will extend all assistance, she

"Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has been reviewing the ongoing works and developments all departments. All the projects and matters have been under his supervision. Now he is under the custody of the Central Government...

said.

Summers are also coming and several places face water supply problems, so he has given directions on how to address the issue... department and the officers will be directed as per the directions given by the CM," she said. Kejriwal (55) was arrested

by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday from his official residence in connection with an excise policy-linked money-laundering case. A court on Friday sent the AAP national convenor to the central agency's custody till March 28.

## **INDIA Bloc set to...**

From Page 1

Since Kejriwal's arrest, that many AAP leaders termed as 'imminent', the Opposition leaders have in unison claimed that the BJP is scared of the outcome of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls and is acting out of panic to create problems for the Opposition.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said, "While capturing all the institutions, including the media, breaking up parties, extorting money from companies, freezing the accounts of the main Opposition party were not enough, now the arrest of an

elected Chief Ministers has also become a common thing." He further added that 'INDIA will give a befitting reply to this.

Even those no longer with the alliance, including Mamata Banerjee led Trinamool Congress, have extended their support to Delhi CM, as party leaders rushed to Delhi to be part of the Opposition meeting related to Kejriwal who are planning to knock the doors of Nirvachan Sadan.

The AAP has organised mega protests on Sunday against the ruling BJP Government by taking out candle marches and burning effigies of the Narendra Modi Government in all of the 70 Assembly seats in the national Capital.

The party said in a statement, There will be a candle march and effigy burning across Delhi tomorrow in protest against the dictatorship of the BJP and the fake arrest of Arvind Kejriwal. Now the people of Delhi have come out on the streets in protest against the arrest of CM Arvind Kejriwal. We all have to stand together as the shield of Arvind Kejriwal. The arrest of Arvind Kejriwal will prove to be the last nail to oust the Modi Government from

### Further fissures in Oppostion alliance...

From Page 1 Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) is

still struggling to wrap up seat sharing allegedly because of a lack of coordination between the Congress and the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) and the Sharad Pawar led NCP. According to sources, the talks are stuck because the others in the alliance and the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) of Prakash Ambedkar which is in talks with the MVA, have staked claim on seats the party wants. According to the VBA, the differences between the Congress and the other parties extend to at least 15 constituencies.

There is a restlessness within

the Congress leadership as their share of seats has come down to 16-18 constituencies in the 48 Lok Sabha seats from Maharashtra and if done, its shall be the lowest ever for the grand old party. In 2019, the Congress's share was 26 constituencies and it contested 25, giving Palghar to the Bahujan Vikas Aghadi.

Thackeray has staked claim on a Congress bastion Sangli after Mumbai North West. From the Congress, former Maharashtra Vasantdada grandson and young party leader Vishal Patil is among the contenders for the ticket. Congress claim on Wardha in the Vidarbha region has also

faced roadblocks from the Sharad Pawar's NCP which is adamant to contest Bhandara-Gondia, the home constituency of state Congress president Nana Patole

The VBA has staked claim on seats such as Solapur, Akola, and Amaravati, which the Congress wants to contest. VBA wrote to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge complaining about the "lazy' attitude of the MVA, and claimed that the "lack of concurrence between the Congress and the Sena (UBT) in at least 10 seats and between the Congress, the NCP (SP), and SS (UBT) in at least five

### **Fresh** soldiers join...

From Page 1

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan will contest from Sambalpur and the party's spokesperson Sambit Patra will try his luck from Puri once again after losing out in a close contest in 2019.

The party fielded Maneka Gandhi from Sultanpur, while Uttar Pradesh Minister Jitin Prasada has replaced Varun Gandhi in Pilibhit. Sita Soren

will fight from Dumka (Jharkhand).

The BJP dropped Varun Gandhi from Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh and allotted the seat to former Congress leader Jitin Prasad. The party has replaced General VK Singh (Retd) from Ghaziabad and allotted the seat to Atul Garg. Singh on Sunday informed that he will not be contesting the upcoming Lok Sabha elections as he wants to serve the country in a different way. Taking to social media platform X, Singh informed that he will not be contesting the upcoming Lok Sabha

Election 2024. The BJP has dropped former Union Minister Anant Kumar Hegde from Uttara Kannada

constituency, Union Minister Ashwini Choubey has been dropped from Buxar. New entrant Sita Soren will contest from Dumka. Other remarkable mentions

from the 5th list are Nityanand Rai from Ujiarpur, Giriraj Singh from Begusarai, Ravi Shankar Prasad from Patna Sahib, Jagadish Shettar from Belagaum, from Sudhakaran Chikkaballapur, Pratap

Sarangi from Balasore, Aparajita Sarangi from Bhubaneshwar, From Uttar Pradesh, it has fielded Raghav Lakhanpal from Saharanpur, Sarvesh

Satish Gautam from Aligarh,

Durviksy Singh Shakya from

from Moradabad,

Badaun, Chhatrapal Singh Gangwar from Bareilly, Awasthi from Ramesh Kanpur, Rajrani Rawat from Barabanki, Dr Arvind Gaud from Bahraich. From West Bengal, it has fielded Dr Jayanta Roy from

Jalpaiguri (SC), Rajú Bista from Darjeeling, Kartick Paul from Raiganj, Silbhadra Dutta from Dum Dum, Swapan Majumdar from Barasat, Arup Kanti Digar from Arambagh (SC), Agnimitra Paul from Medinapur, Ashim Sarkar from Bardhaman Purba (SC) and Dilip Ghosh from Bardhaman-Durgapur. The BJP announced its candidates for 17 Lok Sabha seats in Bihar, dropping three sitting MPs, including Union Minister Ashwani Kumar Choubey. According to the list Choubey, who was elected from Buxar for the second consecutive term in 2019, was replaced by Mithilesh Tiwari, a senior BJP leader and a former MLA. The party also dropped its incumbent MPs Chedi Pawasan and Ajay Kumar Nishad from Sasaram Muzaffarpur constituencies respectively.

The BJP fielded former MLA Shivesh Ram for Sasaram, while Raj Bhushan Nishad, a greenhorn in the Lok Sabha polls, will contest the Muzaffarpur seat on a party ticket.Vivek Thakur, a Rajya Sabha member, was fielded from Nawada, where the BJP would be contesting this time,

instead of its ally Lok Janshakti Party (LJP). All the remaining 14 candidates are sitting MPs, who will seek reelection from their respective seats.

The BJP announced the names of its candidates for 18 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha, while dropping four sitting MPs from the list. The nominees for Cuttack, Jajpur and Kandhamal Lok Sabha constituencies are yet to be named by the party. The party has fielded four women -Aparajita Sarangi (Bhubaneswar), Sangeeta Kumari Deo (Bolangir), Keshari Malvika Deo (Kalahandi) and Anita Subhadarshini (Aska). The Anita

sitting MPs who were denied

BJP tickets this time are Suresh Pujari (Bargarh), Union Minister Bisheswar Tudu (Mayrbhanj), Nitish Gang Deb (Sambalpur) and Basant Panda (Kalahandi). The party has nominated Pradeep Purohit in place of Pujari while Union Education Dharmendra Minister Pradhan replaced Nitish Gang Deb in Sambalpur.

Rairangpur MLA Naba Charan Majhi has replaced Bisheswar Tudu in Mayurbhaj seat. Malvika Keshari Deo is made the new candidate in place of Basant Kumar Panda in Kalahandi LS seat.

The sitting MPs who have been retained are Jual Oram (Sundergarh),

Chandra Sarangi (Balasore),

Sarangi (Bhubaneswar). The other BJP candidates are Ananta Nayak (Keonjhar), Abhimanyu Sethi (Bhadrak), Rudra Pany (Dhenkanal), Baijayant (Kendrapara), Balabhadra Majhi (Nabarangpur), Bibhu Tarai (Jagatsinghpur ), Sambit

Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo

(Bolangir) and Aparajita

Patra (Puri), Pradeep Panigrahy (Berhampur) and Kaliram Majhi (Koraput). In Rajasthan, the party has retained two sitting MPs --Sukhbir Singh Jaunapuria of Tonk-Sawai Madhopur and Bhagirath Chaudhary from Ajmer. Chaudhary was fielded in the assembly elections in December last

year but he lost the polls.

## Rape of minor girl sparks protest in city

Afour-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 34-year-old brother of her teacher at a tuition centre in east Delhi's Pandav Nagar area, sparking a protest in the area with people vandalising some vehicles. According to the police, the alleged incident happened on Saturday and the victim has been referred to All victim has been referred to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)-Delhi from Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital. They said an FIR has been registered the accused arrested They also said inflammatory messages about the case are being circulated through WhatsApp to spoil the atmosphere, and urged people to

Meanwhile Delhi Law Minister Atishi wrote to Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, demanding strongest possible action is taken against the perpetrators of this horrendous crime. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva strongly condemned the incident and demanded strict action against the accused.

Police said the protesters gathered near the house of the accused and vandalised some vehicles over rumours that no action was being taken. They said a large number of police



personnel and paramilitary forces have been deployed in the area to maintain law and order. Deputy Commissioner of Police (east) Apoorva Gupta rushed to the spot.

"Last night (Saturday), a case of rape involving a four-yeargirl surfaced in the Mandawali police station. The police registered a case under appropriate sections and arrested the suspect on the same day," she said in a statement. There are many false messages and rumours circulating on

social media about this case, she said. "The girl is absolutely fine. She was sent to AIIMS because the One Stop Centre for children there provides better facilities

compared to Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital," said the DCP, adding that the girl's parents are with her.

Additional Commissioner of Police (eastern range) Sagar Singh Kalsi said, "We have arrested the accused and detained some of his family members. Some locals vandalised a few vehicles after they received some messages that no arrest has been made so far. Police force deployment has been made, no one will be allowed to breach law and order." The girl is out of dan-

ger, he said. The officer further said the girl is being counselled apart from being given other assistance.

Sources said that after the alleged incident, the girl was crying and told her parents that while the teacher was away, his brother raped her at the tuition centre and also threatened her of dire consequences if she reveals the matter to anyone.

## AAP attacks BJP silence on ties with Delhi liquor scam prime accused

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP has questioned the silence maintained by the BJP over its relationship with Sarath Chandra Reddy, the prime accused and the the prime accused and the "kingpin" of the so-called Delhi liquor excise scam, whose companies donated Rs 60 crore to the BJP through electoral bonds. The AAP has written a letter to BJP president JP Nadda seeking answers to its three questions be made public now that money trail to BJP account has been established by electoral bond donations received from Reddy's firms.

AAP senior leaders Saurabh Bharadwaj and Jasmine Shah, together with AAP Chief Spokesperson Ms. Priyanka Kakkar, held a joint press conference in this connection at the party headquarters and raised questions about the relationship between the Reddy and the BJP.

Addressing a press conference, Bharadwaj said that the BJP has remained silent as to why the party was receiving funds from Reddy, the owner of a well-known pharmaceutical company - Aurobindo Pharma.

The senior AAP leader expressed his surprise over the BJP's silence in this entire matter. "Their prominent

leaders and ministers, including Anurag Thakur, Smriti Irani, Manoj Tiwari, Virendra Sachdeva, everyone is silent. Every person is stunned as to what has happened. How did this matter come to light?," he

press meet, "We want to raise three key questions in the case - What is the relationship between Reddy and BJP? Who met him from the (BJP) party and what was their conversation? And why were people, the (Central Bureau of Investigation) CBI and the (Enforcement Directorate) ED not informed about receiving funds from Reddy?' The AAP reported that Reddy had acquired several liquor shops in specific zones of Delhi under the recently annulled Delhi liquor policy. He underwent questioning on November 9, 2022, and the Enforcement Directorate subsequently arrested him the following day. After spending several months in custody, his

Bharadwaj stated during the

AAP senior leader Jasmine Shah on Sunday called Reddy an 'approver' on the case, she said, "To make Reddy an approver in the case, he was kept in jail for six months after which he changed his

only made him approver under pressure but also took crores from him."

AAP chief spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar added, "If BIP won't answer the questions that have been raised (on Sharat Chandra Reddy's donation to the party), then it would be obvious that it has been caught red-handed for being involved in corrup-

Aurobindo Pharma bought electoral bonds worth Rs 52 crore with more than half of it going to the BJP, according to data released by the Election Commission. According to report, the Hyderabad-based firm pur-

chased the bonds between April 3, 2021 and November 8, 2023 and an amount of Rs 34.5 crore was donated by it to the BJP, Rs 15 crore to the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and Rs 2.5 crore to the Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

In June last year, Reddy turned approver in the case statement underwent alterafter a Delhi court allowed ation, leading to his release on him to do so. Before that, the ED had accused him of indulging in unfair market practices to gain undue advantages from the liquor policy by conspiring with business owners and politicians involved in the excise

### ABVP, United Left neck and neck in JNU polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ New Delhi

In the fight for capturing the highest post in the premier national educational institution of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), which has been by large considered the bastion of the left, early poll trends on Sunday show a neck and neck battle between the RSS affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the

United Left outfits.
In a close battle for the central panel of the Jawaharlal Nehru University's Students' Union elections, which are being held after four years due to delay by the Covid-19 pandemic and not conducted thereafter, Left's Dhananjay is leading the tally for the president's post followed by the ABVP's Umesh C Ajmeera. As of 7:40 pm, the United Left Alliance's presidential candidate Dhananjay had 1,361 votes while ABVP's Umesh

1,162 votes.

For the vice-president's post also, the ABVP is giving a tough competition to the Left's candidate Avijit Ghosh, who is currently leading with 1,214 votes. ABVP's Deepika Sharma is second in the race with 984

These early poll trends are based on the tally of 3,295 ballots done by the the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) election committee shared by different stu-

For the general secretary's post, an Ambedkarite student union BAPSA's candidate Priyanshi Arya, supported by the Left, is leading the post with 1,478

The United Left extended its support to Arya after the Election Committee cancelled the nomination of its candidate Swati Singh after her candidacy was challenged by the ABVP. Arya is getting a close competition from ABVP's Arjun Anand who has 1,309 votes. However, according to the trends the ABVP is leading the joint secretary's post with 1391 votes, followed by Left's Md

1,321 votes. The counting of votes is currently underway with votes from many schools pending to be counted.

The last election, in 2019, was won by SFI candidate Aishe Ghosh in 2019.

The left students outfits have formed an alliance to contest under the banner 'The United-Left' alliance, similar to last

elections, including a coalition of parties such as AISA, SFI, DSF, and AISF. The aim to do so is to not let the RSS' ABVP capture JNU. However, with the big win of

the RSS's student outfit in Delhi University's student union, ABVP looks hopeful to claim the posts in the presti-

### INDIA bloc rally drama to divert attention from corruption, says BJP

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

Criticising the Indi Alliance's maha rally, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Sunday said the rally of the Indi Alliance on March 31 is part of the great drama to divert attention from corruption and demanded resignation of Kejriwal. He said by announcing a mega rally, the "Indi Alliance" leaders are alleging that the arrest of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on corruption charges is murder of democracy. He has urged the INDI leaders to tell that if Kejriwal is innocent, why didn't he get relief from any court earlier and why is he not getting bail after arrest. Sachdeva said that most parties



of the "Indi Alliance," including Congress, have been troubled by the investigations into scams of before 2014 or during their state governments' tenures." For the past two years, Arvind Kejriwal has also been facing investigation and is under custody of the investigation agency which has shak-

en the entire alliance," he said Sachdeva said that the rally of the Indi Alliance on March 31 is part of the great drama to divert attention from corrup-

Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said Kejriwal is now playing the sympathy card and is unsuccessfully trying to get public sympathy by putting forward his wife and family members, but the public has understood his reality. "The reason for this is that after coming into politics, Kejriwal had sworn an oath to his family that he would create purity in politics, but he has also destroyed the dignity of the family with his corrupt conduct. Therefore, now people have understood his intentions," he said

### Holikas of Corruption: BJP burns CM effigies **STAFF REPORTER** NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP leaders and work-ers burnt effigies of 'Holikas of Corruption' Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as a mark of protest against rampant corruption in Delhi Government. After burning effigies, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said that the message of Holika Dahan is the burning of evil and the victory of goodness, and the biggest evil within Delhi is corruption because Arvind Kejriwal, as a symbol of corruption, has looted Delhi.

He said that the job of a chief minister is to develop city but Kejriwal is the first chief minister who has worked to loot Delhi with one bottle and give another bottle for free. On this



occasion, other officials including Sunil Yadav, the president of the OBC Front, was present. Alongwith party workers, Sachdeva burnt effigies at Connaught Place, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri at

Mahipalpur, MPs Manoj Tiwari at Nathupura & Ramesh Bidhuri at Sangam Vihar, Loksabha Candidates Kamaljeet Sehrawat at Uttam Nagar, Yogendra Chandolia at Udyog Vihar, Praveen Khandelwal at Rani Bagh, MLAs Ajay Mahavar at Brahmpuri, Vijendra Gupta at Rohini, Abhay Verma at Luxmi Nagar, Om Prakash Sharma at Madhu Vihar, Anil Bajpayee at Kailash Nagar, Mohan Singh Bisht at Sonia Vihar, Delhi BJP Vice President Yogita Singh at Govindpuri Extension, Dinesh Pratap Singh at Pandav Nagar, Vinay Rawat at Rohini Sachdeva said that in Delhi,

whether it's a temple, a school, a Gurudwara, or the main market, there is no place where Kejriwal has not opened liquor shops. The result of the struggle of BJP workers is that soon Arvind Kejriwal like Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh will be in Tihar jail.

He said that if Kejriwal had even a bit of morality, he would

joined the investigation, but Kejriwal and his ministers are extremely corrupt and have lost morality. The Delhi BJP president said that for now, only the investigation of the liquor scam is underway, and if the investigation of the Jal Board scam also starts, then many more secrets of Kejriwal will be revealed.

have resigned first and then

Speaking at Mahipalpur, Bidhuri said Kejriwal is now being recognized as an evil. Therefore, this time it was decided to burn the evil of corruption on Holi. A large number of voters from the area were present on this occasion. Bihduri along with party workers burnt the effi-gy of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal here.

## Kejriwal instructions from ED custody scripted: Tiwari | Traffic advisory issued for Holi,

**STAFF REPORTER** NEW DELH

 $D_{ ext{on Sunday hit out at the}}^{ ext{elhi BJP MP Manoj Tiwari}}$ Aam Aadmi party supremo Arvind Kejriwal, calling his instruction from ED custody to the Water Minister scripted and his arrest a cause of celebration for the people of the city. Tiwari said, "In ED's custody

there is a culprit and taking his reference today a script has been written that water and sewer-related facilities in Delhi are disorganised." Tiwari's remarks come after

Water Minister Atishi, in a press conference, informed media that she received directions from the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal late Saturday, from ED custody, on running the city govern-

Kejriwal was arrested by the



ED on Thursday from his official residence. A court on Friday sent him to the central agency's custody till March 28. "This (Kejriwal's direction) comes after no one in Delhi came to his support. The pub-

lic didn't express sorrow at his arrest. In fact, they are celebrating, distributing sweets, and bursting crackers that the man who made Delhi cry is behind bars now," Tiwari claimed. The actor-turned-

politician, who is BJP's contender from North East Delhi's Lok Sabha seat, said the city is in a pathetic condition with sewers overflowing and people being forced to drink dirty tap water. "If you want to know the actual condition of Delhi, go and see the streets. The sewer water overflows and gets into lanes and homes. People get dirty tap water to drink. The water quality is bad enough to make you sick," he said.

