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NAVEEN GUARANTEE

STARTING FROM JULY

FREE ELECTRICITY

90% OF FAMILIES WILL BE BENEFITTED









ONE VOTE FOR MLA

PUBLISHED BY DR. SASMIT PATRA, GENERAL SECRETARY, BUJU JANATA DAL

2nd-phase polls in State today 33,000 police personnel to be deployed

I he police have made elaborate security arrangements for peaceful elections during the second phase of the polls in the State on Monday, said Director General of Police (DGP) Arun Kumar Sarangi on Sunday.

While 33,000 police personnel, including102 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), are being deployed, special security measures would be taken for sensitive and critical booths located in Maoist-hit districts.

The second-phase polling would be held in five Lok Sabha seats of Bargarh, Sundargarh, Balangir, Kandhamal and Aska and 35 Assembly constituencies coming under these Parliamentary segments across eleven dis-

"Mobile parties have been introduced for Monday's polling. There will be one mobile party for each 10-12 booth location. A total of 655 mobile parties will be deployed during this phase of elections,' said Sarangi

Besides, there are checkposts at 48 inter-State borders to deal with any eventuality.

A total of 257 flying squad teams and 251 static surveillance teams have been formed, the DGP said.

At the EVM strong rooms at 18 locations, the inner security of the strong rooms is provided by the CAPF and the outer security by the Odisha Police, said Sarangi

Modi arrives at Bhubaneswar

To hold road show in Puri today

Also to address meetings in Angul, Cuttack PNS BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived at Bhubaneswar

on a two-day visit to Odisha on Sunday evening, a day before the second phase elections in the State.

He arrived in a special plane of the Indian Air Force amid tight security. Many senior BJP leaders and party functionaries of the State received him at the airport. From there, his carcade went straight to the party office where he held a key review meeting with senior party leaders.

Modi will make a night halt in the Raj Bhawan before leaving for Puri on Monday. After having a darshan of the deities at the Jagannath Temple, he will hold a road show in the town from 8 am. Then, Modi will leave for Angul, where he will address a public meeting at 9.30 am. Later, he will speak at another meeting in Cuttack at 11.30 am.

Samir Dash joins BJP, predicts major win for party

Hours after resigning from the primary membership of BJD, Nimapara MLA Samir Ranjan Dash joined the BJP at a special function held at the BJP State office here on Sunday. Dash was upset after he was not given a ticket by the BJD to contest the 2024 elections from his constituency.

Despite urging the party to reconsider the decision, Dash was denied a ticket and it subsequently triggered resentment among his supporters.

In a video statement, Dash informed about his decision to quit the BJD and cited that he was forced to resign as the leaders of the party lost faith in him and also the organisation in Gop block. Prior to his joining the BJP, Dash said, "When the leaders do not trust you, it is not possible to stay and work in the BJD. As I have joined the BJP now, I can confidently say that the saffron party will win with a huge

margin in Nimapara." Dash further said that it had been a routine for him to work with people for almost 18 hours in a day and take part of several agitations and programmes in the district. "I have been working dedicatedly and will continue to serve people. Not only Nimapara, some parts of Jagatsinghpur district will also be affected by my decision. The candidates of BJP including Prabhati Parida will certainly win with good margins," said

Low pressure

No prediction of cyclone yet: IMD

Even as a low pressure is likely to form over the Bay of Bengal (BoB) by May 22, the weather office on Sunday said that there is no need to panic as no prediction has been made regarding the formation

of a cyclone. The system is likely to move initially northeastwards and concentrate into a depression over central parts of the BoB around May 24

"Till now, no forecast has been made regarding any cyclone. Only after low pressure forms, we will be in a position to say with clarity. As the system is yet to develop far away from Odisha, IMD has not issued any forecast regarding any cyclone. Hence, there is no reason for the people to panic," said IMD Regional Director Manorama Mohanty.

However, Mohanty stated that the conditions are favourable for the formation of the low pressure area.

Several parts of Odisha would experience thunderstorm activities in the next couple of days. Some parts of the State might also experience rainfall activities on May 25.

Even though some models are showing different things, the IMD is referring over 10 models and satellite observations and has issued a forecast regarding the formation of low pressure and no forecast has been issued for any cy-

"As it is cyclone month, we are keeping a close watch on the developments. The moment we get any information, we will issue our forecast," said

Aparajita decries Pandian's remarks on PM, Pradhan

 $B_{
m IP\,Lok\,Sabha\,candidate\,for}$ Bhubaneswar Aparajita Sarangi on Sunday came down heavily on BJD leader VK Pandian for his certain remarks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and BJP national president JP

Addressing a Press conference here, Sarangi said, "He (Pandian) should not call the Prime Minister a tourist. He should not make negative remarks on the works of the Prime Minister.



She took exception to certain words used by Pandian against Dharmendra Pradhan, saying, "Use of words like 'Aukat'(capacity) 'Dum'(guts) against the Union

Minister and raising a question on his eligibility is unbecoming of a former IAS officer like Pandian, who should conduct within the boundaries of dignity.'

'He also asked me about my performance in the last five years. I want to ask Pandianbabu one thing - if he has the guts, he should ask 12 Lok Sabha MPs of his party (2019-2024) to present their report cards in the public domain. I would not find them inside the Lok Sabha. Three of the MPs - Bharturhari Mahtab, Anubhab Mohanty and Pinaki Misra used to raise

questions and were actively taking part in proceedings. The BJD 'rewarded' these three MPs as they were denied tickets this time," Sarangi remarked

She added that Prasanna Patasani was the BJD MP for five terms and he should put forth his report card in the public domain. "I will repeat it how many of their MPs have come out with their report cards. Will Pandianbabu take pains of putting the report cards of the MPs in the public domain?" she asked.

However, no reaction from the BJD was received.

'Modi's slogan is 400 lies every day'



Congress targets PM before visit to State

BHUBANESWAR

Udisha Congress in-charge Ajoy Kumar on Sunday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi before his visit to the State and said Modi is the Sahenshah of falsehood and speaks lies at election meetings at a loud voice.

Dr Kumar said doubling of farmers income, Rs 15-lakh deposit in every account, a pucca house and electricity to every household, construction of Smart Cities, creation of two crore jobs every year and introduction of Bullet trains in the country consist of some lies Modi has been telling. According to the "BJP Bhakts", Modi was able to stop the Russia-Ukraine war, but in reality he is unable to curb the violence in Manipur. He has crossed all limits and every day he is saying more than 400 lies on the lines of his slogan 'Ab Ki Baar Charso Paar, Kumar

He alleged that the BJP and the RSS are making all efforts to stop the reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The Naveen Patnaik government could have followed Tamil Nadu and carried out reservations for the OBCs, which form the majority population of Odisha,

In Kendrapada Jail staffs seen in video taking bribe

RAJESH BEHERA KENDRAPADA

 ${f A}$ video of a relative of an inmate in the Kendrapada Sub-Jail allegedly bribing the on-duty jail staffs on Saturday has gone viral on social me-

In the video, it is seen that a person is giving some money wrapped in a paper to the jail staffs to meet his relative who is lodged in the jail.

It is alleged that hardcore criminals are operating their gangs outside from the confines of the jail through smuggled mobile phones. Besides, the criminals are being provided with all sorts of facilities in jail in exchange for money by some unscrupulous jail officials.

Though the jail is under CCTV surveillance, checking is being carried out and modern gadgets have been installed for security purposes. But food stuffs, contraband items and tobacco are being smuggled into the

One can find huge quantities of half-burnt cigarette butts, bidi and gutkha wrappers outside the boundary wall of the jail.

Intellectual masses demand that the prison authorities probe the incident and conduct surprise raids on the sub-jail to stop such illegal activities.

RSC Summer Hobby Camp to continue till June 7



For students from Std 1 to XII

BHUBANESWAR

he Regional Science Centre, Bhubaneswar has been organizing Summer Hobby Camp since May 6 which will continue till June 7 for the school students from standard

The hobby camp is aimed to encourage the creativity of the students and to promote the attitude of experimentation and exploration through

learning by doing so as to develop interest in the field of science and technology.

The activities of the camp help in enriching the knowledge of the participants through hands-on activities, demonstrations, games etc which will help them to learn the concept with experiments, model making and interaction with the professionals.

The Summer Hobby Camp covers a wide arena of disciplines like Robotics, Hands-on Mathematics, Science of Photography, Talk to Nature, Fun

with Water, Colorful Chemistry, Life Sciences, Creative Electronics and AI, Performing Arts and Science Drama etc. where students can participate as per their interest. To enhance the experiential learning during the camp, various professionals, leading institutions are also joined to provide an exposure to the students. Some of the notable names include Subash Chandra Rauto (President Awardee), Ar. Shakti Nanda (an eminent photographer), besides institutions

like Natya Chetna, CV Raman Global University, Forum for River and Ocean Scientists and Technologists, Grow with Nature and many more. Students from various schools have enjoyed the activities organized during the camp I, II by making science demonstration kits on Robotics, Programming to control Robo arm, Water boat, Magic square, sound waves, electromagnet etc. which help them to understand the difficult concept of science with ease and play-

In city Vehicles without number plates seized

BHUBANESWAR

he Commissionerate police have intensified its drive against vehicles moving around in the capital city without registration numbers and with fancy number plates.

During the drive, the police seized some vehicles including a costly Mercedes Benz car without a registration number plate and brought it to the Traffic police station. The driver of the car failed to give a satisfactory reply as to why the vehicle was without a registration number.

Traffic ACP Jayant Dora said, "If someone drives a vehicle without a registration number or with a fancy number, we will seize it. The vehicle will be handed over to its owner only when he produces a release order from court."

"If an occupant shows documents as to why the vehicle doesn't have a registration number, we will let him go. Otherwise, we will take stringent action against him. So, I would like to request people not to drive vehicles without number plates or with a fancy number plate," he added.

India as economic superpower under Modi: Truth v. hype?

s India casts its votes in an election expected to give Prime Minister Narendra Modi another five years in office, the question of whether India can transform into a 21st-century economic powerhouse looms large. Modi's leadership has positioned India as a significant alternative to China for investors and manufacturers, a feat driven by robust economic expansion and strategic international relations. But can India truly rise to superpower status under Modi's governance? Let's delve into the potential and challenges that lie ahead.

Rapid economic growth and global position

India is already one of the world's fastest-growing economies. Under Modi's administration, the country's per capita GDP grew by an impressive 55% between 2014 and 2023. Within this period, India surged from being the ninth largest economy to the fifth largest globally. This economic leap was



S JYOTIRANJAN

not merely statistical; it reflected the country's dynamic and robust growth in comparison to other major economies. By 2023, India's economy was valued at \$3.7 trillion, marking a substantial increase

in global economic rankings. Projections indicate that India's economy is comfortably placed to grow at an annual rate of at least 6% over the coming years. However, analysts argue that to truly achieve superpower status, the country should aim for an 8% growth rate or higher. Sustained high growth third-largest economy in the world by 2027, trailing only the US and

Infrastructure and digital

One of Modi's most significant initiatives has been the massive overhaul of India's infrastructure akin to China's transformation three decades ago. The government has allocated billions to building roads, ports, airports and railways. The 2023 national budget alone earmarked considerable capital spending to spur economic expansion. The results are tangible: from 2014 to 2023, India added nearly 55,000 kilometers (around 35,000 miles) to its National Highway network, a 60% increase in total length. Such infrastructure development not only facilitates economic activities but also creates jobs and enhances the ease of doing business.

In addition to physical infrastructure, Modi's government has revolutionised digital public infra-

structure. The Aadhaar programme, which began in 2009, has provided millions of Indians with proof of identity, reducing corruption and ensuring better delivery of welfare benefits. The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has also transformed the financial landscape, allowing instant payments through QR codes and integrating millions into the formal economy. By 2023, India had achieved financial inclusion targets that would have otherwise taken decades, showcasing the transformative impact of digi-

Stock market and investment India's burgeoning economic potential is reflected in its stock market. By late 2023, the market capitalisation of companies listed on India's exchanges surpassed \$4 trillion. The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) became the world's sixth largest exchange by market capitalisation, growing 50% from February 2023 to February 2024. This growth was

driven by both domestic and foreign investors with expectations that foreign investments would surge further post elections.

The Modi government's strategic focus on manufacturing has also played a pivotal role. Amid global supply chain disruptions and increasing tensions between the US and China, India has positioned itself as an attractive alternative. A \$26-billion productionlinked incentive programme aims to entice companies to set up manufacturing in India, covering sectors from electronics to pharmaceuticals. Major firms like Apple supplier Foxconn have significantly expanded operations in India with the country projected to produce 23% of the world's iPhones by 2025, up from just 6% in 2022. Such moves are expected to attract other global players, reinforcing India's manufacturing capabilities and global economic standing.

Challenges and prospects

Despite these advancements, significant challenges remain. India ranks 147th in GDP per capita, indicating widespread poverty and inequality. The benefits of economic growth have not uniformly trickled down to all segments of the society. Guido Cozzi, a macroeconomics professor, emphasises that while economic growth can lead to improvements in per capita GDP, inclusive growth policies are essential to address income in-

equality effectively. After all development, employment still remains a critical issue. The creation of millions of jobs is necessary to lift the largely impoverished population. The Modi government must focus on generating employment opportunities to cater to the aspirations of the youth, ensuring that the economic growth translates into tangible benefits for all citizens.

Under Modi's leadership, India has made remarkable strides towards becoming an economic su-

perpower. The combination of rapid economic growth, strategic infrastructure development, digital transformation and a burgeoning stock market position India favourably on the global stage. However, to sustain this momentum and truly achieve superpower status, PM Modi's government must address critical challenges such as income inequality and job creation. If re-elected, Modi's administration has the potential to further these advancements, paving the way for India to fulfil its economic aspirations and emerge as a dominant global force.

(The writer is an advocate, Orissa High Court, Addl. Central Government Standing Counsel, CAT, Cuttack Bench, Consulting Editor-Legal Affairs and Public Policy, The Pioneer and a Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Law and Media Studies, School of Mass Communication, KIIT University. Views are personal)

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OPINION 6

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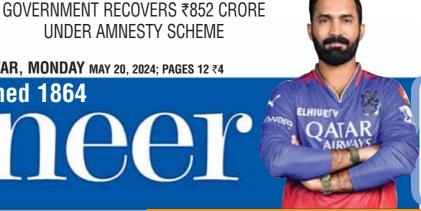
RCB'S TURNAROUND WILL INSPIRE OTHER

BHUBANESWAR, MONDAY MAY 20, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

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EC shifts focus to urban voters today

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

mid the sweltering heat and high-pitch **p**olitical rhetorics and promises by contestants in the fray, over 8.95 crore voters in 49 Parliament constituencies spread in Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Iharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Benga will cast their vote in the fifth phase of polling on Monday. On the eve of phase five of Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission on Sunday pointed out that Mumbai, Thane and Lucknow have shown apathy towards voting in the past and asked these city dwellers to turnout in

higher numbers. Low turnout of voters is expected on Monday due to extreme heat wave conditions in some States including Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

The poll authority noted that in the past these cities have

"suffered" from urban apathy in voting. "The Commission specially calls upon these city dwellers to erase the stigma by turning out in higher numbers," it said. So far, the last four phases have registered a voter turnout of 66.95 per cent.

On May 3 too, while referring to voter work

CANDIDATE Dinesh Pratap Singh	PARTY
Rahul Gandhi	BJP Congress
Smriti Irani Kishori Lal Sharma	BJP Congress
Rajnath Singh Ravidas Mehrotra	BJP SP
Karan Bhushan Singh Bhagat Ram Mishra Narendra Pandey	BJP SP BSP
Chirag Paswan Chandra Ram	LJP (Ram Vilas) RJD
Rajiv Pratap Rudy Rohini Acharya	BJP RJD
Piyush Goyal	BJP
Bhushan Patil	Congress
Omar Abdullah Fayaz Ahmad Mir	National Conference People's Democratic Party People's Conference
	Rahul Gandhi Smriti Irani Kishori Lal Sharma Rajnath Singh Ravidas Mehrotra Karan Bhushan Singh Bhagat Ram Mishra Narendra Pandey Chirag Paswan Chandra Ram Rajiv Pratap Rudy Rohini Acharya Piyush Goyal Bhushan Patil Omar Abdullah

turnout in phase two, the Commission had said it was "disappointed" with the turnout level in some

metropolitan cities. The EC had last month assembled many metro Commissioners here to

strategy

out

fight urban apathy.

Urban and youth apathy is described as a phenomenon when young voters and those living in metros fail to turn up at polling stations on election day. As summer is on peak, hot and dry weather is another factor which may impact the voters' turn out in the fifth phase.

For Rahul Gandhi, Rae Bareli will be the second seat from where he is contesting the national polls. The Congress scion has already contested from Kerala's Wayanad in the second phase.

Rae Bareli is a Nehru-Gandhi family pocket borough that was represented by his mother Sonia Gandhi since 2004.

The BJP has fielded UP Minister Dinesh Pratap Singh. In Amethi, Union Smriti minister Irani, who had defeated Rahul in 2019, is seeking a second term, while KL Sharma, an aide of the Gandhi family, has been fielded by the

Among other prominent candidates in the fifth phase of Lok Sabha polls are several Union Ministers including Rajnath Singh (Lucknow, UP), Piyush Goyal Maharashtra), (Mumbai North, Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti (from Fatehpur, UP) and Shantanu Thakur (Bangaon,

Congress.

WB); LJP (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan (Hajipur, Bihar), Shiv Sena's Shrikant Shinde (Kalyan, Maharashtra), and BJP's Rajiv Pratap Rudy and RID president Lalu Prasad's daughter Rohini Acharya (both Saran, Bihar). Uttar Pradesh, which sends the largest number of MPs to Parliament, will see 14 seats voting in the fifth phase with the fate of five Union Ministers at stake.

These seats include Congress pocket boroughs of Rae Bareli and Amethi. Faizabad, which includes Ayodhya, the nerve centre of the BJP's Hindutva politics will also vote in this

At the height of bitter political rivalry, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Prime Minister Narendra Modi

and other BJP leaders tried to fend off the challenge posed by the INDIA bloc parties by raising the pitch on issues of appeasement, dynastic politics, Ram temple, Citizenship temple,

Amendment Act (CAA) corruption and welfare initiatives taken by his government.