The BJP MP alleged that this is the result of the Kejriwal-led Delhi government's overlooking these matters for the past nine years that the people of Delhi lost trust in him.

"You got to know the problems of Delhi after you were sent into custody. Now you will realise what it means to not pay the pension of the elderly, give ration cards to the poor. But it's

too late, Arvind Kejriwal ji." he said. He added, "... He himself accepted that in the last nine years Delhi's condition turned pathetic, there will be no sympathy for you, no word, no agitation will be seen."

Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that AAP leaders are masters of gimmicky and the letter of Kejriwal to Water Minister Atishi is nothing but a melodramatic effort to be in news. "Delhiites very well know such melodramas will continue till 25 May but this will not effect the mindset of people who have already decided to vote for BJP in ensuing loksabha. People stand with development represented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and reject the anarchic forces led by Arvind Kejriwal," he said.

## special teams to be deployed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Traffic Police ■ issued an advisory in view of Holi, stating that special teams will be deployed at major road intersections to check drunken driving and red-light

jumping.
According to the advisory, the traffic police has made elaborate arrangements to ensure the safety of pedestrians and motorists on the roads and check incidents of drunken driving, over-speeding, reckless driving, zig-zag driving, dangerous driving, red-light jumping, triple riding, driving by minors, riding two-wheelers without a helmet, performing stunts on two-wheelers etc. "Special checking teams will be

deployed at major intersections, drinking points and vulnerable points for the Holi celebrations to detect and prosecute traffic violations. These special traffic police checking teams will be stationed on various roads and strategic locations/intersections all over Delhi, along with PCR vans and local police teams, to check drunken driving, redlight jumping etc.," the advisory stated.

Further, according to the directions of a Supreme Court committee on road safety, in cases of drunken driving, red-light jumping, using a mobile phone while driving, dangerous driving and over-speeding, the licence will be seized and liable for suspension for a minimum period of three months, it said. Action shall also be initiated cles are found to be driven by minors or unauthorised persons, performing stunts, driving without a licence etc., the advi-

The general public is advised to obey traffic rules, specifically not to drink and drive, observe the prescribed speed limits, obey traffic signals, not to indulge in racing or competition with other vehicles, two-wheeler riders and pillion riders should wear helmets and avoid triple riding, not to indulge in reckless, dangerous or zig-zag driving, not to allow minors or unauthorised persons to drive your vehicle, not to indulge in performing stunts on twowheelers and celebrate Holi indoors, not in public places or roads," the advisory added.

unavoidable circumstances, permission will have to be

taken from the Police

Commissioner, or the

Additional Commissioner of

or Commissioner of Police Zone

concerned," the order stated.

"No person will neither (sic)

### Four held for duping 63 people on pretext of providing overseas jobs

**STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

 $D^{\text{elhi police have arrested}}_{\text{four people including two}}$ Russia for running an international recruiting/consultancy in the national capital through which they deceived 63 Indians for overseas jobs on the pretext of providing work permit visas in foreign countries including Poland, Germany & other European countries.

Two Russians, identified as Artem Tolkachev and Igor Sirenko along with two Indians, who were there employees, namely Sagar Sharma and Rohit, duped innocent people in lieu of providing Work Permit visa. Their consultancy "WGA Visa India Pvt. Ltd" was located near the Patel Nagar metro station.

The scam was unearthed on the basis of a complaint received in Cyber Cell from Yogesh Girdhari Gahane of Nagpur

about cheating of Rs. 75,000 on companies in Poland, the pretext of Work Permit VISA by the fake company. After investigation, it was revealed scammers contacted the complainant through their Instagram page "wgapoland" (WorkGroup Agency) and then shared a link of their fake website to lure them into cheating. Accordingly, on March 18, police conducted a raid of said premises to verify the facts and found the fake company being run. The team also recovered five laptops, seven mobile phones, four passports, fake offer letters, resumes, QR codes for receiving money, Rs. 76,000 and currencies of different countries including USA, Russia, Poland and Nepal.

"The motive to open the company was to cheat the young innocent Citizens of India on the pretext of providing fake work Permits regarding employment at non-existing

Lithuania, Netherlands, Luxembourg and other European countries because Indians are the most passionate for going abroad at any cost," the police informed. According to the police, Igor used to run all the affairs without coming into the picture from his rented accommodation located at DLF in Delhi's New Moti Nagar area while the overall supervision was of Natsva, who looked after all functions of the company through CCTV from Russia. Their two Indian employees were also arrested after confirming the role in the cheating racket. "As per the facts and circum-

stances, a case under appropriate sections of laws has been registered at PS Crime Branch and both Russian nationals were arrested in this case," police added.

### Section 144 imposed in Noida on Holi **STAFF REPORTER** ■ NOIDA

N o religious prayers or processions would be allowed at public places or disputed sites across Noida and Greater Noida on Monday (Holi), the Gautam Buddh Nagar Police said on Sunday as it imposed CrPC section 144 across the district.

Police also ordered that no person shall consume "liquor or intoxicating substances at any public place and warned action under IPC section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by a public servant) for violation of the order.

In its order, police said along with Holi, Dhulandi festivals, protests are also proposed by some groups on March 25 and in view of this, "the possibility of disturbance of peace by anti-social elements cannot be ruled out.'

The order said, "Apart from this, in view of upcoming Lok Sabha elections, peace may be



should be prevented from carrying out such activities which may create an unfavourable environment.'

Additional DCP (law and

order) Hirdesh Katheriya in the order said, "Considering the seriousness and urgency of the situation and due to paucity of time, it is not possible to provide an opportunity of hearing to any other party, hence this order is being passed ex-parte." According to the order, unlawful assembly of five or more people, unauthorised processions or demonstrations, polit-

ical or religious, are prohibited. The order also bars the use of private drones within a radius of 1 km of government establishments and also bans people from carrying sticks, rods, tridents, swords, firearms etc in public places. "Namaz, Pooja, or any type of

religious processions will be completely prohibited in public places and public routes. In

try nor inspire anyone to offer puja, namaz etc at disputed sites where the practice is not prevalent. Apart from this, no person will insult each other's religious scriptures. Will not put any kind of religious flags, banners, posters etc. On religious places, walls etc, nor will ne provide assistance to anyone in this work," it added.

person will let loose animals like pigs, dogs etc to roam in public places, religious places, procession routes or near religious places during religious gatherings, nor will he cooperate with anyone in doing so, which may offend some community's feelings.

The order also directed that no

## Nitish announces JD(U) candidates for all 16 LS seats in Bihar

 $B^{\text{ihar Chief Minister Nitish}}_{\text{Kumar's JD}(\text{U}) \text{ on Sunday}}$ announced candidates for all 16 Lok Sabha seats it is contesting in the state, with priority being accorded to Other Backward Classes and Extremely Backward Classes, the party's core base.

As per the formula announced by the BJP led NDA last week, the JD(U) has been assigned 16 out of the state's 40 seats, equivalent to its current strength in the Lok Sabha but one less than the number it had contested five years ago.

According to the list made public at the JD(U) office in the presence of national vice president Vashisth Narayan Singh and Sanjay Kumar Jha, 12 of the party's sitting MPs have

been given another chance from their respective seats. However, in the seats of Sitamarhi and Siwan, sitting MPs Sunil Kumar Pintu and Kavita Singh respectively have been denied tickets by the party which has hedged it's bets on législative council chairman Devesh Chandra Thakur and Vijaylaxmi Devi, who joined the JD(U) along with her husband Ramesh Singh Thakur just the day before. 'All the candidates have been

decided by the CM who is also the party president. We have reposed our faith in most of our sitting MPs but in some places, there have been changes," said

The party will be contesting the Muslim-majority constituency of Kishanganj, which it had lost in 2019, reposing its trust in Mujahid Alam, who was



ner by a margin of less than

Besides, the party has given up its sitting seat of Karakat, represented by Mahabali Singh, for ally Rashtriya Lok Morcha, headed by former Union minister Upendra Kushwaha, but got Sheohar, which was previously held by BJP. The JD(U)'s Sheohar candidate

will be Lovely Anand, wife of mafia don-turned-politician Anand Mohan and mother of RID MLA Chetan Anand who crossed over to the NDA during the assembly's budget session last month. According to Sanjay Jha, the list

of candidates includes "six OBCs, five EBCs, one Mahadalit, a Muslim and three from the upper castes. There are also two women. Care has been taken to ensure that all

sections of the society get a fair representation".

The party is contesting only one of the six reserved constituencies in Bihar, Gopalganj, where sitting MP Alok Suman will seek re-election.

Among the other sitting MPs

who will be seeking re-election from their respective seats are former JD(U) president Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan' (Munger) and Nalanda MP Kaushalendra Kumar, who will be running for a fourth consecutive term from the seat that has in the past been represented by Nitish Kumar himself and his mentor George Fernandes. Besides, Purnea MP Santosh

Kumar Kushwaha, who made his debut in 2014, when he held his own in the face of the Modi wave, and retained the seat five years later, bolstered by the JD(U)'s realignment with BJP,

The seat may be heading for a triangular contest with the Congress having promised its ticket to Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav, who recently merged his Jan Adhikar Party, and signals emanating from the RJD that it may field Bima Bharti, a JD(U) MLA who

joined the RJD on Saturday night. Other JD(U) candidates are Sunil Kumar (Valmiki Nagar), Ramprit Mandal (Jhanjharpur), Dileshwar Kamait (Supaul), Dulal Chandra Goswami (Katihar),

Dinesh Chandra Yadav (Madhepura), Ajay Kumar Mandal (Bhagalpur), Giridhari Yadav (Banka) and Chandreshwar Prasad Chandravanshi (Jehanabad), all sitting MPs, getting tickets from their respective seats.

## Rajnath celebrates Holi with troops in Leh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday celebrated Holi with soldiers in Leh. He could not visit Siachen glacier to celebrate the festival with troops due to adverse weather conditions there and promised to visit them soon and extended Holi greetings on the phone. Accompanied by Army chief General Manoj Pande and Fire and Fury Corps chief Lt General Rashim Bali, Rajnath celebrated Holi with the troops

Addressing them, the defence minister commended their valour, determination and sacrifice as they serve in harsh terrain and inclement weather conditions to protect the motherland. The positive commitment of the soldiers posted in high altitudes is much stronger than minus temperatures, he said. He termed Ladakh as India's capital of valour and bravery, just as Delhi is the national cap-



ital, Mumbai is the financial capital and Bengaluru is the technology capital.

"The entire country feels safe as our brave soldiers are protecting the borders. We are progressing and leading a happy life as our vigilant soldiers stand ready at the borders. Every citizen is proud of the Armed Forces as they live far away from their families so that we celebrate Holi and other festivals with our families peace-

fully. The nation will forever be indebted to our soldiers, and generations," Rajnath said.

their courage and sacrifices will keep inspiring the future The defence minister asserted that he decided to celebrate

Holi with the soldiers a day before, as he believes that the festivals should first be celebrated by and with the protectors of the country. He urged the Chiefs of the three Services to establish a new tradition of beginning the celebrations of the festivals with the soldiers a day before. "Such celebrations with soldiers on the snowy peaks of Kargil, in the scorching plains of Rajasthan and in the submarines located in the deep season bould become an integral part should become an integral part of our culture," he said.

On the occasion, Rajnath also laid a wreath at the War Memorial, Leh as a mark of solemn tribute to the brave hearts who have made the supreme sacrifice in the service of the nation.

Later, he spoke with the soldiers posted in the world's highest battlefield Siachen over phone and extended the Holi greetings. He told them that he will soon visit Siachen and interact

### Nausena Bhawan symbol of Naya Bharat, Nayi nausena: Navy Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar has said 'Nausena Bhawan, the new state of the art headquarters of the force, is not just a building but a symbol of 'Naya Bharat' and 'Nayi Nausena?

Located in Delhi Cantonment, the sprawling complex is equipped with modern facilities and cutting-edge technologies.

On Saturday, Admiral Kumar held a press meet at the new 'Nausena Bhawan', the first media interaction at the complex since its inauguration last week by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

'This building is not just a building, but a symbol of 'Naya Bharat' (new India) and 'Nayi Nausena' (new Navy) and the progress of both our nation and the Navy. Inspired from maritime heritage of Bharat and modern history of Indian Navy,



tions of a rising Bharat as well as the rising maritime consciousness of our country," he

In his address, the Navy chief said the modern landmark also represents "our resurgence as a maritime power"

"I would say, this building is actually a representative of 'Naye Bharat ki Nayi Nausena aur Nayi Nausena ki nayi soch ka pratik' (new navy of new India, and new thinking of new navy). That is what it symbolises," he said.

The multi-storey building has three wings, and the press interaction was held at the Seafarers Hall located in the

a round cross-section, with a compass depicted in at its cen-

The logo of the India Navy with its motto 'Shan No Varunah' has been prominently displayed on the facade and in the foyer

The press interaction largely centred around the 100 days of "sustained operations" by the Navy at seas in executing antipiracy, anti-drone and antimissile operations under 'Op Sankalp' in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and north Arabian Sea and sea off the east coast of Somalia. "This is a testament to a new

and confident Indian Navy, and we are trying to wear the new identity of Bharat," he said. The defence minister Singh on March 15 had inaugurated the 'Nausena Bhawan'. It marked a significant milestone for the Navy as it has established its "first independent headquarters in Delĥi".

### Congress releases fourth list with 45 \_S candidates



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

¬he latest fourth list released by the Congress with 45 candidates for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, figures the name of its Uttar Pradesh unit chief Ajay Rai from Varanasi who will take on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

While the Congress fielded veteran leader Digvijaya Singh from Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh, it nominated newlyinducted leader Lal Singh from Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur to take on Union minister Jitendra Singh.

MLA Vikas Thakare will take on Union minister Nitin Gadkari in Maharashtra's Nagpur, according to the list. In its fourth list, the party announced candidates for 12 seats of Madhya Pradesh, nine of Uttar Pradesh, seven of Tamil Nadu, four of Maharashtra, two each of Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Manipur and Jammu and Kashmir, and one each of West Bengal, Assam, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Mizoram and Chhattisgarh.

The Congress has left the Nagaur parliamentary constituency in Rajasthan for the Hanuman Beniwal-led Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP). The tie-up with the RLP is significant as the Congress looks to boost its position in the desert state, where it lost the Assembly polls recently and had not won a single seat in 2019 Lok Sabha election. The party is looking to expand its support base among the jats with the tie-up with Beniwal, who has a significant following

among the community. For Uttar Pradesh, where the Congress is in an alliance with the Samajwadi Party (SP) and contesting 17 seats, it has announced candidates for nine seats. These include Rai from Varanasi, Danish Ali from Amroha, Imran Masood from Saharanpur and Alok Mishra The suspense over whether

Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will contest the polls from Amethi and Raebareli respectively contin-

There is speculation that Rahul Gandhi may also contest the polls from Ámethi, besides his declared seat of Wayanad in Kerala, and Priyanka Gandhi from Raebareli, a seat which was previously held by her mother, Sonia Gandhi.

This will be Rai's third direct contest against Modi in the general election after 2014 and 2019. He had lost both times to the prime minister by big margins. Amethi and Raebareli are considered bastions of the Gandhi family and the local units of the Congress have demanded that the two scions of the family contest the polls from there. In Uttar Pradesh, the Congress has also fielded Ram Nath Sikarwar from Fatehpur Sikri, Pradeep Jain Aditya from Jhansi, Tanuj Punia from Barabanki (SC), Akhilesh Pratap Singh from Deoria and Sadan Prasad from Bansgaon (SC).

In Tamil Nadu, the party has Karti renominated Chidambaram from Sivaganga, Manickam Tagore from Virudhunagar, S Jothimani from Karur and Vijay Vasanth from Kanniyakumari, among

In Madhya Pradesh, the party has fielded Digvijaya Singh from Rajgarh, Kantilal Bhuria from Ratlam (ST), Akshay Bam from Indore and Arun Shrivastav from Bhopal, among others. Singh had last contested the polls from Bhopal but lost to the BJP's Pragya Thakur



The Karnataka government has moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Centre to release financial assistance from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) to the State for drought management.

The petition has also sought to in not releasing the financial assistance for drought arrangement as per the NDRF is "exfacie violative" of the fundamental rights of the people of the state guaranteed under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution.

It said the state is reeling under severe drought", affecting the lives of its people and for the Kharif 2023 season, which starts in June and ends in September, a total of 223 out of 236 taluks are declared as drought-affected.

The plea said 196 taluks are categorised as severely affected and the remaining 27 as moderately affected.

"Cumulatively for Kharif 2023 season, the agriculture and horticulture crop loss have been reported in more than 48 lakh hectares with the estimated loss (cost of cultivation) filed through advocate D L Chidananda, said.

It said the assistance sought from Government of India under the NDRF is Rs 18,171.44 crore.

"In terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, Union of India is under obligation to render financial assistance to the state governments," the plea, settled by senior advocate Devdatt Kamat and state's Advocate General K Shashi Kiran Shetty, said.



It said the state is constrained to move the apex court against the "arbitrary actions" of the Centre in denying the financial assistance for drought management to Karnataka under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and the manual for drought management updated in 2020.

"Further, the impugned action

of the Central Government is violative of statutory scheme of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the manual for drought management and the guidelines on constitution and administration of the State Disaster Response Fund and National Disaster Response

Fund," the plea said. It said under the manual for

drought management, the Centre is required to take a final decision on the assistance to the state from the NDRF within a month of the receipt of the inter-ministerial central team (IMCT). "Despite the IMCT report,

which visited various drought

affected districts from October

4 to 9, 2023 and made a com-

drought situation in the state and consideration of the said report by the sub-committee of the National Executive Committee constituted under section 9 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, Centre has not taken a final decision on the assistance to the state from the NDRF even after a lapse of almost six months from the date of the said

report," the plea said. It alleged that inaction on the part of the Centre to act on the report and take a final decision to release financial assistance to the state is "ex-facie illegal, arbitrary, and violative of fundamental rights" guaranteed to its citizens under Article 14 and Article 21 of the Constitution. It said the State is duty bound to affirmatively protect the fundamental rights of its people guaranteed under Article 21

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had on Saturday said the state government has filed a petition in the top court demanding a direction to the Centre to immediately release grants under the NDRF to the state, which is reeling under acute drought. Accusing the Centre of sitting on Karnataka's pleas for release of funds though there is a severe drought, he had said the state government was compelled to approach the apex court.