PM Modi, while campaigning in Uttar Pradesh on Friday, also claimed that the Congress and the Samajwadi Party will run a bulldozer over the Ram temple if elected to power, prompting the Congress to complain to the Election Commission on Saturday. He also alleged that the opposition wanted to bring back Article 370.

Maliwal assault could have been fatal: Cops

RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

fter a late-night hearing on After a late-night nearing on May 18, a city court sent Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar to five days in police custody in connection with the alleged assault on AAP Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal. Meanwhile, a team of Delhi Police on Sunday seized a laptop and CCTV digital video record (DVR) from the residence of Kejriwal. Along with this, some documents were also taken away by the Delhi Police from the Chief Minister's residence in the alleged assault on May 13 when Kumar, allegedly attacked Maliwal.

The Delhi Police, in its remand paper, has described the alleged assault on Maliwal by Kumar as a "serious case" involving a "brutal assault" that could have turned "fatal." During the hearing, the court

observed that "the fact that the video footage was not found in the pen drive provided to the investigating officer (IO) during the course of the investigation and the mobile phone was formatted by the accused speaks volumes." Magistrate Gaurav Goyal was

hearing the application of Delhi Police which was represented by Additional Public Prosecutor Srivastava. The police had sought seven day custody. Constitutional courts that the "Considering the submissions" opportunity must be given to



made on behalf of both the parties, I find there is a necessity of police custody remand in the present case. Accordingly, the application moved by the IO is partly allowed and the accused is remanded to police custody for five days," the court said in its order passed around 12:45 AM Sunday. It noted the prosecution's submissions about the need to take Kumar to Mumbai and other parts of the national Capital to collect evidence, which was not possible without the accused's custody. "Admittedly, the case is at a nascent stage. Allegations made in the FIR are corroborated in her (Maliwal's) statement recorded by the magistrate on oath and further, it is again corroborated in the medico-legal case (MLC) of the victim or complainant," the court said. The magistrate also observed, "I am aware of the view of

the investigating agency to complete the investigation in order to reach the truth of the matter but at the same time the rights of the accused are also to be protected." Asking the Investigating

Officer to take Kumar into formal custody, the court directed his medical examination every 24 hours and said the investigating agency would not subject the accused to "any torture." It also allowed Kumar to meet his advocate and wife for half an hour each during the police custody.

application for Kumar's providing requisite medicines was also allowed. The proceedings which commenced around 9: 15 PM Saturday saw initial arguments by Srivastava following which the magistrate said, "I find force in the arguments of the APP (Additional Public Prosecutor) that there were sufficient grounds to arrest the accused without notice?



HAATH BADLEGA HALAAT



Baby kidnapped from Ranchi rescued; 5 held

 $oldsymbol{A}$ nine-month-old baby, who had been allegedly kidnapped from the Ranchi railway station in Jharkhand and sold for Rs 58,000 in Odisha, was rescued by the Cuttack RPF and the Ranchi police on

Five persons were arrested in this connection. The accused were identified as Amit Sanatan Pal (36), Radha Sahoo (38) and Sunil Mishra (18) of West Bengal, Nusrat Jahan (37) and Sohana Begum of Kalapancha under the Charichhak police station in

Police said one Pradeep



some food, two men and a

woman offered tea to his wife

which she drank and became

unconscious. On his return, he

found his wife in a semi-con-

scious state with his baby miss-

Later, police verified CCTV

footages in the Ranchi railway

station, basing on which a

Lohra of Dhagar Tola in Latehar district of Jharkhand had lodged a complaint with the Ranchi police alleging that his baby boy was stolen from his wife while she was taking rest near the ticket counter at Ranchi railway station on May 12 night.

When Pradeep left to buy

tions, including Cuttack. Subsequently, RPF and

Ranchi police found a family comprising two men and a woman staying in a rented house at Jobra to have been missing from the locality for the last few days. Their mobile phone location

was found near the Khurda Road railway station leading to the arrest of Pal, Sahoo and Mishra who confessed to have sold the baby to Nusrat Jahan, said a senior police official.

During interrogation, Nusrat Jahan confessed to have sold the baby to Sohana Begum for Rs 58,500 for a commission of Rs 20,000.

3 held for smuggling mangrove tree roots in B'kanika

5 quintals of roots seized, besides choppers, axe, gas lighter

PNS KENDRAPADA

 $T_{
m he\ forest\ personnel\ of}$ Kanika range under the Bhitarkanika National Park arrested three persons for trespassing into the park area in order to collect Batara and Garani roots. These roots are of mangroves trees, used to prepare fake sandalwood and sold in the local markets.

Seven bags of Batara roots, three bags of Garani roots, weighing about five quintals, two choppers, an axe, a gas lighter and two mobile phones were seized from the trio's pos-



ranger Manas Kumar Das.

The arrestees were identified as Hrushikesh Majhi, Bhajahari Majhi and Ajay Mahalik of Chaudia village under Bansda police station limits in Bhadrak district. They confessed to their crime. Narrating how they make fake sandalwood, they said after collecting the roots, they dip them in sandal scented water for a week and later, spray scent on the roots, which becomes duplicate sandalwood.

The trio was produced before a local court under various sections of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and were remanded in jail custody after their bail petitions were rejected by the court, stated

BJP heavyweights hold meet in K'pada



Urge people to vote for party MLA, MP candidates RAJESH BEHERA KENDRAPADA

 Γ he heavyweight leaders of BJP, including Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, former Union Minister Pratap Sarangi, MP Aparajita Sarangi, national vice president Baijayant Panda, State president Manmohan Samal on May 18 visited Kendrapada and urged people to vote for the BJP. This is for the first time in Kendrapada that the four BJP party stalwarts were seen together on a dais

Pradhan said that Odia Asmita was at stake and Odia people were fed up with the 'Naveen Government.' Now, the people of Odisha want a change. In Kendrapada, the Naveen Government failed to set up a needle industry here, though it is called the citadel of BJD and Bijubabu's Karmabhumi.

If the BJP Government is formed in Odisha, then

DHENKANAL

 $B_{
m JP}$ leader Er Debashisha

Hota is convincing his lakhs

of supporters to cast their votes

for the BJP candidates on May

25 for Dhenkanal Lok Sabha

and all seven Assembly seats.

Recently, he held a meeting at

Gunadei under the Hindol As-

Scores of people, including

youth, women, tribals, artists,

landless labourers, farmers,

teachers and project- affected

by different companies from

all over Hindol Assembly

Constituency attended. Hota

sembly seat.

Kendrapada will witness large scale industrialisation, he said. He further said that in the coming election, the people of the State have made up their

"The whole nation is going to be fully developed and selfreliant by 2047 under the leadership of Narendra Modi and Modiji has been working tirelessly. The whole nation has taken a vow to strengthen Modi's hand; so double lotus will bring double development in Odisha," said Panda.

Modi wave is strong across the nation and Odisha too wants to change its Government. Aparajita Sarangi stated that this time the slogan given by Narendra Modi, "Aab ki baar charso paar" is going to be a

was imminent

mind to see a real Odia in the CM's post. He appealed to the people to bless Modi for the third term and support the BJP candidates and MP candidate, Baijyant Panda, to form a double engine Government in

Pratap Sarangi said the

State BJP president, Manmohan Samal stated that the worthless and insignificant BJD Government's downfall

Hota urges supporters to vote for BJP in Hindol spoke about the pro-people schemes of the Modi Government and how they have been highly beneficial for the people

living on the edge.

He also described the achievements of the Modi Government, including the construction of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu & Kashmir, implementation of Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 and ban of Triple Talaq.

He said Odisha also needs to be provided good governance and urged the people to vote in favour of BIP.

3 crorepatis in fray for Kendrapada LS seat



RAJESH BEHERA KENDRAPADA

If one goes by the affidavit of the candidates during filling of nomination papers for the Kendrapada Lok Sabha seat, then there are at least three crorepati candidates in the fray. They are Baijyant Panda of BJP, Anshuman Mohanty of BJD and Sidharth Swarup Dash of Congress.

While Baijyant is the richest among the 13 crorepatis

who are contesting elections, he possesses a movable property worth of Rs 115.02 crore in his name whereas his wife, Jagi Mangat Panda, has a movable property of Rs 6.57 crore. Whereas, Baijayant has immovable assets worth Rs 26.48 crore, he also has a liability of Rs 98.50 lakh pending against his name.

Similarly, Anshuman (40) who is contesting the Parliamentary election on BJD ticket, has a movable property worth of Rs 80.59 lakh whereas his wife Swetalina Dash possesses movable assets of Rs 62 lakh. Ansuman has immovable properties worth of Rs 1.28 crore, including Rs 26.47 lakh of self -acquired assets and Rs 1.01 crore of inherited assets, whereas his family has immovable properties worth of Rs 2.08 crore. He has liabilities of Rs 50 lakh as loans from banks and financial in-

Congress candidate for Kendrapada LS seat, Sidharth Swarup Dash possesses movable assets worth Rs 53.65 lakh in his name whereas his wife Tanmayee Dash possesses movable assets of Rs 2.44 crore. Sidharth, however, does not have any immovable properties. His liabilities are worth Rs 2.13 lakh, including loan from bank, financial institutions and others) in his name whereas his spouse has liabilities of Rs 13.09 lakh.

Poll observers' meetWebcasting in 60% booths in Jagatsinghpur

JAGATSINGHPUR

An election review meeting was held under the chairmanship of Election Commission of India [ECI] deputed general observer Dr H P Tumod in collectorate here on Thursday. The meeting overall discussed pre-poll arrangements made by the district administration in Jagatsinghpur district.

Dr Tumod urged at the meeting to ensure strict adherence to the model code of conduct enshrined by ECI during elections and all poll stakeholders must obey the orders and instructions of the ECI in letter and spirit for free and impartial elections.

Collector cum district electoral officer Anupam Saha presented an extensive poll preparation plan initiated by the administration in the subjects of electoral roll preparation, postal ballot, and management of EVM and VVPAT machines, including model polling booths, Sakhi booths, youth and eco-friendly booths, SVEEP programme and arrangements at the polling stations.

The observers, verifying the arrangements, emphasized that training to the presiding and polling officers are an important component for conducting elections smoothly and peacefully. At least 60 percent of polling booths will be covered by webcasting in the district. The observers also discussed the storage of EVMS after elections and counting of votes which will be held on June

The meeting was attended by ADMs from Pradip and Jagatsinghpur, municipality executive officer and CDO cum EO Zilla Parishad.

Rajnath slams Cong, BJD for 'no dev in Odisha'

■ BHUBANESWAR

efence Minister and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh on Sunday targeted the ruling BJD and the Congress while addressing a mega public meeting in Rairakhol in Sambalpur

In his address, Singh stated that the Congress ruled Odisha for 50 years and the BJD for 25 years. But Odisha has not developed much in the last 75 years as poverty is yet to be eradicated. All the important documents, manuscripts art and culture have been lost. "I have been told that even the keys of Puri Jagannath Temple's Ratna Bhandar are also missing", he said.

"India has touched new heights under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Earlier, the world was not taking India seriously, but now things have changed dramatically. It was PM Modi who played a crucial role in ensuring the safe return of citizens



and students in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war which was stopped for 4.5 hours," said Singh.

Be it the abrogation of Article 370 or the construction of the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya, whatever promises made by the BJP have been fulfilled, said Singh.

The previous governments even failed to eradicate poverty. The Modi government has been working for the poor and other backward classes. Be it pucca houses, cooking gas,

toilets and other facilities, the BJP government has done a lot of work to bring a massive transformation in the lives of people.

"It was the BJD government that tried to stop the benefits of Central schemes from reaching the beneficiaries in Odisha. The work for providing pucca houses, toilets and cooking gas has not progressed much under the BJD rule. Several poor people are deprived of availing the benefits of Ayushman Bharat here," said Singh.

Oil refinery workers pledge support for BJD candidates



PARADIP

On Friday, the Eastern India Oil Refinery Workers' Union held a rally at the Jagatsinghpur District Truck Owners' Association office premises. The rally was presided over by the union's president Santosh Kumar Pattnaik.

Key attendees included Jagatsinghpur Lok Sabha MP candidate Dr Rajashree Mallick, Paradip MLA candidate Gitanjali Routray, district women BJD president Sabita Mohapatra, district supervisor Santosh Bej, Paradip supervisor Girish Babu, Kujang Block Campaign Committee chairman Raghunath Sahu, State Youth BJD secretary and Paradip coordinator Rashmi Ranjan Das, joint secretary Rajesh Bhuyan, Jagatsinghpur district BJD president Rabi Narayan Jena and district BJD secretary Bikram Mohanty.

Labour leader Chinmay Das delivered the welcome speech, introduced the guests and highlighted the public welfare programmes of the Eastern India Oil Refinery Workers' Union

under the leadership of Pattnaik. The speakers, including Pattnaik, urged the attendees to support the BJD candidates by voting for the joint Conch symbol, ensuring a decisive victory for both MLA and MP candi-

The rally saw enthusiastic participation from labour union workers and members of civil society, who collectively decided to support the BJD candidates in the upcoming elections, demonstrating their commitment to the leadership of Naveen Patnaik.

50 Vaisya Samaj families face 'boycott' in Ganjam

For last 2 years by own community RAJEEV RATHAN BRAHMAPUR

More than 50 families of the Haladia Tailik Vaisya Samaj in Ankushpur under Ganjam district have been subjected to a social boycott by their own community for the past two years. In this regard, a delegation of the victims lodged a complaint with Brahmapur SP, on Friday.

These families are excluded from participating in marriage ceremonies, events, and other essential activities, facing ostracisation within their village. Among the 400 families residing in Ankushpur, these 50 families are particularly targeted, enduring kangaroo courts imposed by influential individuals within their caste.



faced, which severely disrupt

their lives and violate their basic human rights. SBL president Rabindra Mishra spoke to the media, stating that this form of social boycott is more perilous than the coronavirus and contravenes Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Indian Constitution. He emphasized the necessity of eradicating such practices.

Despite efforts by elected village leaders, including the president, secretary, and treasurer of the NGO, the situation remains unresolved. SBL president Mishra, secretary Uma Sankar Sahu, advisor Professor SN Tripathy and members Pradeep Beura, Narayan Pradhan, Kapil Behera, Kirtan Sahu, and

Kampanidhi Sahu, have formally requested Brahmapur SP to address these issues urgently. They have also sent copies of their appeal to the Sadar Inspector-in-Charge, Inspector General of Police, Brahmapur, Director General of Police, Odisha, Chief Secretary of Odisha, and the Chief Minister of Odisha, urging immediate action to ensure the safety, security, and upholding of human rights for the ostracized families

As distress migration was checked due people's engagement in

PMAY house building, farming **AJIT PANDA** ■ NUAPADA

 $T_{
m he\ first\ phase\ of\ voting\ in}$ Odisha is over. The turnout of voters in Khariar and Nuapada Assembly Constituencies, two of the seven segments of Kalahandi Parliamentary constituency which went for voting in the phase, was 78.25 % and 74.76 % respectively.

Nuapada district as a whole recorded 76.54% voting. The voting percentage is about 4% more this time than in the 2019 general election. As in previous elections, women participation in voting was higher than men this time. The



increase in voting percentage no doubt is due to continuous efforts by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to encourage voters to participate in large numbers. Two other factors which can be attributed to the increase in polling percentage are reduction in migration this year as workers were engaged in construction of their houses under PMAY and supply of irrigation water in the right canal for Rabi cultivation in Khariar constituency for which the people were

tied to their farming works. As many as 40,352 families were allotted houses under

PMAY scheme this year after a gap of two years and it can be roughly said that two third of the beneficiaries are seasonal migrants. Under PMAY -MGNREGA convergence, the beneficiaries get 95 days of wage employment under MGNREGS when they work in the construction of their own houses. The district has already released the first instalment wage of 30 days to 39,000 ben-

The right canal of Lower Indra Irrigation Project has provided irrigation to 3,500 acres area for Rabi cultivation benefiting about 2,500 fami-

eficiaries under the scheme.

lies. Most of these farm households would have migrated after harvesting of Kharif crops had they not got irrigation in the ongoing Rabi season. This shows how timely in-

tervention to address pressing issues help people a lot to ascertain their rights in a democratic setup. However, for the politicians, these are not the issues that draw their attention. As the voters even after the end of voting are tight-lipped and are not revealing to whom they have voted, the candidates are engaged in speculation. Some of them, as police reports reveal, have become vindictive. There are allegations that BJD candidate Adhiraj Panigrahi has threatened some people for not supporting him during the election. One case has also been lodged against BJP candidate Hitesh Bagartti. Situation seems to be tense and there is speculation it may remain so till the day of counting.

BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY | MAY 20, 2024

CISF to take over counterterrorism role at Parliament as CRPF withdraws

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $M^{
m ore\,than\,3,300\,CISF\,per}_{
m sonnel\,will\,take\,over\,the}$ complete counterterrorism and anti-sabotage security duties at the Parliament complex from Monday following the with-drawal of over 1,400 CRPF staff from the country's most impor-tant symbol of democracy, official sources said.

The parliament duty group (PDG) of the CRPF wound up its entire administrative and operational paraphernalia -vehicles, weapons and commandos -- from of the complex on Friday and its commander, a deputy inspector general (DIG)-rank officer, handed over all the security points in the complex to the incoming CISF group, the sources said.

A total of 3,317 Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel are being inducted for securing both the old and new Parliament buildings and the associated structures in this complex located in central Delhi after the govern-

task from the CRPF following the December 13 security breach incident of last year, a senior officer told PTI.

In a major security breach on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack, two persons jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during Zero Hour on December 13, 2023, released yellow smoke from canisters and shouted slogans before being overpowered by MPs. Outside the Parliament premis-

es around the same time that day, two other persons sprayed coloured smoke from canisters while shouting slogans. Following this incident, a com-

mittee under the chairmanship of CRPF DG was setup to look into the overall security issues of the Parliament complex and make suitable recommenda-

The CISF counterterrorism security unit will take over the full charge of the Parliament complex from 6 am on Monday, May 20, the officer



It has deployed its staff to guard all the flap entry gates of the complex, posted canine squads, fire fighting personnel along with fire tenders, manpower at CCTV monitoring control room and communication centre apart from the pass section, watch towers apart from specialists to undertake anti-sabotage checks and other operations at the Parliament complex, he said.
With this, the CRPF PDG,
Delhi Police (about 150 personnel) and the parliament
security staff (PSS) who jointly secured the Parliament till now, stand withdrawn, a senior CISF officer said.

He said the CISF personnel have been undertaking familiarisation exercise of the complex for the last 10 days and the men and women personnel of the force who will man reception areas have been given light blue full sleeved shirts and brown pants apart from safari suits as their new uniform. The first officer quoted above expected to be merged with the six battalion strong VIP security wing of the CRPF, while the PSS staff could be tasked afresh for rendering security and protocol duties at other central government installations.

Some PSS staff could be retained for manning the lobbies of the house for marshal duties but a final decision is yet to be taken, he said. The CISF contingent, accord-

ing to sources, has been deployed on a temporary manner called the 'internal security duty pattern' and it is expected that it will be granted a fullfledged sanction as new government assumes office after the ongoing general elections, sources said

The CISF personnel have been imparted refresher training in baggage screening, personal frisking, bomb detection and disposal, quick reaction terrorist counter, sniper task and public interaction and courtesy before being sent for the

ly with the 'black cat' commandos of the National Security Guard (NSG) who were air-dropped from an IAF helicopter on the new Parliament complex to simulate a terrorist attack, the sources

A CRPF officer said PDG troops who left the Parliament complex on May 17 clicked selfies and took photographs as a token of remembrance of "efficiently" guarding the country's highest temple of democ-

"During the 2001 terrorist attack, CRPF personnel showed extreme bravery alongwith personnel from other agencies to defeat the dastardly assault with one personnel laying down her life in the line of duty while some others receiving gallantry medals and in 2023 they were not responsible for the breach that took place."

The PDG personnel felt sad that they had to surrender this duty despite giving their best," the CRPF officer said.

Ladakh at receiving end for past ten years, alleges Congress

Aday before polling for the Ladakh Lok Sabha con-stituency, the Congress on Sunday alleged that over the last 10 years, the Union Territory has been at the receiving end of the Modi Government's "malicious and step-motherly treatment". Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said Ladakhis have been protesting in freezing temperatures over the lack of control over their land and water. "The protests have been ongoing for months, including all 8 tribes and over 30,000 people, coming together for hunger strikes and huge marches," he said. The Modi government's only response has been continued silence and apathy, Ramesh claimed. In a social media post, the Congress general secretary noted that on May 20, Ladakh will go to the polls, and "over the last 10 years, Ladakh has been at the

the Modi government's Anyay Kaal - from complete apathy to malicious and step-moth-

"In August 2019, the Modi government stripped all representation from the people of Ladakh by downgrading them to a Union Territory without a legislature," he said.

"The greed of the Modi Sarkar and its crony corporate friends is threatening Ladakh's fragile ecosystems. Corporates in sectors like mining have their eyes set on Ladakh's natural resources. and if the Modi Sarkar is allowed back into power, there is nothing stopping them from extracting wealth from the land and the people,"

The entire region is being "remote-controlled" from Delhi through a lieutenant governor, he alleged. A huge influx of tourists and urbanisation is putting pressure on Ladakh's resources, creating water shortages, the former environment minister said. Further, the Modi govern-

ment's weakness has caused great harm to Ladakh's security and economy: The Modi government's cowardice has allowed China to seize 2,000 sq. Km of land in Ladakh, taking away 26 out of 65

patrolling points," he alleged The Chinese occupation has directly affected thousands of Ladakhis, particularly indigenous shepherds who graze their sheep and goats in the highlands near the bor-

der," he claimed. Ramesh said the Congress 'Nyay Patra' has clearly promised Sixth Schedule status to the tribal areas of Ladakh, granting critical autonomy to the local people to protect indigenous culture and the region's fragile ecosystem. "We have also outlined a detailed plan to address environmental issues, climate change, and natural disasters. On June 4, Ladakh will begin the process of healing, and return to the path of prosperity and stability!' Ramesh asserted.

Ladakh, a sprawling cold desert region, holds the distinction of being India's largest constituency in terms of area. It has around 1.84 lakh voters — around 96,000 in Kargil district and over 88,000 in Leh district.

46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting to begin in Kochi from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting begins in Kochi on Monday under the shadow of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, an issue that has been affecting the discussions for the past

The 10-day deliberations among signatory nations to the Antarctic Treaty are expected to focus on collaboration between parties on research and exchanging information on plans for sustainable management of resources in the icy continent. Also on the agenda for the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) is the development of a framework for regulating tourism in Antarctica, given the pristine and delicate nature of the continent, and applications by Belarus and Canada for consultative status at the deliber-

"We expect the Ukraine conflict to figure in the talks and we have to ensure that it



doesn't affect the meeting in a big way," a senior official closely involved in the ATCM's organisation said. Russia and Ukraine have consultative status or full decision-making roles at the ATCM, which takes all decisions by a consensus. Russia's increase in surveys of

the Antarctic region for oil and gas reserves has also caused some anxiety among the partner nations, some of

which believe that Moscow may stake claim to large swathes of the continent. Union Earth Sciences

Minister Kiren Rijiju is scheduled to formally inaugurate the ATCM at the Lulu International Bolgatty Convention Centre in Kochi on Tuesday. The ATCM and the 26th Meeting of the Committee

Environmental Protection is hosted by the Union Ministry

of Earth Sciences through the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research.

The meeting is also expected to deliberate on the development of a framework for tourism in Antarctica -- the only continent without any indigenous population. For the 2022-23 season, the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators reported 32,730 cruise-only visitors, 71,346 landed visitors and 821 deep-field visitors. The ATCM has 56 membernations, of which 29 have consultative status or decision-making powers.

The remainder have nonconsultative status. Canada and Belarus are seeking consultative status but their petitions have run into opposi-

Officials said the argument against Canada's candidature is that the North American nation does not have a research station in Antarctica while the scientific output of Belarus is not considered to be adequate for granting con-

Global life expectancy to increase between 2022 and 2050: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

receiving end of the worst of

The latest findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study (GBD) 2021, published in The Lancet, forecast that global life expectancy will increase by 4.9 years in males and 4.2 years in females between 2022 and 2050. Increases are expected to be

largest in countries where life expectancy is lower, contributing to a convergence of increased life expectancy across geographies.

The trend is largely driven by public health measures that

have prevented and improved survival rates from cardiovascular diseases, COVID-19, and a range of communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases (CMNNs), said the study.

It indicated that the ongoing shift in disease burden to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) - like cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and diabetes - and exposure to NCD-associated risk factors - such as obesity, high blood pressure, non-optimal diet, and smoking - will have the greatest impact on disease burden of the next generation. As the disease burden continues to shift from CMNNs to NCDs and from years of life lost (YLLs) to years lived with disability (YLDs), more people are expected to live longer, but with more years

spent in poor health. Global life expectancy is forecasted to increase from 73.6 years of age in 2022 to 78.1 years of age in 2050 (a 4.5year increase).

Global healthy life expectancy (HALE) - the average number of years a person can expect to live in good health - will increase from 64.8 years in 2022 to 67.4 years in 2050 (a 2.6-year increase).



To come to these conclusions, the study forecasts cause-specific mortality; YLLs; YLDs; disability-adjusted life years (DALYs, or lost years of healthy life due to poor health and early death); life expectancy; and HALE from 2022 through 2050 for 204 countries and territories. "In addition to an increase in life expectancy overall, we have found that the disparity in life expectancy across geographies will lessen," said Dr. Chris Murray, Chair of Health Metrics Sciences at the University of Washington and Director of the Institute for Metrics Evaluation (IHME).

"This is an indicator that while health inequalities between the highest- and lowest-income regions will remain, the gaps are shrinking, with the biggest increases anticipated in sub-Saharan

Dr. Murray added that the biggest opportunity to speed up reductions in the global disease burden is through policy interventions aimed to prevent and mitigate behavioral and metabolic risk

'This accompanying study found that the total number of years lost due to poor health and early death (measured in DALYs) attributable to metabolic risk factors has increased by 50% since 2000."

The study also puts forth various alternative scenarios to compare the potential health outcomes if different public health interventions could eliminate exposure to several key risk factor groups by 2050. "We forecast large differences in global DALY burden

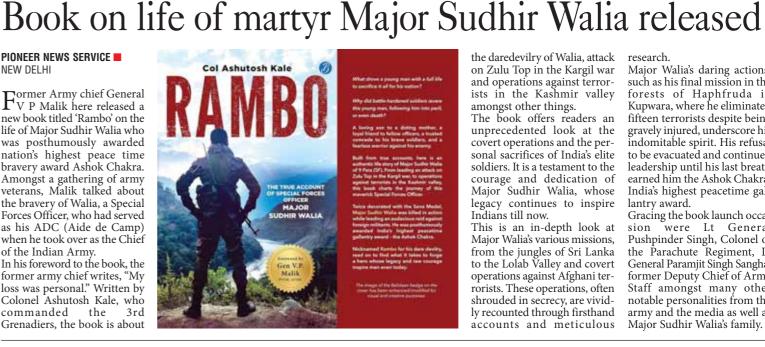
between different alternative scenarios to see what is the most impactful on our overall life expectancy data and DALY forecasts," said Dr. Stein Emil Vollset, first author of the study who leads the GBD Collaborating Unit at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health.

"Globally, the forecasted effects are strongest for the 'Improved Behavioral and Metabolic Risks' scenario, with a 13.3% reduction in disease burden (number of DALYs) in 2050 compared with the 'Reference' (most likely) scenario.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $F^{
m ormer}_{
m V\ P\ Malik}$ here released a new book titled 'Rambo' on the life of Major Sudhir Walia who was posthumously awarded nation's highest peace time bravery award Ashok Chakra. Amongst a gathering of army veterans, Malik talked about the bravery of Walia, a Special Forces Officer, who had served as his ADC (Aide de Camp) when he took over as the Chief of the Indian Army.

In his foreword to the book, the former army chief writes, "My loss was personal." Written by Colonel Ashutosh Kale, who commanded the 3rd Grenadiers, the book is about



the daredevilry of Walia, attack research. and operations against terrorists in the Kashmir valley amongst other things.

The book offers readers an unprecedented look at the covert operations and the personal sacrifices of India's elite soldiers. It is a testament to the courage and dedication of Major Sudhir Walia, whose legacy continues to inspire Indians till now.

This is an in-depth look at Major Walia's various missions, from the jungles of Sri Lanka to the Lolab Valley and covert operations against Afghani terrorists. These operations, often shrouded in secrecy, are vividly recounted through firsthand accounts and meticulous

such as his final mission in the forests of Haphfruda in Kupwara, where he eliminated fifteen terrorists despite being gravely injured, underscore his indomitable spirit. His refusal to be evacuated and continued leadership until his last breath earned him the Ashok Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award.

Gracing the book launch occasion were Lt General Pushpinder Singh, Colonel of the Parachute Regiment, Lt General Paramjit Singh Sangha, former Deputy Chief of Army Staff amongst many other notable personalities from the army and the media as well as Major Sudhir Walia's family.

Parade organised to mark successful training completion of Garud commandos

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

To mark the successful completion of training of Air Force Special Forces 'Garud' commandos, Maroon Beret Ceremonial Parade was held on Saturday at Garud Regimental Training Centre (GRTC), Air Force Station Chandinagar. Air Marshal PK Vohra, Senior Air Staff Officer, Western Air Command was the Reviewing officer for the parade, officials said here.

The Reviewing Officer congratulated the Garuds on successful completion of their training. He emphasised the importance of rigorous training and honing of Special Forces skills to keep pace with the changing security scenario.

He presented Maroon Beret, Garud Proficiency Badge and Special Forces Tabs to the successful Garud trainees and gave away trophies to the neritorious trainees. The best



all-rounder trophy was pre-sented to Flight Lieutenant Shashwat Rana.

As part of the ceremony, Garuds demonstrated combat firing skill, hostage rescue, firing drill, assault explosives, obstacle crossing drill, wall climbing, slithering, rappelling and military martial

The Maroon Ceremonial Parade is a significant event that marks the culmination of an extremely demanding training schedule. These newly passed out trainees enter the elite Garud force and add strength to the operational capability of IAF.

World Abdominal Cancer Day walk brings together thousands of people

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

The International Multicity ▲ Awareness Walk held on World Abdominal Cancer Day on Sunday brought together thousands of people across 25 cities worldwide including Mumbai, Bangalore, Surat, and Jaipur in India, as well as internationally in Oxford, London, Manchester, and New York. However, the participants had the common message of promoting health and fitness to particularly keep the abdomi-

nal cancer at bay.
Organized by the Abdominal Cancer Trust in the national capital, the event featured prominent figures such as Dr Imroz Khan and Dr. Mukesh Kumar, Co founder of World Health and Wellness Fitness who joined in the walk to raise awareness about abdominal cancer prevention and early

detection Dr. Sundeep Jain, founder of Abdominal Cancer Trust, high-



lighted the significance of lifestyle choices in safeguarding one's health, emphasizing that a healthy lifestyle can significantly reduce the risk of abdominal cancer. The Trust is engaged in providing support including medication to the patients afflicted with abdominal cancer. The 5th edition of the event

was particularly special, with Jai Shri Periwal praising the unique approach of raising cancer awareness through a walk. Participants were encouraged to stay vigilant about abdominal cancer symptoms and to seek medical consultation promptly.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

An intricate puzzle

Kejriwal aide's arrest sparks AAP-BJP war of words amid Maliwal's assault allegations

he alleged assault case involving former Delhi Commission for Women chief and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, in which she has named Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's PA Bibhav Kumar, keeps getting murky. The development came within days of Kejriwal's return to campaigning from Tihar Jail, where he had been incarcerated for his alleged role in the Delhi excise policy case. Now the arrest of Bibhav Kumar for the alleged assault has sparked a series of protests and political manoeuvres. The case centres around Maliwal who, interestingly, herself has been under scrutiny by the Anti-Corruption Bureau for alleged appointment irregularities in DCW. After first admitting to the assault, AAP now alleges that Maliwal was blackmailed with the fear of arrest in the case. Bibhav's arrest is linked to this ongoing investigation, adding fuel to an already volatile situation. In response to his aide's arrest, Kejriwal — accompanied by AAP MPs, MLAs and supporters — led a protest march to the BJP headquarters to show solidar-



ity with Bibhav and "expose" the BJP's political vendetta. In a video message to the Prime Minister, Kejriwal asked the latter to arrest all top AAP leaders at once instead of doing that one by one. Kejriwal also emphasised that the action against Bibhav and Maliwal were attempts to stifle AAP's efforts to combat corruption and improve governance. On the other hand, the BJP has asserted that the law against corruption is being followed diligently. Its leaders argue that investigation is a necessary step in ensuring transparency and accountability in public offices. Interestingly, the Congress has chosen to remain silent on this issue. This non-committal stance could be seen as a strate-

gic decision to avoid getting embroiled in the confrontation between AAP and BJP, both of whom are its political rivals in Delhi.

Timing is everything in politics; the cauldron is coming to a boil with less than a week to go for voting in Delhi on May 25. Meanwhile, the ongoing tussle between AAP and BJP is emblematic of the larger power struggle between the parties. This incident is likely to have ramifications beyond immediate political dynamics, potentially influencing voter perception and future elections. It would not be wise to assign motives to Maliwal at this point; besides, the case is now sub judice but one can safely say from experience that several of her past statements have been rather awkward. Once she tweeted she was a "proud daughter" and, on another occasion, said she was sexually abused by him when she was a child. The situation also brings to the fore issues of misuse of investigative agencies and the limits of political accountability. As both parties continue to trade barbs, the people of Delhi watch closely, hoping for resolutions that prioritise effective governance and justice over political expediency. As Buddha once said, three things cannot be hidden for long – sun, moon and the truth! We would know soon whether it was a political conspiracy or really a assault by her own party members!



Women carry statice flowers in bamboo baskets, in Senapati district of Manipu

India tactfully manages US-Iran tensions

BHOPINDER SINGH As India forges a vital partnership with Iran through the Chabahar port agreement, it must adeptly balance its regional interests against the backdrop of American concerns

ran has had an unwarranted grip on the sensibilities of the US administrations, irrespective of their partisan divide. The moment for the bilateral fracture in American imagination starts from the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the subsequent US Embassy hostage drama. The wounded memory for the Iranians is deeper and traced to the CIA-aided coup against the popular Prime Minister, Mosaddegh, in 1953. Undoubtedly, the religious puritanism of Ayatollah Khomeini's regime after the revolution pitted it ideologically against the 'West', but the public memory of the US support to Saddam Hussein (later ousting him) in the decade-long Iran-Iraq war, is now conveniently forgotten by the duplicitous American regimes. Later, Americans linked Iran to 9/11 and the birthing of Al Qaida/ISIL, even though Iran didn't have anything to do with either. If anything, Iran and its proxies fought ISIL in Syrian-Iraqi swathes and were instrumental in decimating the same, though later the Americans killed the Iranian General Qasem Soleimani. Because sectarian undercurrents

and the chessboard of American 'allies' (Israel and Arab Sheikhdoms) have a checkmate from Iran and its proxies in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen - the unjustified demonizing of Iran continues. While countries like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have contributed far more towards religious extremism and terror, they continue to receive American support, while the Iranians face crippling sanctions.
Americans had unilaterally reneged on the Iran Nuclear Deal even when all other signatories i.e., P+1 countries and the UN watchdog agency IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) had confirmed that Iran had complied with all provisions. Pressure from Israel and Sheikdoms ensured that Iran continued getting conflated with everything going wrong in the Middle East, even if Iran did, or iid not nave any roie in the same. While the Hamas group was supported by Iran (as indeed by Saudia Arabia and others, till recently), there is no credible evinew sanctions and export



FROM US CONCERNS

controls on Iran". The import of the same goes beyond the USA as it now seeks to potentially sanction any country dealing with Iran e.g., India, which has recently signed a 10-year contract to manage the strategic Chabahar port in Iran. This gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics bypasses Pakistani land routes, offers an invaluable Indian footprint on the other side of Pakistan (counters China-developed, Gwadar Port, in Pakistan) and strengthens Indian ties with the civilisational land of Iran. With the Taliban in Afghanistan tiring of Pakistan and the Iranians signing this deal, Delhi is justifiably excited about the evolved prospects of countering the Sino-Pakistani assertions in the

While India needs to maintain its relations with the US to countenance the Chinese threats, it also has its regional concerns which require de-hyphenation from US concerns with Iran. India cannot be a blind minion of the US as it has its own bilateral and regional imperatives that warrant 'strategic independence' in decision-making, as was done by buying Russian oil and maintaining cordial relations with Moscow, whilst nuancing concerns for Ukraine. To be fair, the Americans have recognised the Indian positions and compulsions which are not aimed at diminishing the US interest, but only towards protecting its own, hence the restrain in actuality, even as the war of words persists. In any case, the Biden administration will be at its voluble worst and indulge in sabre-rattling (especially on matters about Iran) and therefore important to understand their compulsion of tonality.