## Congress targets Centre on falling value of Rupee

good worth 1 dollar. The extra

Rs 25 we are paying is because

of the falling rupee," he said.

He said when goods being

imported from abroad come to

the country at a higher price,

people in turn will also get

PNS NEW DELHI

ongress on Sunday target-Ced Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue of falling value of the Indian rupee against the US dollar, and sought answers from him.

Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said the falling value of the rupee impacts the pocket of every Indian due to rising fuel rates, inflation and higher EMIs for loans. "Before 2014, the BJP would make big claims on the relatively smaller declines in the strength of the rupee. Remember the typically uncouth remarks made by the-then Gujarat CM, linking the rupee's value and Dr. Manmohan Singh's age? The rupee's value fell below the selfproclaimed Vishwaguru's own age a long time ago," Ramesh

said in statement. The rupee depreciated 48 paise to settle at an all-time low of 83.61 against the American currency on Friday, tracking a surging greenback against major crosses in the overseas markets and weak Asian peers. The rupee had earlier recorded its lowest closing level of 83.40 on December 13, 2023. The Congress leader said



in 2014, the price of one dollar to the rupee was Rs 59. Today, the BJP has increased this price from Rs 59 to Rs 84". "The weakening of the Indian rupee directly impacts your the Indian rupee. pocket: The value of the rupee decides at what price we get goods imported from abroad. In 2014, if any goods came from overseas for 1 dollar, we had to pay Rs 59. Today we must pay Rs 84 for that same

them at a higher cost. India imports 80 percent of its crude oil and must pay for most of it in dollars, he said, adding India is now buying fuel at a higher cost due to the weakening of

"Every time you go to the petrol pump, the weakening of the rupee is having an impact on your pocket. When fuel becomes more expensive, the cost of transporting goods increases. All goods, including food, are becoming more expensive.

When you go to the market to buy groceries, you are paying higher prices due to the weakening of the rupee," Ramesh

## WHO recommends tNGS tests for diagnosing drug resistant TB

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW

 $A^{\mathrm{s}}$  the multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) remains a significant public health crisis with only a fraction of affected individuals accessing treatment globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended adoption of targeted next-generation sequencing (tNGS) tests for diagnosing drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB).

In its latest guidance, outlined in the third edition of "WHO Consolidated Guidelines on Tuberculosis. Module 3: Diagnosis - Rapid Diagnostics for Tuberculosis Detection, the WHO said that these tests offer a more precise analysis of the specific genomic regions of TB-causing bacteria present in patient samples, thereby enhancing the detection of drug resistance compared to alternative sequencing meth-

On the other hand, tests employing whole genome sequencing analyse the entire bacterial genome for drug resis-

Furthermore, implementing tNGS tests necessitates diagnostic labs to be equipped with



adequate data management and storage infrastructure. The WHO has also unveiled a new TB sequencing portal housing a vast repository of sequences, serving as a comprehensive knowledge base for Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the bacteria causing TB.

Only about two in five people with drug-resistant TB are accessing treatment globally in 2022.

Accompanying the guidance, the WHO has also launched a new TB sequencing portal hosting more than 56,000 sequences and representing "the most advanced sequencing and phenotyping knowledge base for Mycobacterium tuberculosis (the TB-causing bacte-

global study published in Lancet Infectious Diseases" journal earlier this week found that India, along with most of the world, failed to achieve WHO's End TB milestones for 2020 -- including 20 per cent reduced TB incidence and 35 per cent fewer deaths, compared to the baseline figures of 2015.

Only 17 of the 204 countries investigated were found to have met the 2020 End TB mortality milestone, with researchers citing drug resistance as an important factor for failing to meet the mortality targets.

Dr. Vikas Tandon, Sr. Consultant - Spine Surgeon, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre said that among all the TB cases, bone and spine TB, also known as osteoarticular TB, constitute a significant portion, accounting for approximately 1-2% of all TB cases in the country.

The incidence of bone and spine TB in India is high, primarily due to the country's large population, poor sanitation, and inadequate access to healthcare. The disease is more prevalent in rural areas, where access to medical care is limited, and people often live in crowded and unhygienic con-

## FM rubbishes Karnataka claim of injustice in Central grants

nion Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday rubbished the Karnataka government's claim that the Centre was not releasing its due share of 'special grants' as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission. She denied that there was any

recommendation by the Finance Commission. government "Karnataka claims that Rs 5,495 crore special grant was not released to Karnataka and this is totally false. The Finance Commission did not in its final report recommend any such special grant," the Finance Minister claimed. Sitharaman's statement came a day after Karnataka filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court requesting a direction to the Centre to immediately release grants under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) to the state, which is reeling under acute



Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his deputy D K Shivakumar, Congress MLAs and other Congress leaders at the central level staged a demonstration in New Delhi alleging that the Centre was

woes and was not releasing its due share of funds.

'I want to make it a point to tell you in detail that every penny that is due to Karnataka, every paisa that is due to Karnataka, is given, given on time, apathetic towards Karnataka's Sitharaman said during a talk

organised Forum, Jayanagar in the city. According to the FM, tax devolution has increased under Prime Minister Narendra Modi between 2014 and 2024 by 258 per cent, which is 3.5 times more

compared to the 10 years

during the previous UPA rule. at all," she charged. Another In these 10 years of BJP rule, the grants-in-aid have also increased to 273 per cent, which is 3.7 times more than what it was the previous 10 vears, she claimed.

The Finance Minister said that between 2004 and 2014, the money received by Karnataka per year was Rs 81,795 crore, which went up to Rs 2,93,226 crore from 2014 to 2024. "Nobody's boasting that we've given this much or anything, but to be wrongly alleged, accused that you're not giving money due to Karnataka, I'm sorry, please look at the figures, look at the dates when the money was received and then tell us something which is specific and right, so that I can respond and I will respond," Sitharaman declared.

"But when we have given it in time and given sometimes even in advance of the time, to just blanket mislead the people to say money is not coming in is not responsible

set of payments to Karnataka that come under the name of grants-in-aid too increased 3.7 times, Sitharaman said. "The grant-in-aid between 2004-14 was Rs 60,779.84 crore, which increased to Rs 2,26,832 crore. So I just want the state government to please look into the papers, keep the facts and not mislead the people of Karnataka," she pointed out.

According to Sitharaman, after Covid, Prime Minister Modi asked the Finance Ministry to give states interest-free loans for 50 years to create infrastructure and spend on the ongoing infrastructure work. "No Finance Commission had

recommended, but the Centre decided to give all the state interest-free loans for 50 years... It might probably even get written off. What was the share of Karnataka in that? Rs 7,130 crore since 2020-21," the finance minister

### BJP slams Kerala over moving SC against President

The BJP on Sunday criticised the Left government in Kerala for its move to approach the Supreme Court against President Droupadi Murmu saying that it reflected the Marxist party's discrimination towards women and tribal communities.

The CPI(M) has always adopted an "anti-woman" stand and they had even opposed when Murmu had been nominated to the supreme post of the country, senior party leader and Union Minister V Muraleedharan alleged.

To prove his argument that party's the Marxist fundamental stand was antiwoman, he said there was no woman member in the Left party's polit bureau till 2022. The saffron party's criticism came a day after the LDF government justified its move to approach the apex Court Murmu against withholding assent to four bills passed by the state assembly, saying her action "significant constitutional implications." "If we look back into history,

we can understand why the Marxist Party is moving against President Murmu...The objection of the CPI (M) leadership towards women is the basic reason for this," Muraleedharan told reporters

He said that it was not for the

first time that bills were getting delayed in the country, but it was for the first time that someone is moving against the President. Muraleedharan also said that

the people of the country, who stand for social justice and equality, would oppose any move intended to h'u m i l i a t e President Murmu.

He said it was understood that the Chief Secretary of the state and senior CPI (M) leader T P Ramakrishnan had jointly filed the case against the President.

The minister questioned the legal sanctity of a civil service officer filing a case jointly with a political leader. The BJP's statement came a

day after the state government filed a plea in the Supreme Court, naming the Union government, the Secretary to the President of India, Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, and his additional secretary as parties to the case. In its plea, the state

government requested that the President's refusal to grant assent to the bills--the University (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2021; the Kerala Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Bill, 2022; the University Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2022; and University (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill, 2022-- without stating any

#### **Phone tapping case: Two additional SPs arrested in Telangana**

PTI HYDERABAD

Two more senior police officials have been arrested by Hyderabad Police in connection with the case of phone tapping and destroying certain computer systems and official data. During investigation, Additional DCP Thirupathanna and Additional Superintendent of Police N Bhujanga Rao, were arrested, an official release from Hyderabad police late on Saturday night said. The two police officials had earlier worked as Additional Superintendents of Police in the Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB) and Intelligence Department, respectively. They were accused of colluding with suspended DSP of the SIB, D Praneeth Rao, who was earlier arrested by Hyderabad police for allegedly erasing the intelligence information from various electronic gadgets as well as for alleged phone tapping during the previous BRS regime.

"During the questioning, the two about their involvement in the reported crimes including conspiracy to monitor private persons illegally by developing their profiles abusing their official positions; to cause disappearance of evidence by destroying the public property to conceal their involvement in collusion with the already arrested D Praneeth Kumar alias Praneeth Rao, DSP (under suspension) and some other persons", the release said. Further investigation is under progress, they said.

On March 13, Praneeth Rao, accused of developing profiles of persons unknown monitoring the same clandestinely, unauthorisedly and illegally besides destroying certain computer systems and official data was arrested, police earlier said. Rao was recently suspended by the Telangana government. He was a DSP during the previous BRS dispensation and was and subsequently working in the office of the Director General of Police (DGP). He was earlier accused of tapping phones of opposition party leaders.

Based on a complaint filed by an additional superintendent of police of the SIB on March 10, a case was registered against Praneeth Rao and others at the Panjagutta police station.

## Five crushed to death by dumper over dispute in Rajasthan

T wo brothers were among five men allegedly crushed to death by a dumper over a dispute in the Pagaria area of Rajasthan's Jhalawar district, police said on Sunday.

The alleged incident occurred late on Saturday and the two accused --Ranjeet Singh and Dunger Singh -fled the spot after the crime, they

The victims are siblings Bharat Singh (22) and Dhiraj Singh (20), and Tufan Singh (33), Goverdhan Singh (28) and Balu Singh (20) of Binnayga

Pagaria SHO Vijendra Singh told PTI that there was a dispute between Ranjeet Singh and Dunger Singh -- aged around 20-22 -- and Bharat Singh and others late on Saturday. The reason behind the dispute is yet

to be ascertained, he told PTI. Having failed to resolve the dispute, Bharat Singh, his brother and the three other victims left for the police station on two motorcycles, he said. They had barely travelled half a kilometre when Ranjeet Singh and Dunger Singh allegedly got a dumper parked nearby and drove it



over the motorcycles, killing four on the spot. The fifth victim died on the way to hospital, the SHO said. The two accused then abandoned the dumper and fled, he said.

Circle Officer Prem Kumar said the reason behind the dispute is yet to be ascertained. It has been learnt that initially there was no major enmity or rivalry between the victims and the accused

The accused are yet to be traced, he

The police have lodged a case under Section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code against Ranjeet Singh and Dunger Singh, SHÓ Vijendra Singh said.

The victims were daily-wage labourers. The post-mortem of the bodies is underway, he added.

travelling and further lawful follow up would take place," Director General of Police GP Singh posted

Additional Superintendent of Police

The email was sent by the student, in

which he claimed that he was on his

authorities were immediately

contacted, who informed them that

the said student had been "missing"

since noon and his mobile phone

on X on Saturday.

IIT student on way to join ISIS detained in Assam: Police

He is a fourth-year student and seized, it is early to say much. We are hailed from Okhla in Delhi, he

A search was started to locate him and he was nabbed from Hajo area, around 30 km from Guwahati, on

Saturday evening with the help of locals, the ASP said. "After initial questioning, he has been brought to the STF office. We

reason,

are verifying the motive of the email," Pathak said. He said a black flag, "purportedly similar to that of ISIS", was found in his hostel room and was being sent for verification to specialised

agencies which deal with proscribed outfits. investigating the intention of sending the email. The student has

given some details, but we cannot disclose anything further now," Pathak added.

## Bawankule attacks Sharad for rumours against BJP

Bharatiya Janata Party's Maharashtra chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Sunday said it was unfor-Sharad Pawar were part of the group spreading rumours that the BJP intended to change the Constitution. The country's Constitution

is very strong and no one can change it, the BJP leader said, adding that people should not fall prey to the "false narratives" of leaders, including NCP (SP) head Pawar.

In a social media post, Bawankule said, "Rumours are being spread about BJP's intentions to change the Constitution because of the various guarantees offered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is unfortunate to see senior leaders like Sharad Pawar joining the herd."

"No one can change the Constitution of the country. It is very strong. Sharad Pawar would definitely know the number of times the Congress party amended the Constitution," he said.

Contrary to such record, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government always respected and honoured the Constitution in the last 10 years, Bawankule said.

"PM Modi even changed the name of Parliament building Samvidhan



(Constitution House). The BJP has always worked for constitutional values and in the interest of the nation. People should not fall prey to false narratives of leaders, especially not of Sharad Pawar," he added. Notably, BJP

Anantkumar Hegde, known for his hardline views, had said his party needs a twothird majority in both houses of Parliament to amend the Constitution and "set right the distortions and unnecessary additions made to it by the Congress". Reacting to it, Sharad Pawar

earlier this month said, "The remarks reflect upon what is there in the mind of the BJP leadership and it is worrisome for the country. If someone is saying this publicly, then such things cannot be neglected."

After a row sparked by Hegde's comments, the BJP had dubbed his remarks "personal opinion" and sought a clarification from

#### terror group, was detained, police said. (STF) Kalyan Kumar Pathak said, The student was nabbed in Hajo After receiving an email, we got area near Guwahati on Saturday about to verify the authenticity of the contents and started an investigation.'

His apprehension comes four days after İSIS India head Haris Farooqi alias Harish Ajmal Farukhi and his were arrested in Dhubri district after Pathak said the IIT-Guwahati

An IIT-Guwahati student, who had allegedly pledged allegiance

to ISIS and was on his way to join the

they had crossed over from "Reference @IITGuwahati student

pledging allegiance to ISIS - the said student has been detained while

## One fisherman drowns, three missing in Tripura Dumbur lake

**PTI** GUWAHATI

One fisherman drowned and three others were missing in Dumbur lake in Tripura's Dhalai district, police said on Sunday.

The body of a fisherman Hari Das (45) was recovered while search operation is on for three other missing, said a senior police officer.

"Four fishermen of Gandacherra sub-division ventured out to catch fish on Saturday. They had taken shelter in a tent in the middle of the lake amidst the heavy storm. Due to strong wind, the tent collapsed and they were submerged in the lake", he said.



spot on morning and initiated a massive search operation and recovered the body of Hari Das, he said, adding lake", he said. the divers are still carrying A police team rushed to out an operation to find Tripura Čhief Minister Manik Saha expressed shock over the death of fishermen in Dumbur

"Have received information about the death of four fishermen due to a heavy storm who went to Dumbur lake to fish. catch administration and police have already taken up follow-up action after the tragic incident. One body has already been recovered while the operation is still I convey condolence to bereaved families and the government will stand by the victim's family in this difficult time", Saĥa wrote

### **DMK MP Ganesamoorthy** hospitalised

**PTI** ■ ERODE

A. Ganeshamoorthy of the MDMK, the sitting Lok Sabha MP from Erode, was on Sunday hospitalised here, with his condition stated to be serious by doctors.

According to police, at around 9:30am today morning, Ganesamoorthy, who was elected on a DMK ticket in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls from here, developed uneasiness and was admitted to a private hospital here by his family members. After check-ups, he was admitted in the ICU and has been put on the ventilator, police said. He was later shifted to a private hospital in Coimbatore at around 2.30 p.M. With two doctors and his family members accompanying him



in the ambulance. Political leaders like S. Muthusamy, state Minister for Urban Development and Housing and Excise and Prohibition, Dr C. Saraswathy BJP MLA of Modakurichi, K.V. Ramalingam of the AIADMK and some others rushed to the hospital and enquired about Ganesamoorthy's health.

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

BAPTIST UNION OF NORTH INDIA, having BAPTIST UNION OF NORTH INDIA, having office at Baptist Primary School, Saraswal Marg, Karol Bagh, Delhi, hereby issue this public notice to make the following declarations on the basis of Annual Genera Meeting held on 23.03.2024:

Declaration of our esteemed office bearers:

\* President: Rev. William Samuel

\* Vice President: Mr. Pinarrow, R.Das

\* Sacretary & Treasurer; Ms. Aditiva Prom.

\* Vice President: Mr. Prilamow. A.Das
 \* Secretary & Treasurer: Ms. Aditya Prem
 \* Change in Legal Advisor: We herebinform the community of the change in outlegal Advisor. Advocate Bharat Dubey habeen relieved of his duties, and we warmly welcome Advocate Kumar Mihir as our new Legal Advisor.

Membership Regulation: It has come t our attention that certain individuals ar alsely claiming membership within the Baptist Union of North India. We want to emphasize that membership to ou organization is regulated strictly through approved subscriptions only. Any perso found impersonating as a member sha

relevant laws.

We urge all concerned parties to take note of these announcements and not to deal with erstwhile members or impersonators.

For any inquiries or clarifications, please content the undersigned.

Teachers training, annual exams during Holi, Good Friday spark row in Bihar **PTI** ■ PATNA "Officials concerned must the department to change the exam schedule of March 29.

Arow has erupted over the Bihar education department scheduling a training programme for government teachers and annual examinations for school students on Holi and Good Friday respectively. RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav has sought the intervention of

into the matter.

ensure that all primary school teachers (from classes 1 to 5) who have not attended training session earlier, must the six-day attend Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) training that is being organised by the council from March 25 to The circular has been sent to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar

the principals of all College A circular issued by the State of Teacher Education (CTE), Council of Educational District Institute Research and Training Education and Training (SCERT) on March 20 stated, (DIET), Primary Teacher



Education College (PTEC), Block Institute for Education and Training (BIET) and other officials concerned.

As per the letter, a total of 19,200 government school teachers will attend FLN training at 78 training centres of the department from March 25 to 30. The SCERT has made it clear that "no leave will be granted" to all concerned during the training period.

The SCERT is the apex academic body in the state for school and teacher education and is a wing of the education

The Bihar government has already declared public holidays on Holi and Good Friday and all offices of the state government will remain closed on those days.

in a Facebook post.

Similarly, the department's decision to conduct annual examinations for students below class 8 even on Good Friday (March 29) has triggered a controversy.