It is with this backdrop that the Statement of the US official must be understood, when pressed about the Indian agreement with Iran, 'You've heard us say this in several instances, that any entity, anyone considering business deals with Iran, they need to be aware of the potential risk that they are opening themselves up to and the potential risk of sanctions". The Americans will say what they have to and the Indians will do what they have to, as it is a well-understood position on both sides. India's strategic equation with Iran is not designed to diminish the US interest.

(1 ne writer, a military veter an, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)



WHILE INDIA **NEEDS TO** MAINTAIN ITS **RELATIONS WITH** THE US TO COUNTENANCE THE CHINESE THREATS, IT ALSO HAS ITS **REGIONAL CONCERNS WHICH** REQUIRE **DE-HYPHENATION**

WITH IRAN

Promise and challenges of drones in agriculture



Drone technology shows promise in agriculture, offering efficiency and cost savings. Yet apprehensions galore hinder its adoption

rone technology has gained popularity in the agriculture industry in recent years. Drones provide farmers with several advantages, such as higher yields, lower costs, and enhanced efficiency. However, there are worries that farmers would be hesitant to use drone technology because they don't know enough about it or are afraid of losing their jobs. We may examine the advantages of drone technology for the agricultural industry as well as any obstacles that might be preventing farmers from implementing it.Drones' advantages in the agriculture industry

In the agricultural industry, drones may be utilised for a variety of purposes, such as insect control, crop mapping, soil analysis, and irrigation. The following are the main advantages of drone use

1. Increased efficiency: Farmers can collect data and monitor crops more successfully because of drones' ability to cover huge expanses of land swiftly and efficiently. Early problem detection can result in quicker and more efficient responses.



2. Increased agricultural yields: Farmers may discover areas that need care by using drones to collect data on crop health. Farmers may raise agricultural yields and profit margins by resolving these problems.

3. Lower prices: By locating farm areas that need maintenance, lowering the need for physical labour, and lowering the usage of pesticides and other chemicals, drones may help farms cut costs.

4. Increased accuracy: Farmers can observe their crops in detail thanks to the high-resolution photographs and data that drones can collect. This can assist in identifying problem areas and guarantee that solutions are focused and successful.Drone technology adoption challenges in the agriculture industry Although farms might profit greatly from drone technology, several obstacles may prevent farm- come these obstacles and

ers from using this tool. These are a few of the main obsta-

1. Fear of losing one's job: Since fewer people will be required to undertake physical labour on farms as a result of the adoption of drone technology, many farmers are worried about losing their

2. Lack of expertise: Farmers may lack the expertise or training required to use drones safely. They might not be confident in their abilities to utilize it, which might make it difficult for them to accept this technology.

3. Cost: Since drones may be pricey, many farmers might not be able to afford to invest in this technology.

4. Regulatory obstacles: Farmers may find it challenging to use this technology if there are regulatory obstacles to the usage of drones in agriculture. Drone technology usage in rural India's agriculture industry is still in its infancy. This technology is attracting curiosity, but there are also worries about job loss and a lack of education and training. Nonetheless, initiatives are being made to overpromote the use of drone technology. The Digital India programme is a major endeavour that seeks to furnish rural regions with digital infrastructure. The initiative's emphasis on education and training may aid in addressing farmers' deficiencies in knowledge and experience. Furthermore, several efforts and organisations are working to further the application of drone technology in agriculture. To promote precision agricultural technology, such as drones, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) developed the Centre for Precision and Farming Technology. Farmers may be reluctant to accept this technology, though, due to worries about job loss and a lack of education and train-

Farmers must have the support and training; they need to use this technology efficiently, as well as an understanding of its potential advantages

(The writer is an assistant ofessor of agronomy, college of Agriculture & environmental technology, Surajmal University, Uttarakhand; view are personal)

FOLLOW THE CODE OF CONDUCT Madam — Apropos the news article

and the Americans lapped it

up with both hands - that it is

the election year and flexing

muscles against the 'enemy

i.e., Iran, brings its electoral

benefits, vitiates the situation

even further. Now Joe Biden

who had earlier come to

power with the promise to

restore the Iran Nuclear Deal

torn by the unhinged Donald

Trump, is all but a forgotten

memory. Today, Biden is try-

ing to outdo Donald Trump in

'taking on' the Iranians, with

The White House issued a

Statement, "Less than a week

ago, Iran launched one of the

largest missile and drone

attacks the world has ever seen

against Israel. Together with

our allies and partners, the

United States defended Israel

We helped defeat this attack.

And today, we are holding

Iran accountable-imposing

even more sanctions.

"Mamata Promises to back INDIA in Power," published on May 16. The Chief Minister of Bengal, Mamta Banerjee, had earlier decided to go solo in the elections. Even the ruling party Trinamool Congress's (TMC) leader's atrocities against women of the Sandeshkhali haven't lowered the spirit of Didi (Mamta Banerjee). Annoyed with the saffron party at the centre and blaming it for hatching a conspiracy in the Sandeshkhali incident, the chief minister has decided to support the INDIA bloc from outside if it comes to power in the

Accusing Narender Modi of not fulfilling any of the promises to the nation, Didi said Publicity and lies are his two weapons. According to the chief minister, the PM is a prachar Babu who does only 'prachar' and nothing else. Using such terms against the PM of the nation is a violation of the code of conduct. All political leaders should maintain the sanctity of the Constitution and follow a code of conduct while speaking publicly.

Abhilasha Gupta | Mohali

CHABAHAR PORT PACT

Madam — It refers to the news article "India And Iran Sign Chabahar Port Pact," this is my response. The Chabahar Port is a cornerstone of India's regional strategy, offering several critical advantages. It serves as a vital gateway for expanding trade with Central Asia, providing a direct, cost-effective route to the region's abundant resources. Additionally, Chabahar acts as a strategic counterbalance to China's influence, particularly in light of China's control of Gwadar Port in Pakistan. The port also offers a reliable alternative trade route to Afghanistan, bypassing the often volatile land routes through Pakistan and ensuring uninterrupted trade and aid flows. This collaboration with Iran further strengthens India's diplomatic ties and bolsters its position in the Asian geopolitical

landscape. India's commitment to the Chabahar

Chhetri retires



propos the news article, "Stalwart Chhetri Announces retirement," published on May 17, this is my response. The news of Sunil Chhetri's retirement has hit the Indian football community hard. As the much-admired and treasured Indian captain announced his decision to step away from international football after the FIFA World Cup qualification match

project, despite the potential risk of US sanctions, underscores its strategic autonomy. India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar defended the Chabahar Port deal with Iran despite US sanctions warning, emphasising its regional benefits. India views the port as crucial for accessing Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan. Despite US pressure, India asserts its strategic independence through the deal to counter China's influence in

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

CRUELTY AGAINST ANIMALS

Madam — Apropos the feature article, "Assault most foul for kindness to animals," by Hiranmay Karlekar, published on May 18, this is my response. Compassion for all living creatures has been the philosophy of India. In most Indian households, rural and urban, when people cook, they reserve a portion of the food for cows, dogs and birds. However, human beings, born as a superior species, consider themselves the sole claimant to this planet and its related div-

against Kuwait on June 6, emotions ran high across the country. Cheetri was the face of Indian football in a remarkable career spanning

over 20 years With a legacy that has left an indelible mark on Indian football, the 39-year-old maestro's journey has been an inspiration to millions, reshaping perceptions of this beautiful game in the nation along the way. Since his debut in 2005, Chhetri has amassed a multitude of accolades, including setting records for the highest number of appearances and goals scored for India. With 94 goals in 150 matches, Sunil Chhetri holds the third position on the list of most international goals, trailing behind only the two superstars, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. "A simple ball unites us all", the saying goes. Needless to say, Sunil Chhetri was a perfect example of this soccer quote.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

idends. Dog lovers aiding animals face assaults by impostors posing as human saviors, reflecting a concerning trend of

violence. Animals may be mute but we as a society have to speak on their behalf as animals breathe like us and have emotions. Even though India, with its population of over 1.42 billion, still faces significant challenges in addressing animal cruelty. Every minute, an animal in India faces abuse, despite existing laws like Sections 428 and 429 in Animal Laws. The State Government does not take animal abuse cases too seriously, making it difficult to calculate just how common they are. India was given a "C" under the Animal Protection Index (API) and is also a moderate performer under the Sanctioning Cruelty category. Unfortunately, these animal abuse statistics have shown, that animal cruelty is a real issue in India that takes millions of victims every year.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneér@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN CONNECTING THE MIND AND BODY

Harnessing the potential of mind is the key to true happiness

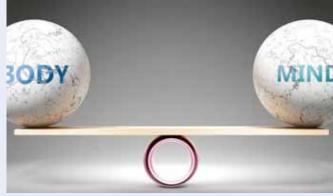


RAVI VALLURI

Inat is the difference between PK and PIKU? Two letters, 'I' and 'U;' I is us and U are them (an extra-terrestrial Aamir Khan). Their CPU is cerebral and our CPU is at the level of the abdomen. Or say for vast multitudes the focus is on the abdomen. It would be quite captivating to watch the main protagonists PK (of the eponymous movie) and Bhaskor (of Piku fame) sharing their thoughts and respective metabolisms in a spaceship. Food has a tremendous impact on our system, which we do not quite comprehend. Improper diet first takes a toll on the metabolism and then attacks other organs of the body. Simply put, the intake of toxic foods generates repugnant thoughts and results in a weak mind and body.

The human mind is an enigma and a reservoir of potential. But the moot question is how do we tap this potential? The mind is a movie theatre where we script and enact innumerable movies and soap operas. Technology alone cannot be a substitute for the enormous potential of the mind. It needs to be cultured, harnessed and harmonized with needs

We need to distinguish the brain from the mind. The brain is an organ that serves as the centre of the nervous system in all vertebrate and most invertebrate animals. Only a few invertebrates such as sponges, do not have a brain, diffuse or localized nerve nets are present instead. Mind on the other hand, is the faculty of consciousness and thoughts. It is an individual's intellect or memory of his attention span or will. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has captured it very succinctly. He says the mind is like the sky and thoughts are like clouds. Your thoughts make or mar the progress and development of the mind.



To be happy in life humans need to calm the obdurate and recalcitrant mind. Further keep reminding ourselves that we are blessed, grateful and have abundance in our lives. Life is full of valleys and peaks. It can never be a rising curve or a straight line permanently.

The human mind vacillates between the past and the future. In the past, the mind is regretful and if it is in the future, it is anxious. In either situation, the mind is not at peace or in the present moment and thus remains

Incidentally, there is a deep connection between the stomach and the mind. That is why it is called the gut feeling or the sixth sense. Our solar plexus keeps sending us signals. It depends as to whether we are con-

scious and wakeful enough to grasp those signals. Humans can truly celebrate only if we can silence our minds. There are techniques to do it and develop a relaxation room or space in our minds and harness the energy so that it does not get enervated. By practising Suryanamaskars and Padmasadhana as crafted by Gurudev we can

enhance our Prana, (chi) or energy levels substantially. This energy can be channelled in innumerable ways. There may be some who may practice meditation, breathing techniques or simply observe silence to quieten the mind. The path is chosen based on our personality type. Several others through unflinching prayers and reading inspirational literature can silence the mind. But the aim is to be in the present and lead a happy life. Let our minds not be judgmental and complain and cling to negativities. Willy-nilly we provide the hook to hang

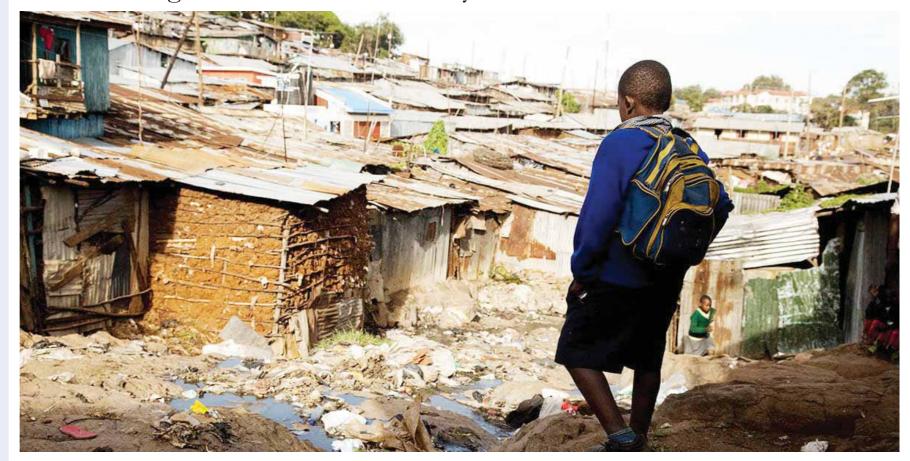
"Life gives you plenty of time to do whatever you want to do if you stay in the present moment," writes Deepak Chopra.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and

Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Economic crisis takes a backseat in elections

As India's election fever rises, the spotlight shifts from core economic issues to religious controversies and symbolic debates



n this dance of democracy, scarce resources are seemingly rambling up the election tempo. The religious slant on employment and sillier issues like the mangal sutra raised are for diverting from the core issue that has as yet to be answered by the pre-poll slogan of "we are the fifth largest economy". Aren't we that large? Some stats say that but the country has tougher stats to counter like the difficult balance of pay-ments and still grim, Manipur the embattled State, for the failure of the provincial Government has over 67000 people displaced during the last year because of the ethnic conflict. There are also reports that farmers plough into the Punjab BJP poll campaign and express similar wrath in Haryana as well. They tell a political party to be people-friendly as also kisans are not born for doles. And Agniveers on their death are not being given a salute is a national cry.

Jobs not being there is the reality. Urban joblessness has risen to 6.7 per cent from 6.5 per cent in March 2024. The men's unemployment has jumped to 6.3 per cent from 5.8 per cent. Periodic labour survey data is a pointer to difficult job scenarios. This is reflected in the elections by the Bihar caste survey that indicates more difficult situations for marginal castes, a detested reality. Caste denotes empowerment as well as deprivation.

Would a Congress manifesto professing over 50 per cent reservation serve the issue? The BJP contests it. It is accused of wanting to rob reservations. It is repeatedly denied by RSS chief Mohan Bhagvat. No party has answered if jobs are not there, how would a reservation help? National Commission for Backward Classes has warned West Bengal and Punjab Governments for not "fully using the space available under the 50 percent ceiling for reservations for scheduled castes, tribes and backward classes and OBCs". It asked Bengal to increase it by 5 per cent and Punjab by 13 per cent. It finds that



MAHANAVRATNA AND NAVRATNA **INDUSTRIES** WERE DOING

WELL WHEN MOST OF THESE WERE AXED OR SABOTAGED, LIKE AIR INDIA AND HMT, TO

FACILITATE THE **GROWTH OF THE** PRIVATE SECTOR WHICH EARNED **HUGE PROFITS BUT DID NOT CREATE JOBS** Bengal filled up 45 per cent of the quota and Punjab only 37 per cent. The worst may be Arunachal Pradesh. Yet another sex racket is busted with eight Government officials among 21 arrested.
The International Labour

Organisation finds 28 million men women and children are in forced labour due to a cycle of poverty. Of these 63 percent are in the private sector. Forced labour generates \$ 236 billion in illegal profits globally every year.
"We now know that the situation

has only got worse. The international community must urgently come together to take action to end this injustice," said the ILO Director General.

The report, titled 'Profits and poverty: The economics of forced labour, also estimates that traffickers and criminals are generating close to \$10,000 per victim, up from \$8,269 (adjusted for inflation) a decade ago. The survey also said that forced commercial sexual exploitation contributes to more than two-thirds (73 per cent) of overall illicit profits, despite accounting for only 27 per cent of all victims in privately imposed work. "Total annual illegal profits from forced labour are highest in Europe and Central Asia (\$84 billion), followed by Asia, including India and the Pacific (\$62 billion), the Americas (\$52 billion), Africa (\$20 billion) and the Arab States (\$18 billion)," the report said. The ILO cautions India. It also worked on conditions of Indian

labour in the Arab countries. In a scenario, where people compromise with their dignity, the ILO doubts the figures on India's galloping progress. The supposed \$ 3 trillion economy, highly burdened

with debt, has an annual repayment of over Rs 10.4 lakh crore. Economic issues remain at the forefront of the voters. Globally shrink-

ing jobs, particularly in IT, has rat-

tled many Indians. Political parties offering sops of reservations or apprenticeships of Rs 1 lakh a year (approx. Rs 8000 plus a month) sells well among the burgeoning numbers of jobless, who are already hit by one of the highest inflation of 55 per cent in ten years. It is not easy for them to manage it amid farmers' distress and the trade

deficit widening to a four-month high at \$ 19.1 billion. Exports rise by one per cent to \$35 billion and imports by over 10 per cent to \$ 54.1 billion. This upsets the Government's calculations on the

impending forex reserves. How would the country improve the job scenario? The age-old move to wean the workers away from the farms has failed. Still, agriculture employs over 54 per cent of the Indian workers. The Nehruvian economy created robust public sector organisations. In 1994-2000, PSUs employed 19.4 million (about 2 crores) people or 69 per cent of the total employed. The other 31 per cent were employed in the central and State Governments. Some 3.4 million jobs were added to nonfarm payrolls and unemployment at 5.6 per cent had fallen from 6.6

In sharp contrast, in 2021-22, PSU employment reduced to 8.61 lakh. And it is gradually reducing. According to official statistics, employment in the organized sector is now a mere 8.34 per cent, of which the public sector accounts for 5.77 per cent and the private sector only 2.58 per cent in the total employment generated.

The Government's massive infra investment of Rs 11 lakh crore this fiscal may have added some jobs in the construction sector but these short-term jobs are not considered quality work. Apart from infra investments are subject to erosion in many ways, right from excess cost estimation to

longer gestation.
So the promise of reservation is a dream. According to CMIE, employment in India increased by a mere 5.8 million till March 2023. An additional 119 million people were not added to the potential labour force during the same. The estimates show that self-employment has been the chief driver of the Indian job market, which was hit hard by demonetisation crushing a parallel selfsustained economy.