Even Robert L Chongthu, principal secretary to the Bihar governor, in a letter to the chief secretary, urged him to direct Both the SCERT circular and the Raj Bhavan letter to the chief secretary are in possession with PTI. Despite repeated attempts Education Minister Sunil

Kumar was not available for his comments on the issue. In a post on X, Tejashwi Yadav

said, "As per orders of the NDA government in Bihar, teachers have to be present even on the day of Holi. This has never happened in Bihar be subject to legal prosecution unde

contact the undersigned.

Ms. Aditya Prem - Secretary & Treasure

www.dailypioneer.com

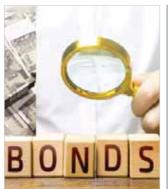
facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

-PAPER WITH PASSION-

## **Black & White**

The Congress seeks SC-monitored probe for transparency in the Electoral Bonds issue

he controversy around the now-scrapped Electoral Bonds just refuses to die down. A day after the political funding data was made public, activists demanded an independent Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe all aspects of the scheme. The Congress has already upped the ante; the debate has been reignited as the party presses for a Supreme Court-monitored investigation into the alleged malpractices surrounding these financial instruments. Accusations of "pre-paid, post-paid and post-raid bribes" have intensified the clamour for transparency and accountability in the electoral financing system. Electoral Bonds, introduced in 2018 ostensibly to promote transparency in political funding, allow individuals and corporations to donate money anonymously to political parties. Targeted at curbing the use of black money in elections, these bonds have faced criticism since inception, primarily over their potential to facilitate unaccounted donations and influence peddling. Despite ensuring transparency, they are said to be



tools for bribing one political party or the other. The Congress alleges that the bonds have become conduits for illegal transactions, facilitating the flow of unaccounted funds to political parties. The use of terms like "pre-paid, post-paid and post-raid bribes" reflects the suspicion that these bonds have been exploited not only to fund political campaigns but also to influence policy decisions through backdoor dealings.

The call for a Supreme Court-monitored investigation underscores the lack of faith in the existing mechanisms for oversight and regulation of electoral finances. Somewhere, the Congress has apprehensions that the party in power may be able to influence the

probe. The Congress, along with other Opposition groups, contends that any inquiry conducted under the Government's auspices would lack impartiality and could be subject to manipulation. The absence of disclosure requirements regarding the identity of donors compounds concerns about accountability and opens the door to potential misuse of funds. Furthermore, recent raids conducted by law enforcement agencies on premises linked to certain political entities have brought to light a web of dubious financial transactions allegedly involving electoral bonds. The controversy underscores broader concerns about the influence of money in politics and the need for robust mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in electoral financing. While proponents argue that such instruments are essential for sustaining political parties and facilitating democratic processes, critics contend that the lack of transparency compromises the integrity of the electoral system. The Supreme Court's intervention in this matter could prove pivotal in restoring public trust in the electoral process. The judiciary can help ensure that the electoral process remains free from undue influence and corruption. Only through a thorough and impartial investigation can the truth be unearthed, and measures be implemented to safeguard the democratic principles upon which the nation's governance rests.



## Zero-water day is nigh in Bengaluru



India stands on the precipice of a dire situation as its water reservoirs dwindle and cities like Bengaluru face a looming Day Zero scenario

he World Water Day (WWD) 2024 coordinated by UN-Water was observed on 22 March. The WWD event every year aims at inspiring action to tackle the global water crisis. A core focus of WWD is to enable the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 which stands for enabling access to clean water and sanitation for all by 2030. This year's WWD's theme 'Water for Peace' focuses on the critical role of water in ensuring stability and prosperity of the world. Water is a precious resource that covers 70% of our planet, but only 3% of the world's water is usable fresh water, and even two-thirds of that is in the form of frozen glaciers and therefore unavailable for use. India is witnessing a rather grim WWD eve this year. According to the latest Central Water Commission (CWC) report, more than half of India's 150 major water reservoirs are having less than 40% inventory. Patchy rainfall due to El Niño has caused nearly 60% of the country to experience inadequate rainfall coupled with this the spiralling demand for water due to increasing population has meant rampant and reckless exploitation of available water resources.

These conditions aided by the upcoming summer months are paving the way for a never before water crisis India has ever seen. This possible squeeze on drinking water may also adversely impact power availability this

Water is the most precious and yet most taken-for-granted resource in the world. Currently, some 1.1 billion people worldwide lack access to water, and a total of 2.7 billion find water scarce for at least one month of the year. At the present consumption rate, this situation will only get worse. India currently has 18 per cent of the world's population, but only 4 per cent of its water resources, making it among the most waterstressed nations in the world. As India finds itself amid an unfolding water crisis, the stress is becoming more visible with each passing year. The extreme water in its major cities. Already Hyderabad municipal authorities too have sounded water shortages in Bangalore for alarms over the dwindling instance is an unfortunate exam- groundwater table.

WWD the garden city has turned into a drought city. The situation is so dire that families only have access to 20 litres of water per day as 6900 borewells out of 13900 total borewells in the city have dried up. Now even drilling up to 2000 feet is not yielding any water. The worst water crisis in the last 40 years has driven up water tanker prices, encouraged black marketing and ignited water conflicts across the once-beautiful city. For a city that is on the brink of Day Zero, the WWD's theme of 'Water for Peace" holds ironic significance for Bengaluru as the city surely needs both water as well as peace now.

Day Zero for water has been the most feared consequence of adverse anthropogenic intervention into the environment. The Cape Town water crisis during 2017-2018 is a well-documented example of a city's touch-and-go with Day Zero wherein the citizens were rationed a fixed number of litres of water per day. The cause of the crisis was severe drought brought on by climate change and a growing exploitation of groundwater. The Bengaluru water crisis must wake up India to the real threat of looming Day Zero for



THE SCARCITY OF WATER CAN BRING A CITY'S OR STATE'S **ECONOMY TO ITS** KNEES. RIDING ON THE PRESENT WATER CRISIS, BENGALURU IS EXPECTED TO WITNESS AN **EXODUS OF IT** PROFESSIONALS TO **NEARBY CITIES THAT** HAVE PLENTIFUL

WATER SUPPLY

The scarcity of water can bring a city or state's economy to its knees. Riding on the present water crisis, Bengaluru is expected to witness an exodus of IT professionals to nearby cities that have plentiful water supply. This will not only negatively impact the IT industry but will also stunt the growth of the real estate market, trade and industry.

The government must launch special programmes to pull back water-stressed cities in India from the edge of drought. To ensure this the city's municipal authority must bring borewells under a licensing system and those borewells operating without proper permissions must be sealed. Water meters must be installed for borewells as well to monitor the drawing of water and to rationalise the same. The government must also regulate the drilling companies and make it mandatory for the drillers to obtain permission before the procedure.

The city's concrete landscape also plays a major role in water scarcity. The manifold increase in paved surfaces causes a heat island effect resulting in peaking temperatures, but more importantly, prevents rainwater from percolating into the soil. This causes insufficient water recharges to the underground aquifers and groundwater table. As a result of this, the borewells begin to dry up.

Bengaluru for instance has 90% of its surfaces paved, this is alarming as it means that the rainfall that the city receives is never properly absorbed. The authorities across India must frame rules regarding paved

The city's water bodies are its lifelines. In the case of Bangalore for instance the slow death of its lakes over the past decades should have served as a prediction for the impending Day Zero for water. But sadly, the signs were ignored even as the landgrabbing mafia encroached on lake beds and suffocated the critical water bodies. To prevent the abandonment of the city by its people, the government must reclaim its water bodies clear the encroachment and pump water into these lakes as they have played a pivotal role in recharging the city's underground aquifers

Bangalore is probably the first city in India that is on the brink of Day Zero. The government must pull out all stops to rescue the city. The long pending fresh water piped supply project from the Cauvery River has been stuck due to various political and bureaucratic reasons. The metamorphoses of waterscarce conditions to water absent conditions can be disastrous for our nation.

(The author is a policy analyst. The views are personal)

## Life's palette: Colours to illuminate existence



In a world where words often fall short, colours emerge as an untapped avenue for communication, evoking emotions and thoughts

ommunicate one must, to share or just to ✓unburden oneself. Else one may cease to stay alive and kicking. Yet communication, with known modalities of gestures and words has never been an issue. It is so because both of these have limitations. The less explored is the application of colours to convey thoughts, feelings and emotions that come in myriad shades and hues. Colours speak when gestures and words betray, something Nature does with masterly finesse. In the countryside, I recently chanced to witness intriguing yellow flowers with red patches towards the centre and dark violet bands along the periphery. A miraculously impressive colour pattern mesmerising the eyes. "Colour! What a deep and mysterious language, the lan-guage of dreams," said Paul Gauguin.

Human beings are not destined to lead a drab life engrossed with ratiocinations, value judgements or analytics of what goes around or will, with heads down but to live with ease, spontaneity, relishing each moment. With colour, you stand out and

shine. Be colourful. The world needs your prismatic soul, said the media person Amy Leigh Mercree. So, Nature created colours; all in nature is in colours for a purpose. It is colours that imbue our otherwise drab routine with vibrancy and optimism. "Colours are the smiles of Nature," said Leigh Hunt. Let the scientists and

philosophers argue whether colour is a physical entity defined by the visual effect of light refracting and reflecting due to varied

frequency & wavelengths of diverse colours, or just an individual perception, anything in colour makes better sense. Colours also help keep our body, mind and spirits in healthy mode so that we can live fully. "The purest and most thoughtful minds are those which love colour the most," said John Ruskin.

The 5000-odd years old abstract art tradition of Rangoli of South Indian origin, still popular, is the art of saying it with colours. Among believers of any description, await a healing touch. If you

colours are widely used apropos to religious or other occasions. Rangoli is also integral to the inaugural ceremonies of scientific, engineering, and cultural meets; followers of different sects have distinctly coloured dress codes. The outsides of main entrances are often, if not daily, decorated with Rangoli of various hues made of pow-

dered rice, flower petals, leaves, sand, sugar etc. Coloured designs of Rangoli and other figures represent an array of diverse human sentiments

and ratiocinations. The circles of Rangoli symbolise eternity, the dots and small lines depict the hurdles creeping into our lives unawares. The ambience around Rangoli is believed to be charged with energy, ushering in positive vibes, and good luck, and keeping the negative, evil spirits at bay.

A look at the rainbow in the sky, the Nature's exquisite colour pattern, made the bard's heart leap up. Most in our strife-torn world direly

could become a rainbow in someone's cloud, as suggested by Maya Angelou, it would be a great, very meaningful life indeed.

Artists and thinkers often compare the world with a canvas, and life with a box of crayons makes great sense. "With color one obtains an energy that seems to stem from witchcraft" said Henri Matisse, the leading proponent of modern art. Each of us is an energy pack of enormous possibilities that we rarely understand. In keeping with our destination, and optimally using discretion, we can give a shiny, dull or any colour to our life; it is one's individual choice.

This Holi, ignore for a while the propriety of playing with colours with or without song & dance. And immerse in spontaneous expression of verve, drinking life to the lees, because all moments of life are not for analysis nor a mathematical puzzle to be resolved. Like a Kolavari song just to be enjoyed, no matter if you don't understand it!

The writer is a blogger and writes on social, spiritual and health issues. Views are personal)

### **OPACITY IN ELECTORAL BONDS**

Madam — Apropos news article "EC uploads complete electoral bond data," published on March 22, this is my response. The secrecy surrounding the Electoral Bond Scheme, which was notified in January 2018, is now gone with the complete disclosure of the details about the Electoral Bonds. The "Electoral Bond" was a bearer banking instrument with no name of the buyer or payee. Through the Finance Act of 2017 certain provisions in India's election law, the Companies Act, and the Income-tax law were amended to keep the Scheme completely opaque. The alphanumeric numbers in the bonds were not to be visible to the naked eve. The Supreme Court ordered that the State Bank of India, the sole designated bank to issue bonds, publish all the details through the Election Commission. The bank furnished the particulars without identifying alphanu-

meric numbers. The scenes in the court to stop the numbers from being published showed how panicked and desperate the Centre and the industry were. The built-in opacity of the scheme, the desperate attempts to maintain secrecy, the erratic conduct of the SBI, the panicked response of the industry and the ferocity of the government's opposition to disclosure gave the impression that something was rotten in the state of Denmark. Analysts believe that the Electoral Bond Scheme served as a conduit for the free flow of illicit money, enabling the investigative agencies to engage in motivated actions for extortion, alter the course of court cases, quid-pro-quo award of contracts and supply substandard drugs.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

#### **RECOGNISING ETHICAL DUTY**

Madam — Is charity a moral obligation? We have a volunteer obligation to occasionally assist others which implies that we frequently have various options

### **Best article in national interest**

his is in response to Kumar Chellappan's story on the Agenda cover titled 'CAA Passport to Freedom' dated 24 March 2024. I write this to profusely thank you for publishing such a bold and forthright article by Mr Kumar Chellappan 'Passport to

In the national interest, this is the best article I have seen. The same thing is happening in Uttarakhand and it may become another JK soon. I have been raising these issues here. Please convey my thank you to the writer for a wonderful piece of work. Thanks for such an article.

V K Bahuguna | Noida



but a moral obligation to help until personal sacrifice equates to recipients' disparity. The decision to do charity is our powerful choice that reflects our commitment to building a better India for everyone. Moral obligation is a sense of responsibility to do what is right. Uniqueness moulds your personality to

stand out in the crowd, like doing charity for needy ones, giving donations to poor children for their education, and many more good deeds. The euphoria you feel and the high regard you get are inexplicable. Charity should be a moral duty, not a casual choice.

Jagrati Gehlot | Ujjain

#### **ROW OVER SANGITA KALANIDHI**

Madam - Apropos news article "Carnatic singers outraged over honour to Krishna," published on March 22, this is my response. The row over the selection of vocalist T M Krishna for this year's Sangita Kalanidhi by the Music Academy, Chennai, is needless. The honour for Mr Krishna must be seen for aiding others. Charity is not a duty solely from the perspective of his musi-

cal skills, his strict adherence to tradition, and for using Carnatic music as a tool for social reform. The allegations made by a set of musicians like, Mr. Krishna have "vilified the Carnatic music fraternity" cannot be a chief reason to oppose the selection.

The Ramon Magsaysay award winner, in his efforts to obliterate caste elitism in the existing Carnatic music system, has been taking it outside the hallowed portals of Chennai city's prestigious Sabhas and creating more inclusive egalitarian space, where people of all communities, irrespective of caste and creed, come together and listen and enjoy his music. Where were these complainants and what were they doing when the prestigious Kalakshethra Bharathanatyam Foundation was mired in controversy last year, involving allegations of sexual abuse and discrimina-

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneér@gmail.com

www.dailypioneer.com facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

## **FIRST COLUMN**

### THE ESSENCE OF **WORKPLACE CULTURE**

It involves intricate interaction of values, behaviours and organisational dynamics



he majority of the population spends a significant portion of their life at work which highlights the fact that our workplace environment is critical to us. Culture is the way an individual interacts with others that results in work processes. We don't always see culture except for the physical surroundings. The work culture ethic rests upon delayed gratification, hyper-competitiveness and the perpetual need to outperform what machines can do. An organisation's culture includes the life experiences of its employees and is influenced by the organisational executives and those involved in the decision-making process. In layman's terms, workplace culture or workplace environment is a process because of how people learn. Employees learn to perform behaviours through a system of rewards or consequences, so it forms the work culture.

Creating a positive workplace environment requires attention to the physical, social, and cultural factors that influence employee experiences and satisfaction. By prioritising employee well-being and fostering a supportive and inclusive culture, organisations can create a workplace environment where employees thrive and contribute to the success of the business. Recognition and reward systems can impact employee morale and motivation to a large extent. Recognising employees for their contributions and providing opportunities for advancement and development contributes to a positive workplace environment and if it becomes a standard and repeated behaviour by the managers, then it becomes a part



Today, organisations supporting work-life balance provide employees with flexibility and resources to manage their personal and professional lives. This may include flexible working hours, remote work options and policies that encourage employees to take time off when needed. Factors such as lighting, temperature, noise levels, ergonomic furniture, and providing employees with up-to-date technology and the right tools for their tasks impact not only employee comfort but also increase the productivity and morale of the organisation. A positive work culture fosters employee engagement, where employees are emotionally committed to their work . Above all the most crucial role is the behaviour and actions of leaders and managers that influence the workplace environment at large.

Effective leadership that communicates openly, provides feedback and supports employee development can create a positive and empowering work environment while on the contrary, Negative work culture can manifest in various ways, leading to dissatisfaction, stress and decreased productivity among employees. When leaders exhibit toxic behaviours such as micromanagement, favouritism or lack of transparency, it creates a culture of fear and distrust among employees. When there is a lack of communication or when the information is not shared transparently, rumours and gossip spread, further eroding trust. This leads to employees feeling undervalued, unappreciated or unsupported resulting in resignation or the term which is nowadays widely in use 'Quiet Quitting'. Studies have found that engaged employees are often proven to be more productive, creative and motivated to contribute to the success of the company which shows that the workplace environment encompasses the physical, social and psychological aspects of the work setting that influence employee experience and well-being. It includes everything from the layout and design of the office space to the relationships between colleagues and the organisational culture.

Remember, a good salary motivates you once a month, but a good work culture does the same every single day. The values, norms and practices that define the organisational culture shape the workplace environment. A culture that values transparency, trust, and respect fosters employee engagement and satisfaction.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

## Debunking claims of fiscal discrimination



UTTAM GUPTA

Opposition-ruled States, especially southern States, have raised concerns about discriminatory treatment in the current system of fiscal resource sharing between the Centre and the States



arious Opposition-ruled States especially from south India have complained of 'discrimination' and 'unfair' treatment under the present scheme of sharing financial resources between the Union Government and the States.

Article 270 of the Constitution provides for the sharing of net tax proceeds collected by the Union government with the States. The taxes that are shared include corporation tax, personal income tax, Central GST (Goods and Services Tax) of CGST, the Centre's share of the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST), CED on petroleum products excluding the cess and surcharge levied by the Centre etc. All these taxes put together constitute the 'divisible

This division is based on the recommendation of the Finance Commission (FC) which is constituted every five years as per the terms of Article 280. At a broader level, the State's concern has to do with their spending around 60 per cent of the total expenditure (Centre and States put together) even as the share of their tax revenue in total tax revenue is about 40 per cent. For instance, during FY 2022-23, out of total spending of around Rs 100,00,000 crore, the States' expenditure was Rs 60,00,000 crore, and the remaining Rs 40,00,000 crore was by the Centre. As for the tax collection, out of total proceeds (Centre plus States) of about Rs 50,50,000 crore, the states collected around Rs 20,00,000 crore while the Centre garnered Rs 30,50,000 crore. This doesn't give the full picture. To get it, we need to add to their tax revenue, the amount of transfer by the Centre from the latter's tax collection as per the FC formula.