Poli promises apart, the country is in the grip of a severe economic crisis. Ideally, more PSUs are required to stop labour exploitation in the private sector as well as their disinclination to create jobs. The Mahanavratna and Navratna industries were doing well when most of these were axed or sabotaged like Air India and HMT to facilitate the growth of the private sector, which earned huge profits but did not create

Reversing it would require revival and reforming the Planning Commission and reshaping the economy in the public sector where the private sector would have to compete on equal terms. Reservations to benefit the deprived castes then only would yield results. Would a revamp be possible?

(The author is a senior journalist;

Complex challenges necessitate consciousness and policy shift

India's pressing issues demand pragmatic action and a collective mindfulness shift for lasting, transformative change

ndia faces multitudes of challenges arising from dif-▲ ferent quarters. It is tempting to think of these problems as belonging to society, polity, economics etc. But essentially all problems have their roots in the mind of the human being and arise from a lack of adequate understanding of the self. The solutions therefore have to be both in the external and the internal domain. Let us look at the five major conflicts and challenges plaguing India. A vision for the future would involve constructively responding to these problems.

1. Climate Change It is well-established that climate change is an anthropogenic phenomenon. Ladakh is already agitating about the palpable changes that climate change is inflicting on the



ACHARYA PRASHANT

region's ecology. Five years is too long a time if India does not immediately take corrective steps. There is a terrifying lack of public awareness on this issue leading to political inaction. How are we planning to deal with swathes of terrible heat waves that are going to engulf the country? What will diminishing crop yields and extreme weather events do to the poor? Do we not know the also genuine efforts towards origins of the toxic air that we correcting the consumption- can survive either physically or

are consuming or the water distress we are facing? We continue to wreck the Himalayas with deforestation and the construction of massive carbon-emitting infrastructure, despite knowing that this is causing erratic rain patterns, melting of the glaciers and eventual destruction of life as we know it.

Blind lust for consumption comes from the blind belief that consumption is an indicator of the fulfilment or success of one's life. The sheer size of our population coupled with this notion of consumerism is a recipe for self-destruction. In the next 5 years, we need education and mass-awareness programs on this biggest threat that mankind faces and based flawed philosophy of life, through programs on selfawareness 2. Animal Rights

The same lust that threatens to destroy the planet also co-opts the rights of all living creatures on Earth. The problems of animal rights violations, ecology loss and biodiversity extinction all arise from the same source. When we talk of animal rights, it is today unfortunately a struggle for the basic

right to survive. Close to 50% of all living species on the planet have gone extinct in the last 50 years. Most of it is because of violent human action. 100-1000 species go extinct every day. Also, this is 100 to 1000 times faster than the natural extinction rate.

As Indians and as humans, we

spiritually with the kind of carpet 'speciecide' we have launched against the entire planet. In its scale and brutality, it exceeds any act of violence the Earth has ever seen. It is especially lamentable to see that India, with its Ahimsa, is among the worst perpetrators of atrocities towards lifeforms. Be it meat exports, the expansion of the dairy industry, or the organised destruction of animal habitats through so-called developmental activities, it only augurs doom for

In the next 5 years, I wish to see direct and strong action on this front, which can only result from an arousal of public consciousness.

3. Education

India's education portray the itize the integration of life realities of the world.

deep waters that the country is in. There are startling revelations on the basic quantitative and linguistic abilities of school students, not to mention the unemployability of college passouts. Compared to the developed world and the mass of developing countries, this highlights the utter lack of importance that Indian society places on education. The problems of today can

have only spiritual solutions and we have kept the young population oblivious of spirituality. Our education has become very dangerously antilife. A human being is alive only if he can reflect and understand. There is a need to urgently ramp up the basic education infrastructure of Public statistics on the State of the country and also to prior-

education into the modern education system.

In the next 5 years, we need to see an education system that places deep emphasis on both Vidya(knowledge of the self) and Avidya (knowledge of the world).

4. Protection of rights of the marginalised communities More than half of the world's wealth resides in the hands of

less than 1% of individuals. The situation in India is no different. When national resources are commanded by just a few individuals, the outcome is that much of the world is plagued by poverty, even starvation. The glamorization of wealth and the promise of pleasure has made the middle classes disconnected and indifferent to the stark

In the next few years, the rights of the vulnerable sections must be defended in all ways - through education, legal frameworks and socio-

religious reform. 5. Creative and dignified employment for the youth

Work is not something that you can choose as per the prevailing norms in your academic institution family or community. I would want to see, in the next 5 years, the creation of an academic, social and economic environment that brings creative vocation to the youth, not just as a means of livelihood but as the fulfilment of life itself.

(The author is a Vedanta teacher, author and the founder of Prashant Advait Foundation: views are personal)

Airstrike kills 27 in Central Gaza

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

n Israeli airstrike killed 27 Apeople in central Gaza, mostly women and children, and fighting with Hamas raged across the north on Sunday as Israel's leaders aired divisions over who should govern Gaza after the war, now in its eighth month. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces criticism from the two other members of his War Cabinet, with his main political rival, Benny Gantz, threatening to leave the government if a plan is not created by June 8 that includes an international administration for postwar Gaza. US national security adviser Jake Sullivan was expected to meet with Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders on Sunday to discuss an ambitious US plan for Saudi Arabia to recognise Israel and help the Palestinian Authority to govern Gaza in exchange for a path to eventual statehood.

Netanyahu opposes Palestinian statehood and has rejected those proposals, saying Israel will maintain openended security control over Gaza and partner with local

2 dead, 5 missing

Budapest (Hungary) (AP)

Police say two people have

died and five are missing fol-

lowing a boat collision on the

Hungarian police received a

report late Saturday night that

a man had been found with a

head injury on the shore of the

Danube near the town of

Veroce, around 30 miles (50

kilometers) north of the capi

tal, Budapest. The bodies of a

man and a woman were later

Hours after police began their

search, they discovered a dam-

aged boat in the water, which

they towed to shore. They are

still searching for five adults —

three men and two women —

who they believe were on the

Police said they determined

that a river cruise boat had

been in the area at the time of

the accident. They stopped a

cruise boat with a damaged hull

near the town of Komarom,

more than 50 miles (80 kilome-

Hungarian public television

station M1 reported that the cruise boat, Heidelberg, is a

109-meter (357-foot) Swiss craft that can accommodate 110 people. No passengers on that boat sustained injuries, M1

said. The Danube at Veroce is

wide and is in the center of an

area called the Danube Bend

where the river makes a sweep

the south. The area is a popu-

lar recreational and boating

destination and is on a route

between Budapest and the

140 miles (230 kilometers)

upriver. The deadly accident

comes five years after at least 27

people were killed in Budapest

when a river cruise boat collid-

ed with a smaller tourist vessel,

The tourist boat Hableany, car-

rying 35 people who were

mostly South Korean tourists,

was overtaken from behind

by the much larger cruise boat,

Viking Sigyn, beneath Budapest's Margit Bridge, in May 2019. The Ukrainian

captain of the Viking Sigyn was

last year found guilty of negli-

gence leading to a fatal mass

catastrophe and sentenced to

five years and six months in

sinking it in seconds.

upriver.

ters) further

discovered nearby.

boat.

Danube River in Hungary.

in Danube River

boat collission

Palestinians unaffiliated with Hamas or the Western-backed Palestinian Authority. Gantz's ultimatum expressed support for normalising ties with Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, but he also said "we will not allow any outside power, friendly or hostile, to impose a Palestinian state on us'

Gantz's withdrawal would not bring down Netanyahu's coalition government but would leave him more reliant on farright allies who support the 'voluntary emigration" of Palestinians from Gaza, full military occupation and the rebuilding of Jewish settlements there. Even as discussions about the future take on new weight, the war rages. In recent weeks, Hamas militants have regrouped in parts of northern Gaza that were heavily bombed in the war's early days and where Israeli ground troops operated.

The airstrike in Nuseirat, a built-up Palestinian refugee camp in central Gaza dating back to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, killed 27 people, including 10 women and seven children, according to records at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in nearby Deir al-Balah, which

strike on a Nuseirat street killed five people, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service. In Deir al-Balah, a strike killed Zahed al-Houli, a senior officer in the Hamas-run police, and another man, according to the hospital. Palestinians reported more airstrikes and heavy fighting in northern Gaza, which has been largely isolated by Israeli troops for months and where the World Food Programme says a famine is underway. The Civil Defence said the strikes hit several homes near Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya, killing at least 10 people. Footage released by rescuers showed them trying to pull the body of a woman out of the rubble as explosions echo in the background. In the urban Jabaliya refugee camp nearby, residents reported a heavy wave of artillery and airstrikes. "The situation is very difficult," said Abdel-Kareem Radwan, 48

He said the whole eastern side

has become a battle zone where

the Israeli fighter jets "strike

anything that moves".Mahmoud Bassal, a

spokesman for the Civil

recovered at least 150 bodies. more than half of them women and children, since Israel launched the operation in Jabaliya last week. He said around 300 homes have been completely destroyed. Israel launched its offensive after Hamas' Oct 7 attack, in which militants stormed into south ern Israel, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting some 250.

The war has killed at least 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry which doesn't distinguish between combatants and civilians. Around 80% of the population of 2.3 million Palestinians have been displaced within the territory often multiple times.

'We need a decent life to live,' said Reem Al-Bayed, who left Gaza City and is sheltering with thousands in the gritty coastal Muwasi camp in the south without basic facilities like wells. "All countries live a decent life except us." She gave herself a quick mouthful of bread before tearing the rest into pieces for half a dozen children, then poured them a

US national security adviser, Saudi's Crown Prince meet

President Joe Biden's national security of the al security adviser met early Sunday with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss what the kingdom described as the "semi-final" version of a wideranging security agreement between the countries.

The announcement by the state-run Saudi Press Agency comes as the strategic deal had been upended after Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people and saw 250 others taken hostage back to the Gaza Strip.

In the time since, a punishing Israeli airstrike campaign and ground offensive there has killed over 35,000 Palestinians, endangering the security deal that had included Saudi Arabia diplomatically recognising Israel for the first time since its founding in 1948.

Saudi state media released no images of Jake Sullivan and Prince Mohammed meeting in Dhahran, a city in the kingdom's far east that's home to its state-run oil giant, the Saudi Arabian Oil Co. known as Saudi Aramco The semi-final version of the

draft strategic agreements between the kingdom and the United States of America, which are almost being finalised — and what is being worked on between the two sides in the Palestinian issue to find a credible path — were discussed," the statement released after the talks said.

That included "a two-state solution that meets the aspirations and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" and "the situation in Gaza and the need to stop the war there and facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid," the statement

Saudi Arabia has long called for an independent Palestinian state to be created along Israel's 1967 borders, with east Jerusalem as its capital. However, that likely may be untenable for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,

whose government hinges on support from hard-liners who oppose a two-state solution and support Israeli settlements on lands Palestinians want for that state

The White House had acknowledged Sullivan's trip and that he would later head on to Israel, where he's scheduled to meet Netanyahu on Sunday However, there was no immediate statement from the US on the discussions, other than to say they would be "including the war in Gaza and ongoing efforts to achieve a lasting peace and security in the region."

Saudi Arabia has long relied – like other Gulf Arab nations on the US to be the security guarantor for the wider Middle East as tensions over Iran's nuclear program in recent years have spilled over into a series of attacks. The proposal now being discussed likely would deepen that, and also reportedly includes access to advanced weapons and possibly trade deals as well.

Houthi rebels strike oil tanker in Red Sea with missile

Dubai (AP): Yemen's Houthi rebels hit an oil tanker in the Red Sea with a ballistic missile early on Saturday, damaging the Panama-flagged, Greek-owned vessel in their latest assault over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, officials said. Though the Ĥouthis did not immediately claim the assault, it comes as they claimed to have shot down another US mili tary's MQ-9 Reaper drone over Yemen and have launched other attacks on shipping, disrupting trade on a key maritime route leading to the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea.

The attack around 1 a.m. struck the oil tanker Wind, which recently docked in Russia and was bound for China, the US military's Central Command said. Both China and Russia maintain ties over military equipment and oil to Iran, the Houthis' main benefactor.

The missile strike "caused flooding which resulted in the of loss propulsion and steering", Central Command said on the social platform X. "The crew of M/T Wind was able to restore propulsion and steering, and no casualties were reported. M/T Wind resumed its course under its own power.'

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre and the private security firm Ambrey similarly acknowledged the attack earlier Saturday. Ambrey said it caused a fire aboard the Wind. It can take the Houthis hours or even days — to claim their attacks. The Houthis have launched attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, demanding Israel ends the war in Gaza, which has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians there. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on October 7, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 others hostage. The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the US Maritime Administration.

Houthi attacks have dropped in recent weeks as the rebels have been targeted by a US-led airstrike campaign in Yemen. Shipping through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden still remains low because of the threat, how-

Slovak PM's condition serious

Slovakia's populist prime minister, Robert Fico, remained in serious condition on Sunday but has been given a positive prognosis four days after he was shot multiple times in an assassination attempt that has sent shockwaves across the deeply polarised European Union nation, the defence minister said. "The worst of what we feared has passed, at least for the moment. But his condition remains serious," Robert Kalinak told reporters outside the hospital where Fico is being treated. "His condition is stable with a positive prognosis." Kalinak added that the hospi-

tal treating the Slovak leader in Banská Bystrica, a former coal mining town of 16,000 situated 29 kilometres (17 miles) from where Fico was attacked, will continue to issue updates on his health status. Milan Urbáni, deputy director

of the hospital, told reporters that "Based on the doctors' morning consultation, we can conclude that the patient is currently out of a life-threatening condition. His condition remains very serious, and he needs a long time to rest to recover. We firmly believe that



everything will go in a good direction

Fico, 59, was shot in the abdomen as he greeted supporters on Wednesday outside a cultural centre in the town of Handlova, nearly 140 kilometres (85 miles) northeast of the capital, Bratislava. Video showed the Slovak premier approach people gathered at barricades and reach out to shake hands as a man stepped forward, extended his arm and fired five rounds before being tackled and arrested.

On Friday, Fico underwent two hours of surgery to remove dead tissue from his gunshot wounds, but he was not healthy enough to be transferred to the capital, officials said Saturday. The country's Specialised Criminal Court in the town of

Pezinok on Saturday ordered the suspected assailant, who is charged with attempted murder, to remain behind bars Prosecutors said they feared he could flee or commit other crimes if freed, a court spokesperson said. The suspect can appeal the order.

Little information about the would-be assassin has been disclosed after prosecutors told police not to publicly identify him or release details about the case. Unconfirmed media reports have named him and said he was a 71-year-old retiree known as an amateur poet who may have once worked as

a mall security guard. Government authorities have given details that matched that description. They said the suspect didn't belong to any political groups, though the attack itself was politically motivated. Fico said last month on Facebook that he believed rising tensions in the country could lead to the killing of politicians, and he blamed the media for fuelling tensions in the country of 5.4 million. President-elect Peter Pellegrini,

an ally of Fico, said on Sunday that Slovakia is a "wounded country" in the wake of the assassination attempt.

Helicopter carrying Iran pres makes hard landing: State TV

helicopter carrying Iranian APresident Ebrahim Raisi suffered a "hard landing" on Sunday, Iranian state media reported, without immediately elaborating.

Raisi was travelling in Iran's East Azerbaijan province. State TV said the incident happened near Jolfa, a city on the border with with the nation of Azerbaijan, some 600 kilometres (375 miles) northwest of the Iranian capital, Travelling with Raisi were Iran's

Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, the governor of Iran's East Azerbaijan province and other officials, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. One local government official used the word "crash" to describe the incident, but he acknowledged to an Iranian newspaper that he had vet to reach the site himself. Neither IRNA nor state TV

offered any information on Raisi's condition. Rescuers were attempting to

reach the site, state TV said, but

Sunak faces revolt over Graduate Route visa plans: Report

had been hampered by poor weather conditions. There had been heavy rain and fog reported with some wind. IRNA called the area a "forest." Raisi had been in Azerbaijan

early Sunday to inaugurate a dam with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. The dam is the third one that the two nations built on the Aras River. The visit came despite chilly relations between the two nations, including over gun attack on Azerbaijan's Embassy in Tehran in 2023, and Azerbaijan's diplomatic relations with Israel, which Iran's Shiite theocracy views as its main enemy in the region.

in the country, but international sanctions make it difficult to obtain parts for them. Its military air fleet also largely dates back to before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Raisi, 63, is a hard-liner who for-

Iran flies a variety of helicopters

merly led the country's judiciary. He is viewed as a protégé of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and some analysts have suggested he could replace the 85-year-old leader after his death or resignation from the role. Raisi won Iran's 2021 presidential election, a vote that saw the lowest turnout in the Islamic Republic's history. Raisi is sanctioned by the US in part over his involvement in the mass execution of thousands of political prisoners in 1988 at the end of the bloody Iran-Iraq war.

uranium at nearly weaponsgrade levels and hampers international inspections. Iran has armed Russia in its war on Ukraine, as well as launched a massive drone-and-missile attack on Israel amid its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Under Raisi, Iran now enriches

Congolese army foils coup

Exiled opp leader threatens pres

roughly 1,500 feet (460 meters) Kinshasa (AP): Congo's army says it has "foiled a coup" early Sunday morning and arrested the perpetrators, including ing, nearly 90-degree turn to several foreigners, following a shootout between armed men in military uniform and guards of a close ally of Congo's president that left often used by cruise boats three people dead in the cap-Austrian capital, Vienna, some ital, Kinshasa.

At first, local media identified

the armed men as Congolese soldiers but then reported they were linked to self-exiled opposition leader Christian Malanga who later posted a video on Facebook threatening President Felix Tshisekedi. Tshisekedi was reelected as president in December in a chaotic vote amid calls for a revote from the opposition over what they said was a lack of transparency. The Central African country has witnessed similar trends of disputed elections in the past.

Congolese army spokesper-son Brigadier General Sylvain Ekenge said on state in the shootout that started television Sunday that the around 4:30 am

attempted coup d'état was "nipped in the bud by Congolese defence and security forces (and) the situation is under control." He did not give further details. This also came amid a crisis

gripping Tshisekedi's ruling party over an election for the parliament's leadership which was supposed to be held Saturday but got postponed. Clashes were reported Sunday between men in military uniform and guards of Vital Kamerhe, a federal legislator and a candidate for speaker of the National Assembly of Congo, at his residence in Kinshasa, about 2 kilometres (1.2 miles) from the presidential palace and where some embassies are also located.