The share of States from the 'divisible pool' currently stands at 41 per cent as per the recommendation of the 15th FC. During FY 2022-23, this was Rs 950,000 crore which means tax revenue with the states was Rs 29,50,000 crore and the net amount remaining with the Centre - after transfer to states - was Rs 21,00,000 crore. With this adjustment, the States' share in overall tax revenue works out to 58.5 per cent which is more or less close to their share



THIS DIVISION IS BASED ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE FINANCE COMMISSION. CONSTITUTED **EVERY FIVE YEARS** AS PER THE TERMS OF ARTICLE 280

in total expenditure at 60 per cent. The second concern relates to the cess and surcharge collected by the Centre which doesn't form part of the 'divisible pool' and hence is not shared with the States. During 2017-18 and 2022-23, there has been a 133 per cent rise in the collection of the major cesses and surcharges. In the FY 2022-23, these accounted for a quarter of the total taxes collected by the Centre. The States argue that because of their exclusion, they are getting only 32 per cent of the total tax receipts of the Centre as against 41 per cent recommended by the 15th FC. This shouldn't be viewed in isolation. These cesses include a Cess like the GST Compensation Cess (GST -CC). The collections from GST --CC are used for the repayment of loans taken to compensate States for the shortfall in tax collection due to GST implementation for the period 2017-22. Flowing back to the

these collections in the divisible An important Cess collected by the Centre is the Road and Infrastructure Cess (RaIC) levied on petroleum products such as petrol and diesel. As is evident from the nomenclature, the collections from this Cess are meant fundamentally for building infrastructure projects mostly national highways, expressways etc. These can't be made a part of the divisible pool as by sharing with the States thereby reducing the funds available with the Centre, the very objective behind levying the RaIC will be

coffers of the States in its entirety

already, it makes no sense to include

Considering that the cesses and surcharges are levied for a well-defined purpose, including the proceeds from their imposition in the 'divisible pool' and then, to argue that the transfer to the states works out to 32 per cent which is lower than the devolution percentage recommended by the FC (read: 41 per cent) is untenable. The fact of the matter is that states are getting their legitimate share in full out of the tax collection by the Centre as per the FC

Apart from the Centre bolstering States' tax revenue as per the FC devolution formula, it is also helping them on the expenditure side by pumping a sizeable share in the centrally sponsored schemes (CSSs) being implemented by states where its contribution can range from 50 per cent to a high of 90 per cent depending on the Scheme. Besides, the Union government is also helping them by making available 50-year interest-free loans for financing capital expenditure. For the current FY, the loan amount is Rs 130,000 crore.

A third concern voiced by the southern States in particular, has to do with what they describe as outright discrimination they face in the distribution of the devolved funds among the States (also known in FC jargon as 'horizontal devolution'). They contend that industrially developed States (all southern States fall in this category) receive much less than a rupee for every rupee they contribute to the Centre's tax kitty as against States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. For instance, Karnataka gets back only 46 paise for every rupee it contributes while Uttar Pradesh gets Rs 1.79 against each rupee contributed by it.

The argument is specious. It sounds like a high-income earner who contributes more to the government's coffers (that is the way it should be under a progressive tax regime) expecting proportionate benefits from the latter. The proposition suffers from an inherent contradiction. Likewise, a rich state like Karnataka which contributes a rupee as tax should not expect a rupee in return.

have followed this dictum while framing its recommendations. The criteria used by the 15th FC for

determining the share of states in the divisible pool gives weights to various parameters as under 45 per cent for the income distance; 15 per cent for the population; 15 per cent for the area; 10 per cent for forest and ecology; 12.5 per cent for demographic performance and 2.5 per cent for tax effort. 'Income distance' is the distance of a State's income from the State with the highest per capita income. States with lower per capita income hence, not having the capacity to generate their resources are given a higher share to promote equitable and balanced development. Accordingly, while, 'income distance' gets the maximum weight of 45 per cent, population and area get a significant 15 per cent each as these factors put a heavy demand on resources.

Even as the formula seeks to protect the disadvantaged states, it also gives incentives to states detter placed (in terms of per capita income and low population) by giving weight to efforts for controlling their population and improving tax collection efficiency. A 15 per cent weight for these efforts is a good balancing act. Such States also get what is termed as post-devolution revenue deficit (PDRD) grants. These are meant to meet the gap in the Revenue Accounts of the States post-devolution. The eligibility and quantum of grants to concerned states are decided by the FC based on the gap between the assessed revenue and expenditure of the State. The 15th FC had recommended PDRD grants amounting to about Rs 300,000 crore over the five years ending FY 2025-26. To conclude, there is no merit in the argument that the States are treated unfairly in fiscal transfers.

(The writer is a policy analyst,

## The golden hour: Timely response in medical emergencies

#### Awareness of the golden hour, a brief window of time during which a life can be saved, is crucial

n emergency medical care, time is of the essence. Among the critical concepts that underscore this urgency is the "Golden Hour." This term refers to the crucial sixtyminute window immediately following a traumatic injury or medical emergency during which prompt medical intervention can significantly improve a patient's chances of survival and recovery.

The importance of the Golden Hour lies in its acknowledgement of the delicate balance between life and death, where timely medical attention can tip the scales in favour of life. During this period, the body's physiological responses to trauma are at their most



critical stage. Without timely intervention, cascading complications may ensue, leading to irreversible damage or even death.

One of the primary reasons why the Golden Hour holds such significance is the rapid progression of traumainduced pathophysiological changes within the body. Prompt medical care during this critical period can help

bilise the patient, and prevent further deterioration. Moreover, the Golden Hour

emphasises the importance of swift and efficient emergency response systems. Access to timely medical care, including rapid transportation to appropriate healthcare facilities, is paramount. Whether it involves dispatching ambulances equipped with life-saving equipment or giving CPR, every minute counts in maximising the chances of a positive outcome.

Furthermore, the concept of the Golden Hour underscores the significance of preparedness and training among healthcare professionals and first responders. From paramedics providing mitigate these responses, sta- initial on-site care to emer-

gency room physicians orchestrating complex treatment strategies, proficiency in trauma management is indispensable. Training programmes focused on rapid assessment, triage, and intervention empower healthcare providers to make critical decisions swiftly and effectively, optimising patient outcomes within the Golden

Saving lives during the Golden Hour is not solely dependent on medical expertise but also on community awareness and proactive engagement. Education campaigns emphasising the importance of early recognition of emergencies, prompt activation of emergency medical services, and basic life support interventions



empower individuals to become active participants in the chain of survival.

Awareness is the key amongst the people and that makes all the difference, feels Dr Devi Shetty, Founder of Narayana Health. "It is the first four to six hours in case

patient can be recovered after that no one can do anything about it. Unfortunately, unlike in heart attack where patient experiences acute pain, brain stroke is silent but is the second largest source of deaths in the country," he

Indeed, brain stroke is the second leading cause of death worldwide, after heart attacks. In 2020, one in six deaths from cardiovascular disease (CVD) was due to stroke. Globally, 15 million people suffer a stroke every year, with 5 million dying and 5 million becoming permanently disabled.

In this crucial hour, attendants' awareness can go a long way in saving lives. of heart attack and just one From giving CPR to going to

stroke-ready is crucial, if you go to a hospital that is not equipped to handle such an emergency, they will consume the golden hour figuring out what the problem is,"

says Dr Shetty. Unfortunately, the right information and awareness about medical emergencies are still lacking. "insider," a new docu-drama series based on real-life events fills that void. to offer viewers an unfiltered look into medical emergencies, shedding light on the critical moments that occur within the confines of the Emergency Room. By harnessing the power of technology and fostering greater awareness within our communities, we can ensure that every individual receives hour in brain stroke that the the right hospital which is the critical care they need

when it matters most. The Golden Hour epitomises the essence of timely intervention in emergency medical care. It serves as a poignant reminder of the profound impact that swift and efficient medical attention can have on saving lives and minimising the long-term consequences of traumatic injuries and critical medical conditions. Embracing the principles of the Golden Hour requires a collective commitment from healthcare professionals, emergency responders, policymakers, and communities at large to ensure that no precious moment is wasted when every second counts in the fight for life.

> (The author is a freelance writer, views are personal)

## Biden, Trump win Louisiana presidential primary

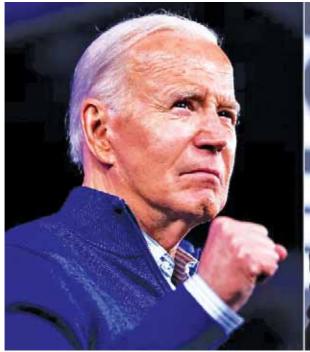
**AP** WASHINGTON

S President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump won Louisiana's primary on Saturday, collecting more delegates after they already clinched their party nominations.

appeared in Democratic Biden also Missouri's primary, with results not expected to be reported until next week

None of the races were in suspense. Biden and Trump have already beaten their major competitors. But the primary races are still closely watched by insiders for turnout and signs of protest voters.

For Biden, some liberals are registering their anger with Israel's war against Hamas following the militant group's October 7 attack. More than 30,000 people, two-thirds of them women and children, have been reported killed by





launched its offensive. A protest movement launched by Arab American communities in Michigan has spread to several other states.

Trump is his party's dominant figure and has locked up a third straight Republican nomination. But he faces dissent from people worried about the immense legal jeopardy he faces or critical of his White House term, which ended shortly after the January 6 insurrection mounted by his supporters and fuelled by his false theories of election fraud. Saturday's primary was the Missouri Democratic Party's first party-run presidential contest since a new law took effect in August 2022. Louisiana's primaries, meanwhile, come almost four vears after the state was the first to postpone its primaries due to the COVID-19



## Israeli airstrike in northeastern Lebanon wounds 3

**AP** ■ BEIRUT

An Israeli airstrike deep in Northeastern Lebanon early Sunday wounded at least three people, a local official

The airstrike near the city of Baalbek, a stronghold of Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group, was the latest to hit the area in recent weeks.

The strike occurred a few minutes after midnight and wounded three people according to Baalbek's mayor, Bachir Khodr, who posted the news on X.

It was not immediately clear what was struck. The strike came hours after Hezbollah said it used two drones carrying explosives to attack an Israeli Iron Dome missile defense system in the northern Israeli town of Kfar

The Israeli military said warplanes attacked a workshop used by Hezbollah for military activities. It added that after the strike some 50 rockets were fired from Lebanon toward Israel, saying some were shot down and others fell in open areas.

A pair of Israeli airstrikes March 12 near Baalbek killed at least two people and wounded 20, marking a continuing escalation between Israel and Hezbollah over the war Israel is fighting with Hamas militants in Gaza. Since the Israel-Hamas war began October 7, Hezbollah has been carrying out attacks on Israel's military posts along the border. Israel has since staged dozens of airstrikes, mostly along the border. But since late February the Baalbek area has been attacked at least three times.

## Frozen in time: Kamala tours bloodstained building

**AP** PARKLAND

US Vice President Kamala Harris toured on Saturday the bloodstained classroom building where the 2018 Parkland high school massacre happened, then announced a program to assist states that have laws allowing police to temporarily seize guns from people judges have found to be dangerous.

Harris saw bullet-pocked walls and floors still covered in dried blood and broken glass left behind from the February 14, 2018, attack at Marjory Stoneman Douglas hool that killed students and three staff members and wounded 17.

The halls and classrooms the three-story structure remain strewn with shoes left behind by fleeing students and wilted Valentine's Day flowers and balloons. Textbooks, laptop computers, snacks and papers remain on desks. She was told about each victim who died.

"Frozen in time," Harris said repeatedly about what she saw. She was accompanied on the tour by victims' family members, some of them pushing for more spending on school safety and others for stronger gun laws.

Harris, who leads the new White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, said there are lessons to be learned from Parkland, both for stopping school shootings before they happen and mitigating them with mitigating measures such as making sure

classroom doors don't lock to others or themselves. The from the outside as they did at Stoneman Douglas. She pointed out that shootings are a leading cause of death for children and teenagers.

"We must be willing to have the courage to say that on every level, whether you talk about changing laws or changing practices and protocols, that we must do better," Harris said.

At Stoneman Douglas, former student Nikolas Cruz, then 19, fired about 140 shots from his floor through the second and onto the third. He pleaded guilty in 2021. He was sentenced to life in prison in 2022 after his jury couldn't unanimously agree he deserved a death sentence, angering the victims' families. The building was preserved so his jury could tour it. It has loomed over the 3,600student school from behind a temporary fence since the school reopened two weeks after the shooting. It is scheduled to be demolished this summer. No replacement plan has been announced. Following Harris' tour, she

announced a USD 750 million grant program to provide technical assistance and training to Florida and the other 20 states that have similar "red flag laws."

Florida's law allows police officers, with a judge's permission, to temporarily seize guns belonging to anyone shown to be a danger

statute has been used more than 12,000 times since it was enacted six years ago in response to the Parkland shooting. Harris also called on both Congress and states

without red flag laws to adopt

The

administration has called for a

them.

massacre.

Biden

national red flag law. Cruz had a long history of troubling and bizarre bizarre troubling before behaviour the shooting, including animal torture. In the weeks before AR-15-style semiautomatic the shooting, he had been rifle during his six-minute reported to local law attack, moving methodically enforcement and the FBI by planning a mass shooting, but no action was taken. He legally purchased 10 guns in months between his

> 'Red flag laws are simply designed to give communities a vehicle through which they can share ... Information about the concern of potential danger or the crying out for help," Harris said.

18th birthday and the

Senator Rick Scott, a Republican who signed Florida's red flag law as governor, issued a statement Saturday calling the Biden administration's proposed national red flag law "radical," saying it would be modeled on California's statute and strip gun owners of their rights. California's law is broader than Florida's as it allows family members, employers and others to initiate the

## Nepal celebrates Holi

Holi, the festival of colours, was celebrated on Sunday in Kathmandu and other hilly districts across Nepal amidst tight security.

However, in Terai, the southern plains of the country, the festival will be celebrated on Monday.

President Ŕamchandra Paudel, in his message on the occasion, expressed confidence that Holi would

"promote mutual harmony in the society and further strengthen national unity". Expressing his good wishes for happiness, peace and prosperity to all Nepalese at home and abroad, President Paudel described Holi as the celebration of "victory of justice over injustice and victory of virtue over evil". Nepal Police intensified

security in and around Kathmandu Valley to avoid any untoward incident.

personnel were mobilised in the Valley to maintain law and order. Police also used drones to

monitor the security situation in sensitive areas. The force also started checking

vehicles at around 100 places to monitor possible traffic rule violations during the festival. The local administration has warned of action if anyone sprays colours or throws water over people without consent.

## Russia mourns concert hall attack

**AP** ■ MOSCOW

 $\mathbf{F}^{ ext{amily}}$  and friends of those still missing after an attack that killed over 130 people at a suburban Moscow concert hall waited for news of their loved ones as Russia observed a day of national mourning on Sunday.

Events at cultural institutions were cancelled, flags were lowered, and TV entertainment and ads were suspended, according to state news agency RIA Novosti. A steady stream of people brought flowers to a makeshift memorial near the burntout concert hall.

The attack, which has been claimed by an affiliate of the Islamic State group, is the deadliest on Russian soil in

As rescuers continue to search the damaged building, some families still the event targeted by gunmen on Friday are alive.

Igor Pogadaev was desperately seeking any details of his wife's whereabouts after she went to the concert and stopped responding to his messages.

He hasn't seen a message from Yana Pogadaeva since she sent her husband two photos from the Crocus City Hall music venue. After Igor saw the reports of gunmen

opening fire on concertgoers, he rushed to the site but couldn't find her in the numerous ambulances or among the hundreds of people who had made their way out of the venue. "I went around, searched, I asked everyone, I showed photographs. No one saw anything, no one could say anything," Pogadaev told The Associated Press in a video message. He watched flames bursting out of the building as he made frantic calls to a hotline for relatives of the victims but received no information.

As the death toll mounted on process, but the removal also has to be approved by a judge. Saturday, Igor scoured hospitals in has to be approved by a judge. Moscow and the Moscow region, said in an nighttime address to the



admitted patients. But his wife wasn't among the 154

reported injured, nor on the list of 50 victims authorities have already identified, he said. Refusing to believe that his wife could

the attack, Pogadaev still hasn't gone I couldn't be alone anymore, it's very difficult, so I drove to my friend's," he said. "Now at least I'll be with

someone." The Moscow Region's Emergency Situations Ministry posted a video Sunday showing equipment dismantling the damaged music venue

to give rescuers access. Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to be trying to tie Ukraine to the attack, something its government firmly denies.

Russian authorities arrested four

nation, among 11 people detained suspicion of involvement in the attack. He claimed they were captured while fleeing to Ukraine.

Though no court hearing has been officially announced, there was a police presence around Moscow's Basmanny District Court be one of the 133 people who died in on Sunday. Police tried to drive

journalists away from the court. Putin called the attack "a bloody, barbaric terrorist act" and said Russian authorities captured the four suspects as they were trying to escape to Ukraine through a "window" prepared for them on the Ukrainian side of the border.

Russian media broadcast videos that apparently showed the detention and interrogation of the suspects, including one who told the cameras he was approached by an unidentified assistant to an Islamic preacher via a messaging app and paid to take part in the raid.

Kyiv strongly denied any involvement,

and the Islamic State

affiliate

responsibility. Γhe Islamic State group released highly graphic footage from the attack on Saturday, appearing to show one of the gunmen opening fire on people lying on the ground.

Afghanistan

Putin did not mention IS in his speech to the nation, and Kyiv accused him and other Russian politicians of falsely linking Ukraine to the assault to stoke fervor for Russia's fight in Ukraine, which recently entered its third year. U.S. Intelligence officials said they had confirmed the IS affiliate's claim.

ISIS bears sole responsibility for this attack. There was no Úkrainian involvement whatsoever," National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said in a statement. The U.S. Shared information with Russia in early March about a planned terrorist attack in Moscow and issued a public warning to Americans in Russia, Watson said.

AP ALONG RIVER RWIZ

Along a stretch of bush by a muddy river, labourers dug and slashed in search of bamboo plants buried under dense grass. Here and there a few plants had sprouted tall, but most of the bamboo seedlings planted more than a year ago never grew.

Now, environment protection officers seeking to restore a 3kilometer (1.8-mile) stretch of the river's degraded banks were aiming to plant new bamboo seedlings, clear room for last year's survivors to grow and look after them better than they did the first time

A successful bamboo forest by the river Rwizi - the most important in a large part of western Uganda that includes the major city of Mbarara would create a buffer zone sand miners, subsistence farmers and others whose activities have long

threatened the river. The National Environment Management Authority

estimates that the Rwizi has lost 60 per cent of its water catchment area over the decades, and in some areas this winding river runs as narrow as a stream. "Once bamboo is established, it is almost like a said Jeconious Musingwire, an environment officer who was the project's technical advisor. "The roots trap everything, including the surface runoff, and stabilize the

This East African country is seeing growing interest in bamboo, a perennial plant cultivated in many parts of the world. It can be burned for fuel in rural communities, taking pressure off dwindling forest reserves of eucalyptus and other natural resources. It's a hardy plant that can grow anywhere. And bamboo.

weaknesses of the banks."

businesses can turn it into products ranging furniture to toothpicks. Some of the bamboo species grown in Uganda are imported from Asia, but many - like one whose shoots are smoked and then boiled to make a popular traditional meal in eastern Uganda - grow wild. The Jgandan government has set a 10-year policy that calls for planting 300,000 hectares (about 1,100 square miles) of bamboo, most of it on private land, by 2029 as part of wider reforestation efforts.

That's an ambitious target. The Uganda Bamboo Association, the largest such group with 340 members, has planted only 500 hectares. Even with growing interest in bamboo farming, authorities will have to encourage more farmers in rural parts of Uganda to plant vast tracts of land with



But signs are promising. Not far from the scene where labourers were tending bamboo plants sits a large commercial farm that includes

seven acres of bamboo. The plants at Kitara Farm were well-tended, and a stockpile of 10,000 bamboo poles sat waiting to be sold.

Caretaker Joseph Katumba said the property has become something of a demonstration farm for people who want to learn more about bamboo. He

recalled that when they first trees, eventually they ge began planting bamboo in 2017, some people asked why they were "wasting land" by planting bamboo when it grows wild in the bush. Katumba said that's changed,

with skeptics now interested in planting bamboo "because they have studied it and they love it." Unlike eucalyptus - a tall flowering plant widely planted here for its timber - "there is no bamboo season. The more you look after it well, weeding around it, the more and more years you will earn from bamboo."

Bamboo grows faster than eucalyptus and regenerates like a weed. It also can thrive in poor soil. Kitara Farm stopped planting new eucalyptus lots while its bamboo acreage continues to expand, he said.

"We have so many eucalyptus forests. But we realized that once you cut the eucalyptus finished, and once they are finished there is no more money," he said. "But with bamboo, we investigated and found out that when you plant it ... the grandkids and their grandkids and their grandkids are their grandkids. will earn from bamboo. A single bamboo pole brings a little less than a dollar, so

farmers need to grow a lot to

earn enough. Bamboo promoters are urging them to see a bamboo plantation as the same kind of cash crop as coffee or tea estates. Banks are offering bamboo "plantation capital" to clients, loans that promise ownership substantial acres of bamboo. "Each person should actually

plant bamboo, and a lot of it, said Taga Nuwagaba, a bamboo farmer and businessman who owns a bamboo furniture factory near the Ugandan capital of Kampala.



## 300 abducted kids in Nigeria freed

Nigerian schoolchildren have been released, local officials said on Sunday, more than two weeks after the children were seized from their school in the northwestern state of Kaduna and marched into the

At least 1,400 students have been kidnapped from Nigerian schools since 2014, when Boko Haram militants kidnapped hundreds of schoolgirls from Borno state's Chibok village in

In recent years, abductions have been concentrated in the country's northwestern and central regions, where dozens of armed groups often target villagers and travellers for

Kaduna state Gov. Uba Sani did not give details of the release of the 287 students abducted from their school in the remote town of Kuriga on

aged 12 or younger. In a statement, he thanked statement, President Bola Nigerian Tinubu "particularly ensuring that the abducted school children

unharmed." Tinubu had vowed to rescue the children "without paying a dime" as ransom. But ransoms are commonly paid for kidnappings, often arranged by families, and it is rare for officials in Nigeria to admit to the payments.

No group has claimed responsibility for the Kaduna kidnapping, which locals have blamed on bandit groups known for mass killings and kidnappings for ransom in the conflict-battered northern region, most of them former herders in conflict with settled communities.

At least two people with extensive knowledge of the security crisis in Nigeria's northwest told The Associated Press that the identity of the abductors is known.

Murtala Ahmed Rufa'i, a professor of peace and conflict studies at Usmanu Danfodivo University, and Sheikh Ahmad Gumi, a cleric who has negotiated with the bandits, said they are hiding in the region's vast and ungoverned

Arrests are rare in Nigeria's mass kidnappings, as victims are usually released only after desperate families pay ransoms or through deals with government and security officials.

The Kaduna governor thanked Nigerian security forces and officials for the release of the students. "I spent sleepless nights with the National Security Adviser, Mal. Nuhu Ribadu Fine-tuning strategies and coordinating the operations of the security agencies, which eventually resulted in this successful outcome," he said.

## Princess of Wales and King Charles: One in two people develop cancer during their lives

THE CONVERSATION E EAST ANGLIA (UK)

The Princess of Wales released a moving video message on March 22 to address speculation about her health. In it, the future queen disclosed that she'd been diagnosed with cancer following tests conducted after she underwent major abdominal surgery at a clinic in London in January. Catherine explained that she was undergoing "preventative chemotherapy" — but emphasised that her surgery had been successful, and that she was "well" and "getting stronger every day". The message was the second announcement of a royal family cancer diagnosis in recent weeks. On February 5, Buckingham Palace published a statement that King Charles III had been diagnosed with an undisclosed form of can-cer, unrelated to the treatment he had been receiving for an enlarged prostate. The statement said that he had begun "regular treatments". The king post-poned all public-facing duties during his treatment, but reportedly continued with his "constitutional role as head of state, including completing paperwork and holding private meetings'

Cancer is the leading cause of death worldwide. One in two people will develop some form of cancer in their lifetime - so the condition will affect almost every family. However, many cancers can be cured if, as appears to be the case with the king, the condition is detected early and treated effectively.

What is cancer? Our bodies are made up of more than 100 billion cells, and cancer typically starts with changes in a small group of cells -

or even a single one.

We have different cell types depending upon where in the body they are and the function that the cell has. The size, amount and function of each of these cells is normally tightly regulated by genes groups of codes held within our DNA that instruct cells how to grow and divide. However, changes (mutations) to DNA can alter the way cells grow and multiply - often forming a lump, or solid tumour. Cancers can also develop in blood cells, such as white blood cell cancer which is known as leukaemia. This type of cancer does not form solid tumours; instead, the cancer builds up in

the blood or sometimes the marrow in

the core of bones, where blood cells are

produced. In all, there are more than 200 types of cancer, but all start with mutations in the DNA contained within each and everv cell.

What exactly are mutations?

Think of your DNA as a big recipe book, and your genes as individual recipes for making different dishes. Mutations are smudges or missing words from this recipe that can result in key ingredients not being added into the mix.

Regardless of the type of cancer or the cells from which it develops, mutations in our genes can result in a cell no longer understanding its instructions.

These mutations can happen by chance when dividing, but can also be the result of lifestyle choices such as smok-

ing, drinking, and inactivity. Research has found that in order for a

normal cell to turn into a cancerous cell, anywhere from one to ten different mutations are normally required. How is cancer treated?

Treatment options for cancer depend on a variety of factors, including where your cancer is, how large it is, and whether it has spread to other parts of the body. The main treatments for cancer include surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy. Chemotherapy uses drugs to target and kill cells that are rapidly dividing in our bodies. This approach is effective at targeting fast-growing cells in various cancers - but also has negative side effects. It also targets healthy cells that rapidly divide, such as hair and the cells lining our digestive system. This can lead to commonly reported side-effects such as hair loss, nausea and diarrhoea. Chemotherapy can be used both pre-

ventatively — as in the case of the princess and therapeutically. Preventative chemotherapy, also known

as adjuvant chemotherapy, is given after surgery or other primary treatments to eliminate any remaining cancer cells in the body. It aims to reduce the risk of the cancer returning (known as recurrence). Therapeutic chemotherapy is used as a treatment option for cancer that has spread or is well established, such as advanced-stage cancers. Surgery involves the physical removal of cancerous tissues as well as nearby lymph nodes - small glands which act as filters in your body that cancers can spread through — to eliminate the tumour. Surgery is often used to remove localised cancers that haven't spread throughout the body. Radiotherapy uses high-energy radiation beams that are able to target specific areas

where tumour cells are located to destroy or shrink the tumour. Radiotherapy can be applied externally or internally. Chemotherapy, surgery, and radiotherapy are often combined in cancer treatment to improve outcomes for patients.

Thanks to developments in cancer research over the last 50 years, survival  $rates\ have\ improved\ greatly-- although$ the rate of improvement has slowed recently. Cancer survival depends on various factors such as age — people under 40 have a greater chance of survival — overall health and fitness, as well as family history.

What you should do

Particular changes in your body or warning symptoms could indicate the presence of cancer. These include, but are not limited to: ■ Unexplained weight loss;

■ Fatigue that doesn't improve with rest;

■ Changes in bowel or bladder habits; Persistent cough or coughing up blood:

■ Difficulty swallowing; Persistent pain;

Noticing lumps, such as in a breast or

testicle.

The symptoms may not necessarily be the result of cancer. But it is important to get checked by a doctor if you notice anything out of the ordinary or have had persistent symptoms that don't ease. Early detection and treatment can significantly improve outcomes for many types

### Greek authorities seize 3.75 million capsules of contraband nerve pain drug



**AP** ■ ATHENS

reek authorities said Saturday they seized more than three tons of the prescription nerve pain drug pregabalin and impounded a yacht registered in the United Kingdom. The operation took place Thursday night at the port of Lavrio, 70 kilometers (43 miles) southeast of Athens, the coast guard said.

On the yacht, the coast guard found 3.75 million capsules of Nervigesic, a brand name used by Indian pharmaceuticals firm HAB Pharma for pregabalin. The capsules were packaged in 500 cardboard boxes weighing nearly 3.15 tons, the statement said.

Pregabalin is used to treat nerve pain caused by a variety of conditions, such as diabetes and shingles, and also to treat a type of seizure called partial seizure because it has its origin at a single location in the brain. The raid was ordered based on information from Greece's "National Intelligence Agency about the activity of networks of Egyptian nationals in Greek territory," the statement said.

The yacht and its contents remain at the Lavrio port while local authorities conduct an investigation, the coast guard



## Senegal to elect its next president after months of unrest

Senegalese are heading to the polls Sunday to vote in a tightly contested presidential race marred by months of unrest that threatened democracy in one of West Africa's most stable

The election will take place much uncertainty following President Macky Sall's unsuccessful effort to delay the February 25 vote until the end of the year — and then announcing a surprise amnesty for political prisoners. Two leading opposition figures were released from prison last week to jubilant celebrations. Sunday's election is set to be Senegal's fourth democratic transfer of power since it gained independence from France in 1960. It is also the vote without an incumbent on the ballot since term limits were introduced

woman. "This is poised to be the most competitive election since the introduction of multiparty politics," Tochi Eni-Kalu, Africa analyst at the Eurasia Group, told The Associated Press.

Analysts say no candidate is expected to win more than 50 per cent of the vote, which means a runoff between leading candidates is widely expected. These include Amadou Ba, a former prime minister, and Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who is backed by popular opposition figure Ousmane Sonko

Sonko, who came third in the previous election, was barred from running in January because of a prior conviction for defamation. He has faced a slew of legal troubles in recent years that supporters say are part of a government effort to derail his candidacy.

Other potential frontrunners there is no clear are Khalifa Sall, a former frontrunner among the 19 mayor of Dakar unrelated to candidates, including one the president, and Idrissa Seck,

a former prime minister from the early 2000s who was the runner up in the 2019 presidential race.

Two candidates dropped out this week to back Faye's candidacy, a sign of the start of coalition-building that could determine the outcome of the race, according to analysts. At the forefront of concerns for

many Senegalese voters is the economy, which has been squeezed by high food and energy prices partly driven by war in Ukraine. Unemployment among the nation's youth is widespread, driving thousands to risk their lives on dangerous journeys in search of jobs in the West.

"Jobs are really, truly the priority. Everyone can see that unemployment is taking over," said Oumy Sarr, a political activist. "The second priority is the high cost of living in Senegal today. What is to be done to improve people's living conditions? Inflation is rising, everyone is tired.

## Russia launches another massive missile attack on Ukraine

Russia launched its third massive missile attack on Ukraine in the past four days, and the second to target the capital of Kyiv, with Poland's military saying that one of the missiles launched at western

space Sunday. The head of Kyiv's military administration, Serhiy Popko, said Russia used cruise missiles launched from Tu-95MS strategic bombers. An air alert in the capital lasted for more than two hours as rockets entered Kyiv in groups from the north. He said the attacks were launched from the Engels district in the Saratov region of Russia. According to preliminary data, there were no casualties or damage in the capital, he said. The operation command of Poland, a member of NATO, said in a statement that there was a violation of Polish airspace at 4:23 am (0323GMT) by one of the cruise missiles launched by Russia against towns in western Ukraine.

The object entered near the Polish town of Oserdów and stayed there for 39 seconds, the statement said. It added that military radar systems observed the missile the entire time and all necessary procedures were launched to ensure the safety of Polish airspace.

Poland's Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz told reporters in a televised news conference that the



Russian missile would have been shot down had there been any indication that it was heading towards a target in Poland. He said the missile penetrated Polish airspace about 1,000-2,000 meters (0.6 miles to 1.2 miles)

The Polish foreign ministry said it would "demand explanations from the Russian Federation in connection with another violation of the country's airspace.

"Above all, we call on the Russian Federation to stop the terrorist air attacks on the inhabitants and territory of Ukraine, end the war, and address the country's problems," internal statement read. Since Russia invaded

Ukraine, there have been a number of intrusions into Polish airspace.

In 2022, two Poles were killed in a missile blast.

Western officials blamed those deaths on a Ukrainian air defence missile that went astray but also accused Russia of culpability because it started the war and the Ukrainian missiles were launched in self-defence.

Meanwhile, one person was killed and four wounded in a Ukrainian missile attack on Sevastopol on the Russianoccupied Crimean peninsula Saturday night, city governor Mikhail Razvozhaev said.

## Young Indian professional dies in car accident in Pennsylvania

n a tragic incident, a 24-year-old In a tragic incident, a 21/ Indian professional was killed in a car accident in the US state of Pennsylvania.

Arshia Joshi lost her life in a tragic car accident in Pennsylvania on March 21, the Consulate General of India in New York said in a post on X on Saturday, expressing deep condolences to her family. Joshi had completed her graduation last year. The Consulate said it is in touch with Joshi's family and local community leaders.

"Extending all possible assistance to

transport her mortal remains to India at the earliest," it said, without divulging more details about the deceased

Volunteer-based nonprofit organisation TEAM Aid is assisting in sending Joshi's mortal remains to Delhi to her family.

TEAM Aid's primary focus has been to help members of the Indian community who are either travelling or living abroad and face dire situations such as accidents, suicides, homicides or sudden

death of loved ones. It has been working to provide assistance and help repatriate the

mortal remains to India of people who have tragically lost their lives while in the US

"Amidst a series of tragic incidents, our hearts are heavy with grief," TEAM Aid founder Mohan Nannapaneni told PTI.

In the past week alone, TEAM Aid has sent the remains of five individuals to India and organised three local funerals, he said.

Nannapaneni and his team are currently assisting several more families in sending the mortal remains of their loved ones who died in the US and Canada to India. These include two truck drivers



who tragically lost their lives in an accident in New Mexico. Their remains are being sent to Punjab. A young truck driver passed away suddenly in New Mexico and his remains are being sent to Amritsar,

Nannapaneni said. In Seattle, Washington, a promising 25-year-old Indian student was found dead in his apartment and his remains are being sent to Bangalore. Mourning the loss of a "talented 38-year-old restaurant chef" in San Jose, California, Nannapaneni said his remains are

being sent to Kolkata. In a devastating hit-and-run incident, a 50-year-old man in to Indian immigrants here, Palacios, Texas was killed. His remains will be sent to Ahmedabad for the last rites. In another tragic incident, a 27-

year-old recent graduate was found dead in his apartment in Vancouver, Canada. "We will send him home to Kerala," Nannapaneni

TEAM Aid did not disclose the names and identities of the deceased to respect their privacy. Nannapaneni said his team is in the process of initiating "educational and preventative" programmes soon to offer guidance and support including students and workers, aimed at ensuring their safety and security. "Every day brings news of more

loss, alongside numerous other challenges spanning health, immigration, social issues, and beyond," he said. Earlier this week, former CEO of

PepsiCo Indra Nooyi released a video message, advising Indian students in the US to be "watchful" and respect local laws and urging them to not engage in drugs or excessive drinking to ensure their safety and security.

the pioneer

# FPIs infuse over ₹38,000 crore in equities in March

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $F^{\rm PIs~have~shown~a~significant}_{\rm resurgence~in~their~investment}$ activity within the Indian equity markets this month, injecting over Rs 38,000 crore, mainly driven by favourable shifts in the global economic scenario and strong domestic macroeconomic

The investment came following a modest investment of Rs 1,539 crore in February and a massive outflow of Rs 25,743 crore in January, data with the

depositories snowed.
With this, foreign portfolio investors' (FPIs) investment has turned positive to the tune of Rs 13,893 crore in equities so far in 2024 and Rs 55.480 crore in the

Himanshu market. Srivastava, Associate Director at Manager Research Morningstar Investment Research India, highlighted that

FPIs have become significant buyers in March. The improved global economic conditions and positive Indian macroeconomic scenario have driven FPIs to invest in high growth-oriented markets like India.

Additionally, the recent market correction has provided a buying opportunity.

Further, the influx of FPIs can be attributed to robust GDP growth and expectations of a potential shift in the RBI's policy, possibly leading to rate cuts of 25-50 basis points in the latter half of fiscal 2025, experts believe.



However, last week, FPIs turned net sellers, although marginally, to the tune of USD 314 million. This could be largely attributed to FPIs adopting a cautious approach.

approach.
Apart from equities, FPIs have injected a massive Rs 13,223 crore into the debt market this month (till March 22). This came in the backdrop of Bloomberg announcing India's bonds inclusion in its Emerging Market (EM)

Local Currency Local Government Index and related indices from January 31 next

Moreover, FPIs have been investing in the debt markets for the past few months. They invested Rs 22,419 crore in February and Rs 19,836 crore in

The fundamental reason for this sustained FPI flows into debt is the inclusion of Indian bonds in the JP Morgan EM Bond Fund and Bloomberg Bond Index, which is expected to bring investment of around USD 25 billion. This investment will begin only by June 2024, and therefore, FPIs are doing some front running in view of this potential investment," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Further, FPI inflows into debt are likely to continue going forward. However, a sharp surge in debt flows is unlikely since the US bond yields have also risen in recent days, he added.



### **RBI to conduct** special audit of **IIFL Finance, JM Financial Products**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IFL Finance Ltd and JM Financial Products Ltd (JMFPL) will undergo a special audit to further probe their regulatory breaches, as the Reserve Bank has initiated the process for the appointment of auditors.

The Reserve Bank has floated two separate tenders for the appointment of auditors for special audits of these two non-banking finance companies.