Kamerhe's guards stopped the armed men, Michel Moto Muhima, the politician's spokesperson said on the X social media platform, adding that two police officers and one of the attackers were killed

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is considering restrictions to the UK's post-study visa which allows graduates to stay on and work for up to two years after their degree course as part of efforts to curb soaring legal migration figures

despite strong opposition from some of his ministers, a

PTI ■ LONDON

report claims on Sunday. According to 'The Observer newspaper, Sunak is facing a Cabinet revolt over plans to scrap the Graduate Route scheme, the definitive factor for choosing UK universities among Indian students who have topped the tally of these post-study visas since it was launched in 2021.

Downing Street is said to be considering "further restricting or even ending" the route despite the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) declaring it was not being abused and that it should continue as it helps UK universities make up for financial losses on the domestic front. "Sunak is now



finding himself caught between the demands of rightwingers with one eye on the leadership and Conservative moderates who fear the consequences of a lurch to the right on the party's reputation and election chances," claims the newspaper, quoting sources close to ministers who oppose scrapping the visa. Sunak's Education Secretary,

Gillian Keegan, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt and Foreign Secretary David Cameron are

among those in the Cabinet said to be leading a revolt over the issue. It comes as university and business chiefs have warned that any curtailment of the post-study offer would make the UK less attractive to overseas students, including

Studying at university is one of our biggest export successes. Attracting international students boosts local economies and losing competitiveness would put support for undergraduate teaching

Indians.

Campaigns Officer for the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). "With the MAC finding that

the Graduate Visa is achieving the government's own policy objectives and is not being abused, it's time to put its future beyond doubt and end this period of damaging spec-ulation," he said.

Universities UK (UUK), the leading representative body for UK universities, has also called upon the government to end the "toxic" uncertainty caused by the government's decision to review the visa route. "We hope and expect that the

government now listens to the advice they have been given and provides categorical reassurance that the Graduate visa is here to stay," said UUK chief executive Vivienne Stern. MAC Chair Professor Brian Bell, who concluded the rapid review into the scheme earlier this week, has said that "our evidence suggests that it's the Indian students that will be

and innovation at risk," said most affected by any restric-The influential committee

> which advises the UK government on migration found that Indians accounted for 89,200 visas between 2021 and 2023 or 42 per cent of the overall grants, and the visa was stated as the "overwhelming decision point" for their choice of a higher education destination.

> The uncertainty caused by the review has been chaotic. We urge the government to accept the MAC's findings and ensure the Graduate Route remains a stable and permanent fixture in the UK's immigration system," said Vignesh Karthik from the National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) UK. In a general election year, expected in the coming months, the Sunak-led government sees curbing high legal and illegal migration figures as a priority area and with the latest set of quarterly immigration statistics due next week, further clampdowns are on the horizon

Musk launches Starlink in Indonesia

AP DENPASAR

 $E^{lon\ Musk\ travelled\ to}_{Indonesia's\ resort\ island\ of}$ Bali on Sunday to launch Starlink satellite internet service in the world's largest archipelago nation. Wearing a green Batik shirt, Musk was greeted with a garland of flower petals at a community health clinic in Denpasar, the provincial capital of Bali, where he launched the Starlink service alongside Indonesian min-

Indonesia, a vast archipelago of $17,\!000 is lands sprawled across$ three time zones with a population of more than 270 million, has been trying for years to secure deals with Musk's Tesla on battery investment and for Musk's SpaceX to provide fast internet for the country's remote regions.

During the ceremony, Musk took a speed test of the Starlink internet service with several health workers in Indonesia's remote regions, including in Aru, one of Indonesia's unserved and outermost islands in Maluku province. "This can make it really a lifesaver for remote medical clinics, and I think it could be a

possibility for education as well," Musk told reporters. "If you can access the internet and then you can learn anything and you can also sell your business services worldwide. So, I think it's going to be incredibly beneficial," he said. He also signed an agreement on enhancing connectivity in the country's health and education sectors. Details about the agreement between the

Indonesian government and

company that operates Starlink services, were not provided.

Launching the service at a health clinic aligns with Starlink's broader mission of providing affordable access to high-speed internet services, particularly in underserved and remote regions, said Coordinating Minister of Maritime and Investment Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan.

'Our remote regions need Starlink to expand high-speed internet services, especially to help with problems in the health, education and maritime sectors," Pandjaitan, a close ally of Indonesia's President Joko Widodo, told reporters. He held separate

talks with Musk on Sunday. Communication and Informatics Minister Budi Arie Setiadi said earlier that local Musk's SpaceX, the aerospace internet providers, which rely

on base transceiver stations to transmit signals, are unable to reach outer islands because they have limited coverage. Starlink's satellites, which remain in low orbit, will help them deliver faster internet with nationwide coverage. Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin said of the more than 10,000 clinics across the country, there are still around 2,700 without internet access. "The internet can open up bet

ter access to health services as communication between regions is said to be easier, so that reporting from health service facilities can be done in real time or up to date," he said. During his first in-person visit to Bali, Musk is also scheduled to participate in the 10th World Water Forum, which seeks to address global water and sanitation challenges.



People take part in a pro-Palestinian rally in Berlin, Saturday.

Ukraine, Russia exchange drone attacks Nepal PM Prachanda confident

Russia said it shot down some 60 drones and several missiles over its territory while Ukraine in turn said it destroyed over 30 Russian drones. At least four people were reported killed in an attack on the outskirts of Kharkiv on Sunday as Russia pushed ahead with its renewed offensive in Ukraine's war-ravaged northeast

Russian air defences shot down 57 Ukrainian drones over the southern Krasnodar region overnight, the Russian Defence Ministry said.

Local military officials said drone debris hit an oil refinery in the town of Slavvansk-on-Kuban, but there was no fire or damage. News outlet Astra published videos appearing to show an explosion at the refinery as it was hit by a drone. The videos could not be independently verified.

Nine long-range ballistic missiles and a drone were destroyed over the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula,



A Ukrainian police officer and war crime prosecutor inspect fragments of a glide bomb in front of damaged house, after a Russian airstrike on a residential neighbourhood in Kharkiv, Ukraine, Saturday

following Friday morning's Vyacheslav Gladkov, a church massive Ukrainian drone attack roof was set on fire by falling that cut off power in the city of

A further three drones were shot down over the Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine. According to regional Gov.

drone debris, but there were no

The Russian-installed governor of Ukraine's partially occupied Kherson region, Vladimir Saldo, said that one person died

and 16 were wounded when a Ukrainian drone hit a minibus on Sunday morning. Ukrainian air force officials said air defenses shot down all 37 Russian drones launched against the country overnight. In the Kharkiv region, where morning that one person died and 11 were wounded as a result of shelling over the previous day. Later on Sunday, Syniehubov said four people were killed and 15 wounded in a Russian strike

Moscow recently launched a new offensive, regional Gov.

Oleh Syniehubov said Sunday

on the outskirts of the regional capital, also called Kharkiv. Russia launched an offensive in the Kharkiv region late last week, significantly adding to the pressure on Ukraine's outnumbered and outgunned forces which are waiting for delayed deliveries of crucial weapons and ammunition from Western partners. Ukraine's overstretched forces are trying to slow Russia on the new front by using bombladen drones to destroy military vehicles.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday during a visit to China that Moscow's offensive in the Kharkiv region aims to create a buffer zone but that there are no plans to cap-

of winning trust vote today

Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has exuded confidence that he would win the trust vote in the House of Representatives on Monday, days after a coalition partner withdrew its support for his government.

Prachanda, 69, a former guerilla leader, belongs to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), the third largest party in the House of Representatives (HoR).

He will seek a vote of confidence in Parliament, the fourth within 18 months of taking office, amidst obstruction of the House proceedings by the Opposition Nepali Congress demanding a probe into the alleged involvement of Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane in the misappropriation of cooperative

"There is no doubt that my government will survive the floor test," Prime Minister Prachanda said at a ruling party's programme Kathmandu on Saturday.

'The differences between the ruling alliance and opposition parties will be sorted out through dialogue,"

The Prime Minister is required to take a vote of confidence within 30 days if the party the Prime Minister is representing splits or if a member of the coalition government withdraws support. The Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) withdrew its support last week while quitting the coalition government.

This will be Prime Minister Prachanda's fourth vote of confidence within one and a half years after he assumed the top executive position on December 25, 2022. The new government requires at least 138 votes in the 275-member House of Representatives to win the vote of trust.

Earlier on March 13, Prime Minister Dahal won his third consecutive vote of confi-

Last year, Prachanda faced a floor test after former prime minister KP Sharma Oli-led CPN-UML withdrew its support to the Prachanda-led government following a rift over backing the main opposition party's candidate for the presidential poll.

Prachanda's support has notably declined in successive confidence votes. In January 2023, he obtained 268 votes, followed by 172 in March of the same year. His support further dwindled to just 157 votes in the third-floor test Currently, the ruling coalition holds a majority with 77 seats of the CPN-UML, 32 of the Maoist Centre, 21 of the Rastriya Swatantra Party, seven of the newly formed Janata Samajbadi Party and 10 seats of the CPN-Unified Socialist (CPN-US).

Meanwhile, the major political parties have agreed to form a panel to look into the misappropriation of fund by cooperatives.

Authorities urge caution after wild bears attack several in Japan

AP ■ TOKYO

apanese authorities have warned residents to be aware of wild bears in the country's northeast after several people were attacked, including police officers. A bear about 1 metre (3 feet) in size was captured in Fukushima prefecture Sunday by officials in charge of wildlife damage, according to a Japanese news report that included video of the bear wandering around in a residential area. An official in Inawashiromachi city in Fukushima, who answered the phone, was not able to provide further information. The bears were also seen in surrounding areas, including Akita prefecture.

Two police officers were attacked Saturday in the city of Kazuno in Akita while recovering the body of a missing man, Japanese media report ed. The man had gone hunting for bamboo shoots in the mountains a few days earlier where he was found dead in the area with gash wounds. It remains unclear if he died due to a bear attack.

The officers are in serious condition, though not lifethreatening, reports said.

In response, some wooded Kazuno "for an indefinite time," officials said in a statement. Akita police declined to give more details. News footage showed police officers putting up signs warning people to stay out of mountainous areas where the bears were sighted.

Over the weekend, patrol cars were dispatched together with a helicopter search to locate the bears

Akita prefectural police have urged people to keep bells and other noise-producing devices on hand to scare the bears away in case of an encounter, and not to go out at night.

Thousands of Asiatic black bears live in the wild throughout Japan. Attacks have risen as the borders blur between the bears' habitats and people's dwellings. The scarcity of acorns, berries and other food, possibly connected to climate change, is also blamed for the surge in bear encounters.

Taiwan's new president inherits strong foreign policy position but political gridlock at home

In a campaign ad for Taiwan's president-elect Lai Ching-te, incumbent President Tsai Ingwen was shown driving with Lai in the passenger seat, exchanging reflections on their years governing together. Tsai later turned over the driving to Lai, who was joined by running mate Bi-khim Hsiao.

The message was clear: Lai would steer the island in the direction set by Tsai, who after eight years in power was barred from running again. Lai, 64, will take office Monday. Continuing Tsai's legacy means aiming to strike a balance between cultivating Taiwan's unofficial alliance with the United States and maintaining peace with China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, to be retaken by

Lai is also expected to build on some of Tsai's domestic reforms, despite political gridlock. Lai and Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party has lost the

force if necessary

making it hard for Lai to push through legislation, including the approval of crucial national defense budgets. Tsai, 67, has been Taiwan's

first female president and one of Asia's few female leaders who didn't hail from a political dynasty. Her legacy will be tied to defending the island's sovereignty from China while refashioning it as a credible partner for the US and other democracies. She will also be remembered for overseeing the legalization of same sexmarriage, steering Taiwan through the COVID years and kickstarting the island's military modernization.

She leaves office with high approval ratings. A recent poll by broadcaster TVBS showed 42 per cent of respondents were satisfied with her eightyear performance. Her predecessor, Ma Ying-jeou, left office with approval ratings of around 23 per cent. Tsai's popularity partly reflects

a shift in Taiwan's identity. A vast majority of residents now majority in the legislature, identify as Taiwanese as

to be governed separately from Beijing. Taiwan and China have had different governments since a civil war in 1949 saw the Nationalists flee to the island while China's Communist Party took control of the mainland.

Tsai veered from the more

China-friendly policies of the previous ruling party, the Kuomintang. By the end of Ma's tenure, the frequent exchanges with Beijing were making many Taiwanese nervous, said Shelley Rigger, a Taiwan expert at Davidson College. Beijing called Tsai a separatist after she refused to acknowledge the 1992 Consensus, an agreement which says Taiwan is part of "One China." While pulling away from Beijing, however, Tsai left a door open for communication. "President Tsai has always said that Taiwan, under her leadership, is happy, willing and eager to have dialogue with Beijing, just not on terms unilaterally imposed by Beijing," said Wen-Ti Sung, a think tank Atlantic Council. China has not only declined to speak to Tsai but also ramped up military and economic pressure on the island, sending warships and military jets near

Beijing prevents countries it has diplomatic relations with from having formal ties with Taipei. During Tsai's tenure, it intensified a campaign to lure away the island's few diplomatic partners. During Tsai's years in office, China poached almost half of Taiwan's diplomatic allies, bringing the remaining number to 12.

Tsai pushed back by diversifying trade relationships and increasing military spending including submarine develop ment. She also elevated Taiwan's standing on the international stage, said outgoing Foreign Minister Joseph Wu. "Her leadership style is very moderate, but at the same time very firm in dealing with any kind of international pressure," he said. "She strength-

with the international community," said Bonnie Glaser, the director of the Indo-Pacific program at the German Marshall Fund of the United

Lai, who served as vice president during Tsai's second term, came across as more of a firebrand earlier in his career. In 2017, he described himself as

a "pragmatic worker for Taiwan's independence," drawing Beijing's rebuke. He has since softened his stance and now supports maintaining the status quo across the Taiwan Strait and the possibility of talks with Beijing.

"Lai has spent the last two-plus years trying to convince the world that he is Tsai Ing-wen 2.0," said Lev Nachman, an assistant professor at National Chengchi University. Lai will build on Tsai's efforts to strengthen ties with the US, which doesn't formally recognize Taiwan as a country but is bound by its own laws to provide the island with the means to defend itself.

Pak minister says trade ties with India suspended due to heavy duties

Islamabad (PTI): Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has said that trade ties between Islamabad and New Delhi have remained suspended since 2019 due to the imposition of "heavy duties" by India on imports from Pakistan after the Pulwama attack.

In a written reply submitted to

the National Assembly on Saturday, Dar, who also holds the deputy prime minister's slot, said: "India decided to impose 200 per cent duty on imports from Pakistan, sus-pended the Kashmir bus service and trade across the Line of Control after the Pulwama attack." According to the Dawn newspaper, Dar was respond-ing to a question by Pakistan Peoples Party lawmaker Sharmila Faruqui seeking details about trade challenges faced by Pakistan in its relations with neighbouring countries, especially India.

In March, during a press conference in London, Dar highlighted the eagerness of Pakistan's business community to resume trade activities with India. However, his office later clarified that Pakistan has no plan to resume trade relations with India which has been "non-existent" since 2019. Pakistan downgraded its ties with India after the Indian Parliament suspended Article 370 on August 5, 2019, a decision that Islamabad believed undermined the environment for holding talks between the neighbours.

We have consistently advocated constructive engagement and result-oriented dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues, including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir with India...," Dar said on Saturday. The foreign minister said that the "onus is now on Delhi to take steps for the creation of an environment that is conducive to peace and dialogue". India has been maintaining

that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan while insisting that the onus is on Islamabad to create an environment that is free of terror and hostility for such an

Fresh corruption allegations levelled | Chinese envoy promises friendship against Pakistan ex-PM Imran Khan

PTI ISLAMABAD

 $P_{\text{watchdog has levelled fresh}}^{\text{akistan's accountability}}$ corruption allegations against jailed former prime minister Imran Khan, accusing him of "illegally" possessing and selling seven high-value watches and 10 other precious gifts linked to the state gift repository when he was in power, media reports said on Sunday. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) launched an inquiry against the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi over the alleged misuse of the Toshakhana the state gift repository, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

The beleaguered former first couple has been convicted in earlier Toshakhana corruption cases as well.

were sentenced to 14 years in jail each by an accountability court for alleged corruption in state gifts they got from the state repository. The sentence was later suspended by the Islamabad High Court (IHC). The previous Toshakhana graft case was filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in the charges of hiring the sale of state gifts. The NAB investigation centres on the illegal ossession and sale of seven high-value watches and 10 other precious gifts, including diamond and gold jewellery, the report said.

According to the inquiry, items such as Graff and Rolex watches and diamond jewellery were allegedly sold without being legally owned or deposited in the Toshakhana, as required by law. The Toshakhana is a department under the Cabinet Division that stores gifts given In January, Khan and Bushra to rulers and government officials by heads of other governments and foreign dignitaries. Under the rules governing Toshakhana – a Persian word meaning "treasure house" government officials can keep gifts by paying a price, but first, the gift should be deposited.

gifts purchased/retained at "considerably lower rates" and were routinely sold" without properly declaring them. The expensive Graff watch set was also allegedly sold without "retention", according to the report. The NAB's findings suggest collusion between the buyers of the Graff watches and a private appraiser, who allegedly undervalued the watches by Rs 30 million.

The undervaluation, confirmed via an email from Toshakhana, meant that only Rs 20.1 million, or 20 per cent of the watches' actual value of Rs 100.9 million, was deposited into the government treasury, the report said. "During the course of the inquiry, it was revealed that the value of luxury gift items was assessed in an unscrupulous and slipshod manner by a private appraiser

[...] was not even an industry expert and did not possess the required experience or expertise to make these assessments, Geo News said, citing the report. After the report find ings, the accountability watchdog was authorised to conduct further probes against Khan and Bushra. Separate call-up notices had also been served to them, which they have challenged in the IHC. The court hear Bushra's appeal on June 4 and Khan's appeal on June 24, the report said. The former-cricketer-turned-politician has been lodged at the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi since August last

as two warships dock in Cambodia

AP SIHANOUKVILE

Two Chinese warships docked on Sunday at a commercial port in Cambodia, in preparation for joint naval exercises between the two countries. The Jingangshan amphibious warfare ship and Qijiguang training ship sailed in to the Sihanoukville Port as onlookers waved Cambodian and Chinese flags from the The port is north of the Ream

Naval Base, where China has funded a broad expansion project that has been carefully watched by the United States and others over concerns it could become a new outpost for the Chinese navy on the Gulf of Thailand. The Gulf is adjacent to the

South China Sea, which China claims virtually in its entirety, and would give easy access to the Malacca Strait, one of the

China allocates billions to bailout property sector

most important shipping lanes

in the world. Wang Wentian, China's ambassador to Cambodia, dismissed concerns about Ream, telling reporters at Sihanoukville that wherever the Chinese navy sails "we bring friendship, we bring cooperation" and nothing

"The cooperation between the two armies, between China and Cambodia, is conducive to the security of both countries and the security of the region," he said, standing on the pier. The Jingangshan and the Qijiguang are due to take part in naval exercises from the Ream base from May 24-27, along with two Chinese corvettes that have been docked at Ream's new pier for more than five months.