Audit firms empanelled by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for forensic audit can participate in the tendering process, and the last date for submission of bids is April 8, as per the tender document published by the Reserve Bank of India.

The selected firms will be awarded work on April 12, 2024, as per the bid documents

Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank put a curb on these two entities for noncompliance of regulatory guidelines. The central bank barred IIFL Finance

from sanctioning or disbursing gold loans after certain material supervisory concerns were observed in its gold loan

The RBI had said an inspection of the company was carried out by it with reference to IIFL's financial position as of March 31, 2023.

"Certain material supervisory concerns were observed in the gold loan portfolio of the company, including serious deviations in assaying and certifying purity and net weight of the gold at the time of sanction of loans and at the time of auction upon default," the RBI had said in a statement.

These practices, apart from being regulatory violations, also significantly and adversely impact the interest of the customers,

### **India poised to be premier** destination for commercial arbitration, says SC judge

 $T^{\text{he quickest and easiest}}_{\text{resolution to disputes is}}$  through arbitration and mediation, Supreme Court judge Hima Kohli said.

India stands as a reservoir of untapped potential, poised to ascend as a premier destination for commercial arbitration and mediation on the international level, the apex court judge said. Speaking as the chief guest at the Conference on Ease To Justice Through Arbitration and Mediation in Commercial

Disputes organised by the Indian Council of Arbitration (ICA) at Vagator in North Goa on Saturday, she said India is at the forefront of business and global transactions and disputes were bound to arise. "The quickest and easiest resolution would be through alternate dispute resolutions like arbitration and mediation. enforcement of the ADR award is imperative to keep the economy buoyant," she asserted. The ICA has been propagating the cause of for a long time and holding such conferences is a way forward, the SC judge said. "Court litigation has to be the primary focus, but if the for busin alternatives are developed Kohli said.



well, it will take the burden off the court. It ensures decision-making brings a closure between disputing parties. Nothing can be better than that," she added. "In today's world, thanks to world, thanks to globalisation, everything is moving at a fast pace. This has led to increased commercial transactions, with businesses spanning across cultural and geographical boundaries. At the same time, this has thrown up a variety of legal challenges," she said. International trade and investments have grown phenomenally, making dispute resolution more complex, she said, adding these disputes can affect not only the parties involved ADR, particularly but also the global arbitration and mediation, community. "To address Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has emerged as a powerful tool for businesses", Justice

# Miners urge Centre not to impose export duty on low grade iron ore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $I_{
m affordable"}^{
m ndia}$  has "incredibly affordable" airfares and the

country's aviation market has

the kind of growth potential where Akasa Air as well as other carriers can do well,

according to the nearly two-year-old airline's chief Vinay

overseas flight from Mumbai

to Doha, Dube also asserted

that the airline is not about

and also affect foreign exchange earnings.

In a representation to the government, the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) said the mining sector was adversely impacted when in May 2022 the export duty was imposed on low-grade iron ore fines and pellets. The government, however, withdrew the tax in November same year.

country's GDP is accounted for by Miners' body FIMI has urged iron ore among the non-coal the government not to impose minerals. Iron ore mining also any export duty on low-grade iron significantly contributes towards ore, stating that any such move creating jobs with employment of would cause a significant loss of about 5 lakh persons --45,000 state revenues and employment direct and 4,50,000 indirect, it said. More than 90 per cent of the country's overall iron ore shipments go to China. "We request that any proposal for banning, restricting exports of iron ore and pellets may kindly not be considered and the status quo of nil export duty on these products be maintained," the miners' body said. With the opening of new mines and expansion of existing mines the iron ore production capacity is A major share of the mining likely to rise to 330 million tonnes



in FY'25. But if there is a ban on exports of iron ore or a duty is imposed on its exports, in such a

In the mining of iron ore, lumps are generated to the tune of only 25-30 per cent and the balance of iron ore is in the form of fines. "The fines below 58 per cent Fe are required to be kept in the mining

lease area only as these cannot be utilised by the steel industry specially secondary steel sector," it said. The non-removal of low grade iron ore from the mines restrict the production of lumps also and becomes an environmental hazard besides limiting scientific mining.

Thus accumulation of iron ore fines in the mines also leads to the restricted availability of lumps in the market which in turn adversely scenario the production will drop impacts the steel industry, it said.



sensitive, especially with rising number of air tuture but for others as well. India, which is one of the rising number of air "Thanks to the growth that we world's fastest-growing civil travellers, including first-time

months ago... I think Indian airfares when you compare them to parts of Europe, East Asia, North America, you compare to any decent-sized aviation economy in the world, India has some of the most affordable airfares by a ng margin, not just by Rs 10 or 100... Indian airfares are incredibly affordable," Dube said.

"marketing gimmicks". Akasa are going to see in India, it is aviation markets, is also seen fliers. There have been Travel portal Cleartrip's there won't Air is aiming to be among the not that Akasa will do well in some quarters as price concerns, mainly during outgoing CEO Ayyappan disruptions.

expected to go up, both on international and domestic segments, as there is high demand and more people are making bookings in advance. "In the premium segment, the (price) sensitivity is not so high. There is a second set of consumers, they are a lot more bothered about pricing and they might even take three hops to reach a destination," he told PTI. Meanwhile, Akasa Air's Dube said there is no shortage of pilots at the airline and that there won't be any flight

## Tech Mahindra to merge two US based subsidiaries

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

services Consultation company Tech Mahindra said it plans to merge its two whollyowned subsidiaries, Born Group and Tech Mahindra (Americas), to synergise operations,

optimise operational cost, and reduce compliance risks. The merger is subject to regulatory approvals in the country of incorporation. According to a regulatory filing, the appointed date of the plan of merger is April 1,

"A Plan of Merger of Born Group, Inc., a wholly-owned



step-down subsidiary of the Company with its parent company viz. Tech Mahindra (Americas) Inc., a wholly-owned material subsidiary of the Company, has been approved by the respective companies on Friday, 22nd March 2024," the company While BORN specializes in

world's top 30 airlines by 2030

"We think we have a great

financial future. Listing is in

our future... But you never say

never. We hope to list some day," he told PTI in an

While acknowledging that

aviation competition has

always been intense, he said

Akasa Air to thrive in the

interview this week.

As Akasa Air prepares to take that as long as the focus is on

the international skies on fundamentals, there is March 28 with the first enough room not just for

enough

and will go public in future.

consulting, company. computer programming support services and IT Management support

only if someone else does

badly, no, Akasa can do well

and others can do well, that is the kind of growth that India

has to offer," the airline's Founder and CEO said.

The carrier, which started flying in August 2022, has a fleet of 24 planes and a domestic market share of 4.5

per cent. To a query about air ticket

prices, Dube said the country

airfares.

& Consulting Services. for the financial year ended Tech Mahindra (Americas) 31st March 2023 is USD

providing Brand strategy, (TMA) is a wholly owned visual design, brand identity exploration, and more for company. BORN is a wholly digital products, mobile apps, and physical products in the US, TMA provides owned subsidiary of TMÁ owned subsidiary of the

According to the filing, the turnover of BORN and TMA

55.08 million and USD 1,201.37 million respectively.
"The business of both entities BORN and TMA are complimentary hence consolidation of entities will result in synergy of business operations, optimize operational cost and reduce the compliance risk," the

It added that there will be no cash consideration or issue of new shares involved under the Plan of Merger. The investment of TMA in BORN will get cancelled on the merger becoming effective.

The shareholding pattern of the company will remain unchanged.

## Auto players line up array of new EV models in coming years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian auto industry is **⊥** gearing up to roll out an array of electric vehicle models over the next few years amid a renewed push by the government to encourage environment-friendly mobility solutions with the unveiling of a new policy.

Mass market players like Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors are lining up new models to cater to the demand across segments.

Mahindra & Mahindra CEO Automotive Sector Nalinikanth Gollagunta told PTI that starting January 2025, the company will be rolling out five new battery electric

vehicles in the coming years. "These electric SUVs will be built on Mahindra's innovative INGLO platform and aim to cater to a variety of consumers through their diverse range. The launch of these SUVs is part of Mahindra's broader strategy to lead in the electric vehicle sector, and we expect 20-30 per cent of our portfolio order to cut carbon and oil to be electric by 2027," he imports, the country will

Maruti Suzuki India Executive Officer (Corporate Affairs) Rahul Bharti said the auto major is making serious

"We will start production of a high-spec EV designed-fresh years," he noted.

investments in EVs.

as an EV with 550 km range in FY24-25 and will have about six EV models in the next 7-8

Bharti, however, noted that in fully long-range electric SUV

require many more technologies like hybrid-CNG, Bio-CNG, electric, Ethanol flex fuel etc.

"We are committed to work on all such technologies also," he

Hyundai Motor India COO Tarun Garg said the automaker was among the first OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) to introduce a (original

KONA in India in 2019. Last year, the company launched the IONIQ 5, its premium electric SUV.

Garg noted that as per multiple industry estimates, EVs are projected to contribute around 20 per cent of India's automotive market by 2030. "With the Indian government's steadfast focus on electric vehicles and the supportive

policy framework, we are

confident that EVs will soon

become mainstream, driving a

for India," he added.

The company plans to invest around Rs 26,000 crore over 10 years in Tamil Nadu. This investment will also include setting up a battery assembly plant in the state.

A Tata Motors spokesperson said that the company aims to have 10 EVs by 2026.

The company plans to introduce four more EV models this year, including Curvy EV and Harrier EV. Luxury carmakers are also gearing up to enhance their EV lineup in the country.
"We are invested in the market,

having an aggressive product strategy with more than 12 new products planned for debut in 2024, of which three will be new BEVs," Mercedes-Benz spokesperson said. This well-defined roadmap will help the automaker deepen its BEV footprint, offering customers the best of luxury and

technology, he added. remains "Mercedes-Benz strategically focused and

sustainable automotive future tactically flexible, as we believe customer preferences and market conditions will determine the pace of BEV transition," the spokesperson stated. Audi India expects 50 per cent of its sales in India to come from electric vehicles by

> The automaker, which sells four electric models in the country, plans to expand the product range to achieve its ambitious sales target.

Earlier this month, the government approved an electric-vehicle policy, under which duty concessions will be given to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum investment of USD 500 million, a move aimed at attracting major global players like US-based Tesla.

Mahindra & Mahindra's Gollagunta stated that the policy reinforces the Make in India momentum, with requirements of bank guarantees, minimum investment commitment, and

local value addition.

#### Volkswagen Passenger Cars India, which sold around 44,000 units in 2023, sells performancepremium oriented variants of its models SUV Taigun and sedan Virtus with a 1.5-litre

petrol engine under the 'GT' trim. It has now brought a 1litre petrol engine in the GT lineup affordability. increase

segment of a performance SUV or a performance when introduced the GT on the Taigun and Virtus that basically created that space, which now everybody's

coming into," Volkswagen Passenger Cars India Brand Director Ashish Gupta told

**PTI** ■ JAIPUR

company said.

erman carmaker Volkswagen is seeking to cash in on the increasing demand for its premium performance-oriented offerings in metro and tier II and III cities as it looks to grow sales by 15 per cent in India this year, according to a senior company official.

VW eyes growth in

smaller cities in India

"Earlier, there was no subsedan...So,

Bullish on the growth of the sub-segment, he said it has been fuelled by how the customer preferences are evolving over a period of time with the top-of-the-line features, safety performance topping their demand list and are willing to

pay for it.
"They're not willing to compromise. So, definitely, this is a space which will continue to grow," Gupta asserted. Earlier, the GT was available

only in a 1.5-litre petrol engine option, and around 35-40 per cent of sales were from the GT on both Taigun and Virtus, he added. The growth of GT sales is not

limited only in the metros and cities, he said, adding that "if I look at the GTs even in the Tier II and tier III towns, almost 20 to 25 per cent of my sales are the GTs".

## SOLITARY THYROID NODULES & CANCER

In this concluding part, ARCHANA JYOTI learns from the team at AIIMS Delhi's Surgical disciplines Department led by Dr. SUNIL CHUMBER, that while most thyroid nodules are benign and do not require immediate intervention, thorough evaluation is crucial to rule out malignancy. Close collaboration among patients, endocrinologists, radiologists, and surgeons is essential in managing thyroid nodules.

#### **DOES STN CAUSE CANCER?** By Dr Catherine Halam & Dr Ankita Singh

¬he risk of cancer in a solitary thyroid nodule can vary depending on several factors, including the patient's age, gender, family history, and the characteristics of the nodule itself. Generally, the risk of cancer in a solitary thyroid nodule is estimated to be around 5-15%. However, it's important to note that the majority of thyroid nodules are benign (non-cancerous).

Several features of a thyroid nodule may increase the suspicion of cancer, including: Size: Larger nodules tend to have a higher risk of cancer, although small nodules can also be malignant.

Age: Younger patients with thyroid nodules may have a higher risk of cancer.

Gender: Women tend to have a higher prevalence of thyroid nodules and thyroid cancer compared to men. However men with STN have a higher risk of malignancy.

Family history: A family history of thyroid cancer or certain genetic syndromes can increase the risk

Radiological characteristics: Certain features seen on ultrasound, such microcalcifications, irregular margins, increased vascularity, and taller-than-wide shape, may suggest a higher risk of malignancy.

Further there can be 'Isolated thyroid nodule' which is single swelling in the thyroid gland and the rest of the thyroid gland is normal or a 'dominant thyroid nodule' which is a single nodule that is felt prominently, while rest of the gland is also involved. It can be solid or cystic and have different risk of cancer based on gender: Isolate solid nodule in males- 48% (highest risk), Isolate solid nodule in females-12%, Isolate cystic nodule in males- 24%, Isolate cystic nodule in females-6%, Dominant solid nodule in male- 24%, Dominant solid



Professor and HoD



DR CATHERINE HALAM



DR ANKITA SINGH Assistant Professor



DR AMOL SOOD



DR PIYUSH RANJAN Additional Professor



DR RIJUTA APHALE SR-Breast and Endocrine Surgery



DR SAKSHI DHOLPURIA Junior Resident



DR AJAY MOHAN

nodule in females-Dominant cystic nodule in males- 12% and Dominant cystic nodule female- 4% (lowest risk).

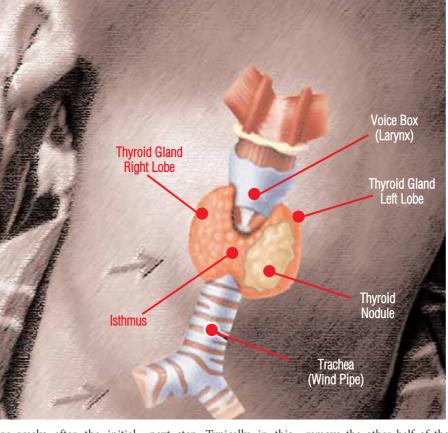
Ultimately, the risk of cancer in a solitary thyroid nodule should be assessed on an individual basis, taking into account various clinical and diagnostic factors. If there is concern about cancer, further evaluation and management, including biopsy and possibly surgery, may be recommended by a healthcare provider.

#### **INDICATIONS OF OPERATION** By Dr. Piyush Ranjan & Dr. Amol Sood

Surgery may be indicated in a benign (non-cancerous) thyroid nodule if it is causing problems like difficulty in breathing or difficulty in swallowing. Surgical removal of the nodule may also be preferred by some patients if it is cosmetically disfiguring. Nodules that are suspicious for

cancer or cancerous should be surgically. Depending on the features of the nodule, the surgeon decides whether to proceed with the removal of only half of the thyroid gland containing the nodule or to remove the complete thyroid gland and also whether removal of the lymph nodes in the neck is

required or not. Nodules for which there is uncertainty whether they are benign or cancerous need further evaluation, in the form of either a repeat FNAB test a



few weeks after the initial FNAB test, or molecular testing. A repeat FNAB test can be helpful as it may upgrade or downgrade the diagnosis of the nodule to either benign or cancerous, which can then be accordingly managed. If, however, the repeat FNAB test also classifies the nodule is indeterminate, surgery is the

next step. Typically, in this surgery, the surgeon removes half of the thyroid gland containing the suspicious nodule and sends the removed part for examination under a microscope by a pathologist. No further treatment is required if the microscopic examination reveals no cancer. However, further surgery to

remove the other half of the thyroid gland may be needed if cancer is seen on microscopic examination of the removed half of the thyroid gland.

Molecular testing looks at the genetic pattern of the thyroid nodule and classifies it as lowrisk or high-risk for cancer. The use of molecular testing can help avoid surgery in low-

risk indeterminate thyroid nodules, which can be kept under observation by routine ultrasound scans. However, the cost of these molecular tests can be prohibitive to many patients, who may then opt for surgical treatment.

By Dr. Rijuta Aphale & Dr. Piyush Ranjan

Type of operation depends on the factors like nodule size, and whether they are benign or cancerous. Common operations for the high-risk and cancerous solitary thyroid nodules include hemi-thyroidectomy and total thyroidectomy (i.e. partial or total removal of the thyroid gland).

Thyroid lobectomy includes removal of one lobe of the thyroid gland. It is suitable for nodules confined to a single lobe. It may also be done on suspicion of cancer if the nodule Isthumusectomy- Removal of the part of the thyroid gland that is a bridge between the two thyroid lobes. It may be done if the nodule is located in

thyroidectomy-Complete removal of the thyroid gland. Usually, this operation is done for larger nodules, nodules on both lobes of the thyroid, or thyroid cancer.

Additional removal of the neck lymph nodes is done along with a thyroidectomy for cancer in selected patients.

As many important structures like nerves, vessels and parathyroid glands are close to the thyroid gland, these operations are subject to various complications. There may be temporary or permanent voice changes due to injury to the recurrent laryngeal nerve.Damage to parathyroid glands may cause temporary or permanent changes in calcium levels.Bleeding and infection may occur but are rare. may develop Patients hypothyroidism and may require lifelong hormone supplementation.

#### **MANAGEMENT WITHOUT OPERATION**

By Dr Sakshi Dholpuria & Dr Ajay Mohan

Fortunately, the majority of thyroid nodules are noncancerous and surgery may not always be the first or only Non-surgical approaches, such as close monitoring, hormonal therapy, radioactive iodine, ethanol ablation, and fine-needle aspiration, offer alternative solutions tailored to the specific characteristics of the nodule. It's crucial to consult with a doctor to determine the most suitable approach based on individual circumstances. Regular follow-ups communication with your doctor are essential for monitoring the nodule and ensuring the chosen nonsurgical management plan

remains effective.

**Observation**: If a thyroid asymptomatic and benign on FNAC, your healthcare provider may recommend a watch-and-wait" approach. Regular monitoring through physical exams and imaging tests, such as ultrasound, can help track any changes in the nodule over time.

Thyroid Hormone Therapy: Replacement Intake of medication (levothyroxine) to maintain normal hormone level is required when the STN is associated hypothyroidism. This may help shrink certain types of nodules.