The joint training is the naval component of the ongoing Golden Dragon exercises, which are regularly held between the two countries. Controversy over Ream Naval Base initially arose in 2019 when The Wall Street Journal reported that an early draft of a reputed agreement seen by US officials would allow China 30-year use of the base, where it would be able to post military personnel, store weapons and

berth warships. Cambodia's then-Prime Minister Hun Sen denied there was such an agreement. He pointed out that Cambodia's constitution does not allow foreign military bases to be established on its soil, but said visiting ships from all nations are welcome. As the Golden Dragon exercises opened on May 16, Cambodian army Commander in Chief Gen. Vong Pisen thanked China for providing new equipment and helping to upgrade military facilities, including the Ream Naval Base.

SL questions **UN** rights report on enforced disappearances

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka has questioned the timing and the mandate of a report issued by the Office of the Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) this week in which it asked the country's government to ensure accountability for enforced disappearances during the armed conflict with the LTTE

The OHCHR report issued on Friday said Sri Lanka's Government must take meaningful action to determine and disclose the fates and whereabouts of tens of thousands of people who have been subjected to enforced disappearance over the decades and hold those

responsible to account. According to the Sri Lankan foreign ministry officials, the min-

OHCHR on its unilateral action to issue a report, particularly its Sri Lanka was irked by the tim-

istry would officially write to the

ing - a day ahead of plans by the Tamil diaspora and kith and kin in the country of those who died during the final battle of the government's war with the LTTE in May 2009 to commemorate the dead.

Events were held to mark the fifteenth anniversary on Saturday in the former conflict zones and even in the capital Colombo despite fears that government troops would crack down on them citing the proscription of the LTTE as a terrorist outfit. Tamil groups claimed a large number of civilians had perished during the final battle. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had run a military campaign for a separate Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern provinces of the island nation for nearly 30 years before its collapse in 2009.

On May 18, 2009, the Sri Lankan Army declared victory with the discovery of the body of the dreaded LTTE leader Velupillai Prabakaran. The Amnesty International

Secretary General Agnes Callamard on Saturday was at the site of the final battle in the northeastern district, a day after he met President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Friday. Despite the passage of nearly 15 years since the end of the armed conflict and many decades since the earliest waves of enforced disappearances, Sri Lankan authorities are still failing to ensure accountability for these **PTI** ■ BEIJING

fter prolonged dithering, has finally announced steps to address the near collapse of its mammoth property sector by allocating billions of dollars to buy back unsold homes and repurchase idle lands to resurrect its bankrupt real estate sector, which once constituted the mainstay of its economic growth.

The People's Bank of China has announced that it would establish a 300-billion-yuan (about USD 42.25 billion) relending facility for the government-subsidized housing project.

Local state-owned enterprises are encouraged to use the funds to buy reasonably priced commercial homes that have completed construction, Tao Ling, deputy governor of the People's Bank of China, told the media last week. Tao

added that these homes will then be used to provide affordable housing. Also, as part of the government's increased financial efforts to support the property sector, commercial banks across the country issued a total of 963.6 billion yuan (about USD 137 billion) in real estate development loans followed by billions of yuan loans for individual housing loans in the first quarter of the year, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The newly set up fund will help developers to have access to financing and to encourage the repurchase of "idle" land and the "relending" funds will enable local state-owned enterprises to buy unsold homes they can then offer as affordable housing, according to Chinese media reports. Besides being unusually large, China's property sector accounted for about a quarter

of annual output of its econo-

my and was highly connected

to other parts of the Chinese economy. The household wealth in China is also highly concentrated in property. Just as systemically important financial institutions had to be rescued to prevent a financial meltdown 16 years ago, major property developers in China may also be too interconnected to fail, according to a report in the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post.

China's property debt crisis. The Chinese property sector As the property crisis became

serious setback for the country's massive economy, sparked the default of the biggest property market developer Evergrande Group in Evergrande has reported over

crisis, regarded as the most

USD 300 billion in liabilities. Earlier this year, a Hong Kong court ordered the liquidation of the company, sending rip-ples across China and the world. Soon the crisis spread like wildfire with other real estate developers like Kaisa Group, Country Garden, Fantasia Holdings and a host of others declaring bankruptcy following millions of unsold and partly developed residential high-rises all over the country. Analysts say it is unlikely that

the decision of the Hong Kong court in January to liquidate Evergrande marks the end of

ning its GDP to around five per cent with persisting slow down, China last week finally moved to stem the crisis. Besides the USD 42.25 billion fund, the government also announced measures to boost the property market, cutting

a major drag on the world's

second largest economy, pin-

minimum down payment ratios, setting up a relending facility for affordable housing and pledging to deliver unfinished homes The measures included minimum down payment ratios for individuals' commercial housing mortgages will be lowered

second-home purchases. This is the lowest down payment requirement in history which will be very helpful in boosting the property market," Yan Yuejin, research director at E-house China R&D

to 15 per cent for first-home

purchases and 25 per cent for

Institute, told Xinhua.

Government recovers ₹852 crore under amnesty scheme for exporters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

government recovered about Rs 852 **L** crore under the amnesty scheme for exporters for one-time settlement of default in export obligation by the holders advance and EPCG authorisations, an official said.

The figures are likely to increase further as the exercise is on for the compilation of the data, the official added.

The government has fixed March 31 as the last date for payment of customs duty plus interest.

"Under the scheme, 6,705 applications were filed and as per the provisional figures, an amount of about Rs 852 crore has been recovered. This figure is further expected to increase," the official said. small

several Meanwhile, exporters have requested the

government to continue the scheme for a one-time settlement of default in export obligation till September.

Ludhiana-based Hand Tools Association President SC Ralhan has said several small exporters have not been able to avail of the benefits of the scheme due to fulfilling their obligations to make payments to MSMEs within

In the new foreign trade policy (FTP), the scheme was announced for exporters for onetime settlement of default in export obligation by the holders of advance and EPCG (export promotion for capital goods) authorisations.

Under the scheme, all pending cases of the default in meeting export obligation (EO) of certain authorisations can be regularised by the authorisation holder on payment of all customs duties



in April, even as the trade deficit widened to a four-month high of USD 19.1 billion during the month, according to government

Imports also increased by 10.25 per cent to USD 54.09 billion in the month under review from USD 49.06 billion in April 2023 due to a significant jump in gold imports.

The country's total exports in goods and services for 2023-24 stood at USD 778.21 billion, the "highest" so far. Merchandise exports in the last fiscal were aggregated at USD 437.1 billion, while services exports stood at USD 341.1 billion.

In line with the "Vivad se Vishwas" initiative, which sought to settle tax disputes amicably, the government has introduced the special one-time Amnesty Scheme under the FTP 2023 to address default on export obligations.

The scheme is intended to provide relief to exporters, who have been unable to meet their

obligations under EPCG and Advance Authorisations, and who are burdened by high duty and interest costs associated with pending cases.

The objective of the EPCG scheme is to facilitate the import of capital goods to produce quality goods and services to India's enhance export competitiveness. The scheme allows import of capital goods for pre-production, production and post-production at zero customs

On the other hand, advance authorisation is issued to allow duty-free import of input, which is physically incorporated in export products.

However, exporters availing benefits under these schemes have to fulfil certain export obligations. Failure to fulfil the obligations attracts

Ministry holds discussions on formulating SOPs to negotiate FTAs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce ministry has held detailed discussions with senior officials of different departments and trade experts on formulating standard operating procedures (SOP) for negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs), an official said.

To discuss the various aspects of these agreements, the commerce ministry has organised a two-day 'Chintan Shivir' on FTA strategy and SOPs for trade negotiations on May 16-17.

Suggestions that came up during the discussions included comprehensive consultations with public and private sector players and sharing details of the proposed FTAs with the line ministries, the official said.

"Consultations should be held at every stage of FTA negotiations. Representatives of certain ministries FTA suggested the commerce ministry to share FTA details with them in a timely manner so that they can prepare their views on those agreements," the official added.

The exercise assumes significance as India is engaging with several trade partners to negotiate free trade pacts.

Former commerce secretaries, trade experts and government officials from ministries, including finance, IT and electronics, and mines, participated in the deliberation. In the Chintan Shivir, various issues were

discussed, including India's trade strategy and vision 2047; economic assessment and modelling of FTAs; inclusion of new disciplines into FTAs such as labour, environment, gender, and indigenous people; services and digital trade; and SOPs for FTA negotiations.

A separate session was also organised on leveraging India's FTAs to address new forms/kinds of measures like CBAM (carbon border adjustment mechanism), supply chain disruptions, critical minerals, and artificial intelligence.

that were exempted in proportion by 1 per cent to USD 34.99 billion to unfulfilled EO and interest at 100 per cent of such duties exempted. India's merchandise exports rose

Zinc demand in India likely to double in next 5-10 years

 $T^{\text{he demand of zinc is expected to}}_{\text{double in India in the next five to}}_{10 \text{ years on the back of huge}}$ investments in infrastructure sector, including steel, International Zinc Association said on Sunday.

The demand for zinc in India depends largely on the growth of the steel market as zinc is mainly used to galvanise steel to protect it from corrosion

"I see a doubling of the demand (for zinc) in the next five to 10 years. The market for primary and refined zinc in India is currently close to 800 to 1,000 tonnes (per annum) and has a great opportunity to increase with all the developments that we are witnessing in India.

We see huge investments in additional steel capacity and ...Steel



still needs to be protected by galvanized coatings. We see a lot of plans and investments going on for new galvanizing lines. So I expect a strong role for zinc in India," International Zinc Association Global Director Martin Van Leeuwen told PTI in an interaction. The current demand for zinc in India is 800 to 1,000 tonnes per

There are very low zinc users in India, he said, adding that per capita consumption of zinc in the country is around 0.5 kg and is far behind the world average.

"If you look at zinc use in India, it is around half a kg per capita. To put that in perspective, the global average is about four kg per capita. And in developed countries like Korea, Europe, US it can go up to six

or seven kgs per capita," he explained. When asked about the outlook for

zinc in the current calendar year, he said that with the world switching over to green energy and strong growth in solar photovoltaics (PV), there seems a great opportunity for zinc in 2024. "The energy transition...Is getting

wonderful some opportunities for use of zinc. We are seeing investments in solar PV and wind energy and especially those two require a lot of zinc to protect steel supports... Zinc is also used to protect the towers, the wind towers for wind energy, especially those towers that are positioned at sea....We see great improvement and a great opportunity for zinc,"

Bank of Maharashtra tops among PSU banks in business growth in FY24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ctate-owned Bank of Maharashtra recorded the highest growth rate last fiscal in terms of total business and deposit mobilisation among public sector lenders at a time when most banks are facing difficulty in achieving double-digit growth.

The Pune-headquartered lender has registered a 15.94 per cent rise in the total business (domestic) in FY24, followed by the country's largest lender with 13.12 per cent growth, according to published financial financial numbers of the public sector banks (PSBs).

However, SBI's total business (deposit and advances) was about 16.7 times higher at Rs 79,52,784 crore compared to Rs 4,74,411 crore of Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) in absolute terms. Similarly, BoM continued to maintain its top spot in terms of growth in deposit mobilisation, with a 15.66

per cent) and Canara Bank (10.98 per cent). Out of 12 public sector banks, only these four lenders could log a doubledigit growth in deposits in the financial year 2023-24.

per cent rise in FY24. It was

followed by SBI (11.07 per

cent), Bank of India (11.05

In terms of low-cost CASA deposits, the Bank of Maharashtra continued to top the chart with 52.73 per cent growth, followed by the Central Bank of India with a 50.02 per cent rise at the end of March 2024.

A higher level of current and account savings accounts helps banks to keep their cost of funds low. With regard to loan growth, the Kolkata-based UCO Bank was a tad higher at 16.38 per cent, followed by BoM at 16.30 per cent. SBI also reported 16.26 per cent FY24.

Loan growth of remaining public sector banks was lower than 16 per cent during the fiscal

On the asset quality side, the Bank of Maharashtra and SBI reported the lowest gross non-performing assets with 1.88 per cent and 2.24 per cent, respectively, as of March 31, 2024. In terms of net NPAs, BoM and Indian Bank reported the lowest numbers, with 0.2 per cent and 0.43 per cent,

respectively. terms of capital adequacy ratio, the Bank of Maharashtra was leading PSBs at 17.38 per cent, followed by Indian Overseas Bank at 17.28 per cent and Punjab & Sind Bank at 17.16 at the end of

Mutual Funds invest ₹1.3 lakh crore in equities in 2024

PTI NEW DELHI

(MFs) $M_{\rm showed}^{\rm utual}$ funds strong confidence in Indian equities this year, injecting around Rs 1.3 lakh crore, driven mainly by significant retail investor interest and the robust performance of the stock Mutual funds, which manage

long-term wealth for domestic investors, prioritise the Indian potential and are less rattled by short-term events like elections, which allows them to keep investing in equities, Tradejini COO Trivesh D said. Additionally, the growing interest in systematic systematic investment plans (SIPs) on the astonishing compounding stories by influencers and industry veterans has perked investors, who otherwise wish to stay away from the markets, to start participating through these mutual funds, he added.

According to the data from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), MFs invested Rs 26,038 crore in the first fortnight of the ongoing month and Rs 20,155 crore in April. Moreover, the highest MF buying for 2024 was experienced in March, as they put in a net of Rs 44,233 crore. Also, they invested Rs 14,295



crore in February and Rs 23,010 crore in January.

With the latest deployment, mutual funds investment in equities reached around Rs 1.3 lakh crore in 2024 (till May 16), the data showed.

In stark contrast, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have been withdrawing money from equities and pulled out over Rs 25,000 crore this year so far, owing to a volatile global environment, uncertainty over rate cuts, and profit booking. This is a great sign for the Indian markets, symbolising the falling dependency on foreign money and the strengthening of retail individuals and DIIs, including mutual funds, to keep markets afloat.

This steady flow from mutual funds and other domestic institutional investors (DIIs) has supported the equity markets over the past few

Notwithstanding occasional challenges, the Indian stock markets have generally shown a positive trajectory, thus catching investors' interest. Equity has been one of the

best-performing asset classes in recent years, and consequently receiving robust flows from domestic investors like mutual funds, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director Research. Manager Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

For domestic investors, local markets are the most accessible investment option, which is why they continue to invest in them, he added.

Indian market's at a steady rate of 7 per cent for FY25, and the fiscal deficit has decreased to 5.8 per cent, the lowest level in five years.

"Additionally, the steady increase in SIP contributions, which reached a new peak of Rs 20,371 crore in April 2024, indicates that investors are becoming more disciplined and confident in the market," Feroze Azeez, Deputy CEO, Anand Rathi Wealth Ltd, said. Sectorally, mutual funds hold financial services, followed by

and pharmaceuticals. Additionally, mutual funds have been increasing their allocation to pharmaceutical, power, construction projects and automobiles in the last one vear.

Interestingly, mutual funds' ownership in NSE-listed companies reached an all-time high of 8.92 per cent in three months ended March 2024, propelled by net inflows of Rs 81.539 crore during the quarter. In comparison, the holding of mutual funds was 8.81 per cent in the quarter December 2023. ended according primeinfobase.Com,

initiative of Prime Database. On the other hand, the share of FPIs declined to an 11-year low of 17.68 per cent as of March fundamentals remain robust. 2024, down from 18.19 per The GDP is projected to grow cent as of December 2023.

High airfares remain a challenge, says **Thomas Cook India**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

High airfares remain a challenge that impacts India's leisure and business travellers, Thomas Cook India's Executive Chairman Madhavan Menon said. In an interview with PTI, he

shared that airline capacity too continues to be a challenge despite an increase scheduled flights.

supply constraints ease a bit with new aircraft being introduced into the network, but this will be over the long term," Menon said. On the company's expansion

plans, he informed that Thomas Cook India is working expanding strengthening its physical network with a combination of owned and franchise outlets and accelerating its digital

"With a focus on viable source markets, we continue our retail expansion with a combination of owned and franchise outlets, across metros/mini-metros and regional India.

footprint in the country.

"Additionally, for our foreign exchange business, we have leveraged existing franchise outlets to set up foreign exchange counters within the same premises. This enables us to ramp up the scale of our



distribution with Menon added.

On the challenges faced by it in India, Menon said that while visa concerns on appointment slots or turnaround time are heightened during the peak season, we have seen an improvement over the last year. 'High airfares remain a challenge that impacts India's leisure and business travellers. Airline capacity too continues to be a challenge, and this is despite an increase in scheduled flights," Menon said. He asserted that easier visa regimes in terms of eVisas, Visa on Arrival and the announcements on free-visa

entry for Indians help boost

Reliance seeks access to ATF pipelines, storages of PSU oil firms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Industries Ltd has sought access to pipelines and storages that public sector oil companies have built over the years for supplying jet fuel (ATF) from depots and oil refineries to airports, as it looks for a larger pie of fuel trade at some of Asia's

busiest airports. Reliance, which produces a fourth of India's aviation turbine fuel (ATF), wants access to storage depots outside the Delhi airport as well as to pipelines leading to Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad airports. It currently supplies small volumes of ATF when compared with supplies made by state-owned firms.