Radioactive Iodine Therapy: This treatment involves taking a radioactive form of iodine, which is absorbed by the thyroid cells, reducing the size of the nodule in case of overactive nodules that produce excessive thyroid

Ethanol Ablation is a minimally invasive procedure that involves injecting ethanol (alcohol) directly into the using thyroid nodule ultrasound guidance. This treatment is often considered for cystic nodules, causing the fluid-filled portion to shrink. Aspiration (Fine-Needle Aspiration) is more of a diagnostic procedure, but in some cases, it can also help drain cystic nodules with the help of a thin needle.

(Concluded)

## Healthy Holi: Enjoy the Festival Safely

On the Holi Day, prioritizing health amid vibrant celebrations is crucial. Doctors stress protective measures like skin and eye care, hydration, food and water safety, respiratory health, and adherence to COVID-19 precautions. The HEALTH PIONEER reports

#### **HOLI & DESSERTS**

ur fondness for Holi and the festivities makes it tough to resist a Gujiya, Laddoo or a Kaju Katli. And don't we often find the festive season as an excuse to have one or more of these amazing sugary treats? That's where the dilemma is, since you are already aware that sugar isn't right for your body and health and yet you still want to have it.

Sugar is fine for you in small amounts but too much indulgence can affect your body and increase your risk of several serious medical conditions like -Increases your risk of Heart Disease - Consuming too much sugar can increase your blood pressure causing hypertension and arterial complications like atherosclerosis, disease characterized by fatty, arteryclogging deposits and stroke.

Diabetes - Diabetes is the leading cause of mortality and life reduced expectancy. Prolonged high-sugar consumption drives resistance to insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas that regulates blood sugar levels. Insulin resistance

Increases your risk of Type 2

causes blood sugar levels to rise and strongly increases your risk of diabetes. Affects your Skin - Bingeeating on the sugary treats can cause Acne, blemishes

and pigmentation. Weight Gain — Eating large amounts of sugar can contribute to weight gain and increased body fat. Obesity is often caused by excessive sugar

consumption. Enhances Cellular Aging — Telomeres are structures found at the end of chromosomes, which are molecules that hold part or all of your genetic information. Consuming high amounts of



DR SFURTI MANN Head of Department and Senior Consultant Internal Medicine & Diabetology Sanar International Hospitals

sugar has been shown to accelerate telomere shortening, which increases cellular aging. Can lead to Fatty Liver - A high intake of fructose has been consistently linked to an increased risk of Fatty Liver. Large amounts of added sugar in the form of fructose overload your liver, leading to Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD), a condition characterized by excessive fat build-up in the liver.

Impacts Dental Health -Eating too much sugar can cause cavities. Bacteria in your mouth feed on sugar and release acid by-products, which causes tooth demineralization leading to cavities. The best way to limit your sugar

intake this Holi is to prepare your own healthy sweets at home. We should not let our guard down even when we are consuming sweets made from artificial sweeteners or if it's sugar free. We

can use whole fruits as

sweeteners as they are a much healthier option. We have to be restrictive to a greater extent in order to avoid sugars and be mindful about consuming sweets on this and all the other festive seasons.

## HOLI



DR PAYAL GUPTA Associate Consultant-Ophthalmology Fortis Hospital Greater Noida

drops.
These days, industry chemicals is being used extensively in colour formulation such as motor oil, diesel, mica, and alkalis that can enter into eyes.

Avoid playing in such groups. We would advise you to immediately consult nearest doctor or Ophthalmologist. If you wear contact lens then remove them before going out to play holi. glasses in such instances because contact lenses can trap the colours and damage your eyes.



**TIPS FOR HAIR & SKIN PROTECTION** 



DR MANISH SHARMA Sr Medical Oncologist, Positron pink, red, and purple." Superspeciality and Cancer Hospital, Rohtak

#### **HOLI & PREGNANT WOMEN**

To prevent any colour entering your eyes, use protective gears like sunglasses. For small

children, you can advise them to

wear goggles so that the colour

does not enter the eyes. Avoid

using synthetic colours. Play with

eco-friendly or organic or natural

colours. In case any colour enters

the eye, use clean water to clean it

with splashing. But do not rub

the eyes neither use any home

remedies like milk or honey or

oil into your eyes as these can

aggravate the problem. Also do

not use any random drops or eye

Tn addition to colours, Holi Lis connected with bhang. However, a bhang overdose for pregnant women might result in major health issues. Bhang consumption can neurological system, and brain in addition to raising blood pressure and heart

It is essential that pregnant women avoid playing Holi at all; instead, they should stay indoors or, if they must go outside, do so in the company of reliable elders. Additionally, as

know, modern Holi colours are composed of chemicals. Certain hues can potentially cause cancer. Thus, nursing moms should use the same prudence as

expectant mothers.



DR SHOBHA GUPTA IVF Specialist, Mother's Lap IVF Centre, Delhi

When a pregnant woman uses these colours in an area where lead is present, it may cause an abortion or miscarriage as well as an underweight reproductive

Medical Director, Gynecologist and

premature birth. The nervous systems may also be impacted. Have a glass of lemon detox water first thing in the morning, then eat something clean and healthful.

#### Apply a generous dose of high levels of SPF and Vitamin E before heading outside on the day of Holi, These works as a shield to block UV radiation.

 Before you begin playing, make sure your hair is well oiled. Olive and coconut oils are good choices for shielding your hair from strong

colouring.

Use oil on your nails, ear lobes, and behind your ears as well, as these are areas where the colour tends to settle more easily.

• After playing Holi, especially if you used chemical colours, stay out of the scorching sun while the colours are still on your body or face. As a result, the colours are more vibrant and challenging to remove. If you are outside, choose a shaded spot to sit.

Make greater use of colours that are easily removed. Remember to apply

Cosmetologist & Co-founder, Abhivrit Aesthetics

waterproof sunscreen with at least SPF 30 or higher before spending a day in the sun. • Dress mostly in coverings for your body and avoid

difficult-to-dry bulky. materials like denim. Use a bandana or thick scarf to cover your head.

Avoid wearing lenses when playing outside. Although the colours of Holi are irritating, lenses tend to absorb the colour, making the situation worse. Put on spectacles and make sure you clean them

HOW TO REMOVE COLOURS After washing, hair needs to be deeply conditioned in order to

use a hair mask to repair the damage. ■ Wash your face and hair after experimenting with colour. Use a cleanser rather than roughly rubbing the skin with soaps to wipe the face

remove colour. Ensure

that your hair is tidy.

After two to three days,

of gulal. Apply a tonne of moisturiser after this, paying special attention to

products designed for sensitive skin. Refrain from your using fingernails to colour remove since they will leave ugly stains. To

remove the colours,

gently scrub the face and body with granulated sugar.

The week after, refrain from bleaching, shaving, waxing, and getting a facial or clean-up. Allow your body and skin some time to heal from the injury.

To remove stains, stay from using away kerosene, petrol and spirits as they will cause your skin to

become dry.

Use solution of sea salt, glycerine, and a few drops of fragrance oil to rejuvenate your skin. This mixture has antibacterial and antifungal properties

and can also remove

artificial colouring.

## RCB EYE BETTER OUTING FROM BOWLERS

PTI BENGALURU

Royal Challengers
Bengaluru's IPL 2024
campaign is just onematch old but it has already exposed their biggest chink — brittleness in bowling, and they need better returns from bowlers against a confident Punjab Kings at an unforgiving M Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Monday.

During their six-wicket defeat against Chennai Super Kings, the pacers were guilty of blindly following a short-pitch ball strategy while the spinners just did not have enough resources to exploit a gradually Chepauk pitch. slowing-down

The three RCB spinners — Mayank Dagar, Karn Sharma and Glenn Maxwell bowled five overs between them and managed middling figures of 37 for one without actually troubling the batters. In contrast, the two CSK spinners — Ravindra Jadeja and Maheesh Theekshana bowled a combined eight overs for figures of 57 for four when the deck was much easier to bat.

So, the Royal Challengers' spinners will have to brace for a tougher task here as the 22-

fences and a quick outfield is not a friendly associate of

These numbers will make that point clear. This venue holds the record of teams scoring more than 200 runs in an innings on most occasions — 27 times, and the average first innings score in the IPL here

But those grim stats also put the onus on the RCB pace bowlers against Punjab.

Mohammed Siraj, Alzarri Joseph, in particular, and Yash Dayal zealously used the quota of two bouncers per quota of two bouncers per over against Chennai but in doing so they sacrificed their control over line and length. It reflected in their run-giving rate too — Siraj (9.5), Joseph (10.3), Dayal (9.3).

Cameron Green, the fourth pacer, took pace off his deliveries and employed the cutters that fetched him two wickets but they were interspersed with loose deliveries as the Aussie conceded nine runs an over. However, following a single-channel strategy will be suicidal at Chinnaswamy and they will have to find a way to use their copious amount of skills more judiciously.



unnoticed glitch. As it often happens, the RCB total of 173 for six against the Super Kings is a bit of misinformative.

It came after a top-order collapse that saw RCB reeling at 78 for five. It required the industry and innovation of Dinesh Karthik and Anuj Rawat for them to go past the 170-run mark.

But banking on lower-order is not an everyday workable approach, as seniors such as Virat Kohli, skipper Faf du Plessis and Glenn Maxwell will have to get those big runs. Of course, a more fruitful outing by Rajat Patidar, who had a torrid time in the recent Test series against England, too will be highly welcome as runs from him offer a cushion for batters ahead of him.

It is imperative too as Punjab is a capable side as they showed while producing a clinical effort against a more fancied Delhi Capitals on Saturday.

Saturday.
They have their own turmoil too such as lack of runs from Jonny Bairstow, whose Indian marathon encompasses last year's World Cup, the fivematch Test series and now the IPL, and waywardness of leftarm seamer Sam Curran.

have temporarily erased all

SQUAD:
Royal Challengers
Bengaluru: Faf du Plessis
(captain), Glenn Maxwell,
Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar,
Anuj Rawat, Dinesh Karthik,
Suwash Prabhudassai, Will Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykuma Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh, Saurav Chauhan.

Punjab Kings: Shikhar Dhawan (captain), Matthew Short, Prabhsimran Singh, Jitesh Sharma, Sikandar Raza, Rishi Dhawan, Liam Livingstone, Atharva Taide, Arshdeep Singh, Nathan Ellis, Sam Curran Karisa Pahada Sam Curran, Kagiso Rabada, Harpreet Brar, Rahul Chahar, Harpreet Bhatia, Vidwath Kaverappa, Shivam Singh, Harshal Patel, Chris Woakes, Ashutosh Sharma, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Shashank Singh, Tanay Prince Thyagarajann,

Choudhary, Rilee Rossouw.

## Russell a phenomenal ball striker, says Phil

Andre Russell's six-hitting carnage at the death that propelled Kolkata Knight Riders to a match-winning total did not come as a surprise to teammate Phil Salt, who described the star allrounder as the described the star allrounder as the "best in the world on his day".

Russell muscled his way to a 25-ball 64 studded with seven sixes and three fours to power KKR to 208 for 7. The hosts then returned to limit Sunrisers Hyderabad to 204 for 7 and record a four-run win in a thrilling

IPL clash here on Saturday. Making debut for KKR, Salt, who had played alongside Russell in Manchester Originals in The Hundred, was excited to see another

special from the West Indian. "I've played with Dre (Russell) in the Hundred. He's a phenomenal ball

striker. The best in the world on his day," Salt said after their win on

"So, to see him do what he did, obviously is incredible. Love watching it, but, you know, it's no surprise to me. I don't think it's a

surprise to anybody on the ground. When he's on, he's incredible."
Four of the top-five KKR batters got out for single digit scores managing just 18 runs in between them, but Salt held firm atop the order and found a fine ally in No 6 Ramandeep Singh (35 off 17).

The duo put together 54 runs that came off just 29 balls.
"Yeah, you know, what I said to the

previous two batters is we'll take it to the 8th over, and if another wicket falls, we'll take it to the 10th. I said the same to Ramandeep, I said we'll take it to the 12th and we'll reassess



there. He was really smart the way he a hell of a cameo and we started to

played.
"He took the pressure off me to hit

put a partnership together. "You know, when wickets are falling,

partnerships. And for him to come out on debut (for KKR) and do that is

very impressive." Heinrich Klaasen threatened to spoil KKR's party with a counter-attacking fifty as IPL's most expensive player Mitchell Starc was hit for four sixes in his last over that yielded 26 runs

for SRH.

Needing 12 to defend in the last over, the inexperienced Rana delivered.

"You try not to ride the wave when you're out there. The game seesawed all the way through their batting innings," Salt said.

"We had a few chances we didn't take in the field, and it looked like, at one point, getting towards that final over was going to hurt us.

"But Harshit held his nerves unbelievably well in the final over and I think we defended what was a

and I think we defended what was a pretty good score."

fine gem back, and we should be

thankful to God on his return to the field," said Sidhu on Star Sports on 'Cricket Live' programme.
Sidhu added that when he first saw the

images of the crash, he wondered how

anyone could survive a mishap like

"When this accident had happened, I

saw the picture of the vehicle. Everything got burned, and there was

no vehicle at the scene. How anyone

can survive that sort of horrifying

"Post that, we were in assumption that

whether the operations will succeed or

not, but all went well for him. And in the process of physiotherapy when the

removal of plaster happens your body doesn't move at all which is a very

painful experience for anyone... From that condition, he is out now," added

Sidhu, following DC's four-wicket loss to PBKS in their opening game.

accident?



## Rohit hopes new faces in MI make a mark in IPL right from beginning

**PTI** ■ MUMBAI

the IPL are able to make a mark from the outset as the franchise aims for a record sixth title under new skipper Hardik Pandya.

Five-time ÍPL champions Mumbai Indians have picked some exciting prospects, including South Africa pacer Gerald Coetzee, uncapped U-19 World Cup star Kwena Maphaka, England's Luke Wood, Sri Lanka's Nuwan West Indies' Thushara, Shepherd and n's Mohammad Romario Afghanistan's

Among the Indians, Shreyas Gopal has also been roped in. Maphaka joined the Mumbai camp last week after Sri Lanka pacer Dilshan Madushanka was ruled out, while Wood replaced injured Australian bowler Jason Behrendorff. "A lot of players that we got

faces, young players who have Former Mumbai Indians done well in domestic cricket as well as international hoped the new faces roped in by his side for this edition of forward to that, hopefully cricket... Quite looking forward to that, hopefully they can make a mark right from the beginning," Rohit said in a video posted by Mumbai Indians.

from the auction, a lot of new

Rohit, who joined the camp on Monday, has had a customised training programme, which included simulated net sessions along with mobility, strength and conditioning decited. conditioning drills.

"For me, preparations have always been the key and that gives me a lot of confidence going into any game," he said.
"There are a lot of things that I do before a game and Ĭ think I have done everything now... Just a few things here and there which is left and which I will do now and I will be ready for the game," Rohit

Rohit is coming off a Test series against England, which India won 4-1.

## Just a matter of time before Pant regains form: Sidhu

 $F^{ormer\ India\ opener\ Navjot\ Sidhu\ is}_{confident\ wicketkeeper\ batter}$ Rishabh Pant's return to form is just a "matter of time" following his nearly 15-month-long absence professional cricket after a horrific car

Pant is back leading his Indian Premier League side Delhi Capitals after missing the action last season due to his recovery and rehabilitation. Though Pant did not have the comeback he would have wished for in DC's match against Punjab Kings here on Saturday, being dismissed for 18 by Harshal Patel, he was quick between the wickets, took a catch behind the stumps and also effected a

"(He is) leading Delhi Capitals and running between the wickets and playing good cricket. Just a matter of time he will regain his form. But,



**PTI** ■ BENGALURU

Anuj Rawat on Sunday hoped to cement his position as Royal Challengers Bengaluru's long-term wicketkeeper batter after veteran Dinesh Karthik has announced that this will be his last IPL season. Rawat gave a glimpse of his versatility with a 25-ball 48 that helped RCB register a competitive 173 for six after initial struggles against the Chennai Super Kings. It was quite fitting that the 24-

year-old left-hander played that innings in the company of Karthik, who did the duty of wicketkeeper-batter for RCB over the last couple of seasons with a good degree of success. Rawat said the RCB management has clearly communicated to him about his new role in the team. "The communication has been very clear to me as in batting down the order. As someone keeping wickets, you have to bat in the middle-order a lot,"

## as RCB wicket keeper batter



Rawat said in a press-conference ahead of RCB's match against Punjab Kings on Monday. The Delhi cricketer, who kept wickets for RCB in the last cou-ple of matches during the IPL

2023, said his confidence level has improved. "Last season also, I kept wickets

in a few games and it gave me more confidence and as this season goes on, I am looking forward to contributing more as a wicketkeeper batsman," said Rawat. Rawat said the Royal Challengers will be looking to win all their upcoming home fixtures after losing the first match against CSK. Apart from Punjab, the Royal Challengers will take on Kolkata Knight Riders on March 29 and Lucknow Super Giants on April 2 at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. "We are following the same process as the last match (against CSK). We are looking forward to our home games and hoping to win all of them," he added.

### Rana fined 60 per cent of match fee for IPL code of conduct violation

Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Harshit Rana has been fined a total of 60 percent of his match fees for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during his team's four-run victory against Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Eden Gardens.

According to an IPL statement, Rana breached the rules under Article 2.5 of the IPL Code of Conduct on Saturday. "He was fined 10 percent and 50 percent of his

match fees for the two respective offences," the

statement said. While the IPL statement did not go into details about the incident, which attracted the code of conduct violation, it could be the 22-year-old's

celebration following Mayank Agarwal's

After dismissing Agarwal in the sixth over, Rana walked in front of the SRH opener and blew him a flying kiss.



"Rana committed two Level 1 offences under Article 2.5 of the IPL's Code of Conduct," said the IPL statement.

"Rana admitted to \the two offences and accepted the Match Referee's sanction. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding,"

Rana kept his calm and defended 13 runs in the last over to give KKR a winning start to the

## Rawat eyes long term role

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement befor responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements Printed and published by Shobori Ganguli for and on behalf of CMYK Printech Ltd., Regd Office:-100k Milap Bhawan, 8/A Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110 002, Phone: 011-40110455, Corporate Office:- 201-205, 2nd Floor, Pratap Bhawan 5, B.S.Z. Marg, New Delhi-110002 Phone: 011-69342500 and printed at Jagran Prakashan Ltd, D-210, 211 Sector-63, Noida (U.P.). Editor-in-Chief Shobori Ganguli AIR SURCHARGE of ₹ 2.00 East: Calcutta, North: Leh West: Mumbai & Ahmedabad South: Bangalore & Chennai. Central: Khajuraho. Lucknow Office: 4th Floor, Sahara Shopping Centre, Faizabad Road, Lucknow-226 016. Telephones: 0522-2346443, 2346444, 2346445.