The firm made the suggestion in its comments to oil regulator PNGRB's draft regulation calling for supply of ATF in all existing and future airports through pipelines that can be accessed by any supplier so as to bring in competition and cut fuel cost.

airplanes at the country's busiest airports are fed by pipelines that were built by state-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) over decades. Reliance, which has been for more than a decade now seeking access to pipelines that supply ATF to airports especially at Mumbai, stated that "the common carrier pipeline scope (which gives third parties access to pipelines built by PSUs) should encompass the associated storage facilities and pumping stations at the 'off-site' oil terminal facilities

ATF supply chain.". 'This will promote a competitive market for supply and distribution of ATF to the airport 'on-site' storage facilities," it said.

as they form an integral part of the

Out of the 17.12 million tonnes of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) produced by public and private sector refineries, 8.2 million tonnes is consumed within the While the fuel market is open, country and the rest is exported.



Jamnagar produce close to 5 million tonnes of ATF, a large part of it is exported.

year ended March 31, 2024.

ATF demand in India is growing in double digits as more people fly. It rose by 11.8 per cent in the fiscal At Delhi International Airport, the country's biggest hub of airlines, pipeline but also storages outside the airport. Third parties have access to pipelines going into the airport but in absence of storage they can't supply much.

Reliance said it was "necessary to declare off-site ATF storage facilities at Bijwasan (outside the airport) as common user facility so OC and BPCL supply the bulk of the 2.7 million kilolitres per annum jet fuel requirement. This Bijwasan common user facility

through rail wagons and use the common carrier pipeline from Bijwasan.

For Mumbai, the second biggest hub, the firm wanted two ATF pipelines of HPCL and BPCL that bring fuel from the two refineries of the PSUs in the city, to be operated on a common carrier basis by giving other companies the right to use them.

For Bengaluru, which is home to the third largest airport in the country, Reliance wanted tie-in connection to the common carrier pipeline from the upcoming ATF tank farm atPL's marketing terminal at Devangonthi as bringing products through tanker trucks to the airport fuel farm was not feasible in view of traffic woes. While the pipeline supply to Hyderabad airport is operated on a common carrier open access basis, Reliance wanted \bar{t} he capacity of the pipeline to be increased to accommodate future demand and allow access to the storage tanks and rail wagon unloading facilities

suggestions for Kochi and Lucknow airports.

Pipelines are an efficient, economical and safe mode of bulk transportation from supply installations to demand centres and these measures (proposed by PNGRB) will competition, ensure compliance with environmental and safety statutes and avoid infructuous investments optimum utilisation of product storage and pipeline infrastructure," Reliance said. Such competition, it said, will benefit airline companies, which incur one-third of their cost on

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) had invited comments from the public various stakeholders including marketing (OMCs), airport companies operators, and airlines operators for development of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) pipelines connecting various greenfield and brownfield existing and upcoming at Malkapur. It made similar airports in India.

visitations



CONFERENCE ON EFFICIENT FOOD PROCESSING HELD The Ministry of Food Processing Industries

(MoFPI), Government of India, and the National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management, Kundli (NIFTEM-K), an Institute of National Ímportance, organized a two-day national conference on Efficient Food Processing for Environmental and Climate-Change Trends (EFFECT), which concluded on May 16 at the NASC Complex, Pusa, New Delhi. The event brought together esteemed dignitaries and experts to address the pressing challenges facing the food processing industry in the wake of climate change. In his keynote address, Dr. R. T. Patil, Former Director of ICAR-CIPHET and advisor at Tanusha Foods (Bhopal), emphasised the need for the food processing industry to proactively address challenges such as rising temperatures, water scarcity, and energy fluctuations through strategic adaptation measures.

KEEPING HYPERTENSION AT BAY

Hypertension or High Blood Pressure is on the rise, posing a significant public health challenge. Despite its prevalence, many cases go unnoticed and untreated with fatal risks. ARCHANA JYOTI highlights the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address this silent epidemic

Dhawan works a desk job with long hours and minimal physical activity. He has a highstress lifestyle, often skips meals, and when he eats, his diet consists mainly of fast food and highsodium snacks. He drinks several cups of coffee a day and smokes a pack of cigarettes daily. He feels his life is normal except that he experiences frequent headaches, occasional dizziness, and feels fatigued most of the time.

After a routine check-up, his doctor diagnosed him with hypertension. His blood pressure was consistently measured at 150/95 mmHg.

Prema Sharma(70) has a family history of hypertension. She has been managing her blood pressure for the past 20 years. She leads a relatively active lifestyle for her age, enjoys gardening, and walks her dog daily. However, she tends to indulge in salty snacks and has a sweet tooth.

Prema doesn't exhibit many overt symptoms due to her long-term management of the condition, but she occasionally experiences shortness of breath and mild swelling in her ankles. During her regular follow-up, her blood pressure was recorded at 160/100 indicating controlled hypertension.

Similarly, Naveen Shukla (28) who is a healthy young adult recently started experiencing frequent severe headaches and blurred vision. He has no family history of hypertension and maintains a balanced diet and regular exercise routine. Upon investigation, Naveen's blood pressure was found to be consistently high at 145/90 mmHg. Further tests revealed that he has a kidney condition causing secondary hypertension.

Doctors are increasingly noticing a large number of such cases of hypertension among diverse age groups. @These cases illustrate how hypertension can affect individuals differently based on their age, lifestyle, and underlying health conditions, highlighting the importance of personalized management plans,@ said Dr Tarun Kumar, Professor of Cardiology at Delhi-based central government RML Hospital. He rings alarm bell as he said, hypertension or high blood ressure leads to 10.8 per cent of all deaths in India. Left unchecked, hypertension can result in severe health issues such as heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, and premature death.

Hypertension is defined as having systolic blood pressure (SPB) =140 mmHg or diastolic blood pressure (DPB) = 90 mmHg.

It is considered 'controlled' when the systolic blood pressure (BP) is maintained below 140 mmHg and diastolic BP below 90 mmHg, with medications and lifestyle modifications.

"The prevalence of hypertension





DR TARUN KUMAR



DR VIVEK TANDON





HOW TO MANAGE, PREVENT HYPERTENSION

pressure). The diet is simple: Eat more fruits, vegetables,

and low-fat dairy foods. • Cut back on foods that are

DASH stands for Dietary

Hypertension (high blood

Approaches to Stop

high in saturated fat, cholesterol, and trans fats

• Eat more whole-grain foods, fish, poultry, and

• Limit sodium, sweets,

sugary drinks, and red

cent among adults aged 18-39 to 33.2 per cent among those aged 40-59. More than 90 per cent of adults with hypertension are either undiagnosed or untreated", he said. For both women and men, the prevalence increases sharply with age. The increase is for all categories of hypertension, including pre-hypertension, for both sexes. About one-fourth of women and men aged 40-49 have hypertension. According to the health experts, contributing factors increases with age from 7.5 per include genetics, obesity, sedentary

essential lifestyle unprocessed foods to better Some modifications are:

Maintain a Healthy Weight: Shedding excess pounds can relieve strain on your heart and reduce blood pressure.

Chronic stress can elevate blood pressure, so incorporate relaxation techniques into your HEAT routine to combat stress.

Monitor Caffeine Intake: While can cause temporary spikes in blood pressure. Be mindful of your caffeine consumption.

pressure. Opt for whole, cool environment in your home.

lifestyle, high salt intake, stress, and excessive alcohol consumption. While Sunit has been advised to adopt a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and

lean proteins, reducing sodium

intake and at east 30 minutes of

control blood pressure levels. Prioritize Adequate Sleep and Regular Exercise: Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night and engage in regular physical Manage Stress Effectively: activity to strengthen your heart and improve circulation, thus

> WAVES **HYPERTENSION** People with a history of high

lowering blood pressure.

moderate caffeine consumption blood pressure should monitor is generally safe, excessive intake their BP during heat waves conditions. They should also drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated, avoid the midday heat, Reduce Processed Food eat a healthy diet, apply Consumption: Processed foods sunscreen if outdoors and wear a high in sodium can elevate blood hat. In most cases, stay inside a

walking, five times a week. Prema's doctor adjusted her medication dosage and added a diuretic to help manage fluid retention. Since, she has chronic hypertension, she has also been advised to monitor her BP at home and keep a log for her moderate exercise, such as brisk next appointment. Among lifestyle support, Prema has been asked to engage in a community support group for individuals with hypertension to stay motivated and informed.

For Sunit, smoking cessation has been advised besides relaxation techniques such as yoga or

Naveen has been referred to a nephrologist for management of the underlying kidney condition. He has been shared with lifestyle modification plan incorporating a healthy diet and exercise.

Dr. Vivek Tandon, Additional Director of Interventional Cardiology at Fortis Hospital Greater Noida, too emphasized the need for increased awareness and accurate diagnosis. "Hypertension is a silent killer that affects a significant portion of the population, yet many remain unaware of their condition."

Dr Tandon cites studies that say that approximately 33% of urban residents suffer from hypertension, while about 25 per cent of the rural population is affected. Only 40 per cent of the urban population and 25 per cent of the rural population are aware of their hypertensive status.

Just 38 pe cent of the urban and 25 per cent of the rural population receive treatment. Among those treated, only 20 per cent in urban areas and 10 per cent in rural areas achieve adequate control, he said. "Accurate measurement and consistent management are vital in preventing the severe health consequences associated with high blood pressure," said Dr Tandon. Dr Tarun agreed as he pointed out that even the theme of the World Hypertension Day on May 17, say 'Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer.' For instance, one should never check BP while crossed legs(it can adds 2-8 mm Hg), placing the cuff over your clothes (adds 5-50 mm Hg), unsupported arm (adds 10 mm Hg), using a small sized cuff (adds 2-10 mm Hg), unsupported back/feet (adds 6.5 mm Hg), talking during measuring BP (adds 10 mm Hg) and last but not the least with full bladder prior to measuring BP that can add up to 10 mm HG). The normal blood pressure is 120/80 mm/Hg or slightly lower.

Dr Tarun also said they recommend DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (high blood pressure). The diet is

WHO Regional Director for South-

East Asia, Saima Wazed warned that at least more than 294 million people are living with hypertension in the Southeast Asia Region itself. Limited access to affordable healthcare services is a significant contributor to low Universal Service Coverage Index scores in many countries, impeding access to quality healthcare, she said. In fact, the South-East Asia Region has identified the prevention and control of hypertension as one of the priorities. Dr Tandon pitched in for effective

strategies such as increasing public awareness through programs, and community educational workshops about the importance of regular blood pressure checks. Expanding healthcare infrastructure in rural areas to ensure more people have access to medical services is also essential. Implementing policies that make hypertension medications and treatments affordable and accessible can alleviate economic constraints." According to a study, high BP in childhood may raise heart attack, stroke risk by 4 times, exposing them to significant risks, including heart, kidney, and brain damage. Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest (NAPi) convenor **Dr Arun** Gupta, blamed on misleading

labels and the addictive nature of ultra-processed foods for the menace. He said that the allpervasive nature of junk food advertising is misleading consumers into eating unhealthy, addictive, ultra-processed foods. @There is a need for stringent policy in this regard if the Government is really serious about the health of its people,@ he said.

measuring 12x11.5x8 cm.

symptoms, and his tumor,

detected incidentally during

patient showed



Enjoy These Fruits With Anti-Inflammatory Punch

 $E_{\text{to two cups of diverse fruits}}^{\text{ating at least one-and-a-half}}$ every day can boost antioxidant activity. Fruits are particularly abundant in anti-inflammatory compounds, which are important in protecting our bodies from heart disease, diabetes, and certain forms of cancer and bowel disease. You'll learn how plant-based

chemicals phytochemicals antioxidant and inflammatory agents, helping to bring down levels of inflammation and to counteract inflammation's harmful effects. And you'll find dozens of antiinflammatory foods with added health benefits that include lowering cholesterol, reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease and of stroke, improving blood pressure.

These also add protection against heart disease, and even reduce pain and soreness after exercise. How to get enough healthful

While all fruits tend to be rich in disease-protective nutrients, some have received particular attention in the nutrition world for their anti-inflammatory

fruits in your diet?

From strawberries and blackberries to cranberries and blueberries, these gemlike fruits are particularly potent in antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity. Along with fiber and vitamin C, berries possess plant pigment phytochemicals, such as anthocyanins and ellagic acid, which may be behind their health benefits. Studies have increased berry consumption with lower risks of heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, and diabetes.

Maybe it's true what they say about an apple a day. A study of nearly 35,000 women, found that consumption of this fruit along with its relative, pears was linked with a lower risk of death from heart disease. The star components of applesfiber, vitamin C, pectin, and polyphenols—have associated, primarily in animal studies, with anti-inflammatory effects and an increase in beneficial microbes in the gut.

Cherries, peaches, apricots, and plums are all examples of stone fruits. These fruits contain fiber, vitamin C, potassium, and a variety of phytochemicals associated with their colors. For example, cherries have garnered the lion's share of the research among stone fruits.

Some studies suggest that cherries can reduce pain and soreness after exercise as well as a reduced risk of gout attacks. The high levels of phenolic compounds in cherries, which have been linked to reduced inflammation, may be behind those benefits.

Oranges, grapefruit, lemons, and limes are famously rich in vitamin C.

They also contain fiber, potassium, calcium, B vitamins, copper, and anti-inflammatory phytochemicals such as flavonoids and carotenoids. Though there is little human research on citrus, the nutrients found in citrus fruits have been associated with heart-protective

Those tiny pomegranate seeds contain big rewards of vitamins C and K, potassium, fiber, and potent phytochemicals such as anthocyanin and resveratrol. These nutrients may be behind the potential benefits of eating pomegranates.

bursting with fiber, vitamins C and K, and powerful phytochemicals.

Doctors' drive, paired with patients' strength, reaps rewards

Extraordinary moments emerge in tough times, shining like sunshine through clouds. Let's celebrate the remarkable among us—the doctors rising to challenges and patients showing incredible resilience. ARCHANA JYOTI brings these inspiring stories to light, restoring hope and joy

 $R_{\text{make a real difference,}}^{\text{eal stories of those who}} \stackrel{\text{deadly blow to her already}}{\text{damaged liver, leading to}}$ shine their brightest in the darkest times. In the process, one should also not miss the rainbow: a symbol of hope and a promise of brighter days. Take the case of little Radha's transplant triumph. Teenager Radha's struggle with liver failure due to Wilson's disease appeared insurmountable. A few years ago, Radha who is now 13 year-old was diagnosed with the rare disease, and ever since then, she has battled the aberrant accumulation of copper in her organs, particularly her liver. However, under the careful guidance of Dr. Naresh Bansal, Senior Consultant, Institute of Liver Gastroenterology

Pancreatic Biliary Sciences Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi, her journey saw moments of despair turn

When hepatitis A dealt a ventilator support. Radha's

acute on chronic liver failure Radha's illness worsened at an alarming rate. Her jaundice, accompanied by skyrocketing bilirubin levels (44), was a clear sign of failing liver function. The subtle development of hepatic encephalopathy sent her into a state of altered consciousness, making a terrible situation much worse. However, it was the catastrophic gastrointestinal Blood vomiting (bleeding) that brought her dangerously close to death and required life support to administered in the

intensive care unit. The family was advised to consider liver transplant as lifesaving option. Radha's and his team at the Sir mother became her hope during her lowest point. Radha's severe bleeding event left her in a hepatic coma, raised require for



elevated requiring pediatric cardiologist, Dr. Neeraj Agarwal from Sir Ganga Ram Hospital to intervene. The PICU team under the guidance of Senior Consultants Pediatrics at the hospital Dr. Anil Sachdeva, Dr. Dhiren Gupta, Dr. Neeraj Gupta, and Dr. Nishant Wadwa

SUCH CASES HIGHLIGHT **SYMBIOTIC** RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOCTORS AND PATIENTS IN ACHIEVING POSITIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES. IN THE PROCESS, ONE SHOULD ALSO NOT MISS THE RAINBOW: A SYMBOL OF HOPE

this 13 year old female The

twelve-hour long

procedure under Dr. Ushast Dhir, Chairman of transplant and hepatibiliary Surgery, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital involving the mother as donor, who donated a portion of liver, showed the system to tackle the daunting challenges.

was more than that, indeed. doctors of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SGRH) had raised Rs 20 lakhs from crowdfunding and corporate donations to finance the transplant since the family was unable to pay for it because of their poor economic condition. Likewise, when a massive adrenal tumor threatened the health of a 59-year-old patient, a surgical team led by Dr. Piyush Varshney, Additional Director of Urology, Fortis Hospital Noida, employed the stateof-the-art da Vinci robotic

unshakable resolve of challenging

masterwork of accuracy Dr Varshney said, 'The

now back home. Her Adrenal Incidentaloma was

as a testament to the a routine ultrasound.

human spirit's resilience Surgical removal is often

medical science and was a

and competence. Radha

recovered very well and is

incredible recovery stands

and the miracles modern necessary when these medicine can achieve. It tumors exceed 4cm in size. These tumors are often In a noble gesture, the highly vascular and pose surgical challenges due to their location near the pancreas, and spleen, kidney. "The da Vinci system's precision allowed us to successfully remove the entire tumor within two hours with minimal blood loss, and we discharged the patient on the postoperative day."

groundbreaking procedure not only saved the patient's life but also showcased the potential of cutting-edge techniques to overcome

These succulent fruits are

(Source: Websites)

RCB'S TURNAROUND WILL INSPIRE OTHER TEAMS, SAYS DINESH KARTHIK

PTI BENGALURU

Royal Challengers
Bengaluru's remarkable
turnaround to win six games on the trot and barge into the Indian Premier League playoffs this year will inspire other teams in future, believes wicketkeeper-batter Dinesh Karthik. RCB, who lost seven of their

first eight games including six defeats in a row, came back roaring from the brink of elimination in the 17th edition of IPL to make the final four

The Faf du Plessis-led side on Friday got the better of defending champions Chennai Super Kings by 27 champions runs to seal the fourth spot in the points table.

"People will always remember certain journeys. The way we have come back after eight games, we needed to win six, people will remember this team," Karthik was quoted as saying in a RCB release.

"Every year in tournament, when you hit the seven-game mark, there will be one or two teams which would have probably won one



or two and they will look to us and say, 'RCB did it. That was special. We are going to try and repeat what RCB did."

"That is what we all play cricket for, sport for, where people follow us and believe us that they can do something special. It is hard. It is not going to be easy, I can tell any team that. What we have achieved today is very, very special," Karthik said.

among Sunrisers Hyderabad

"We have it within our grasp to do something that people RCB will now face the team will remember us for many which finishes third, one decades. It will be a journey

and Rajasthan Royals, in the

Eliminator to be played at

Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

where people will say, 'wow,

We are on that journey,' Karthik said. Karthik said

that RCB team was special

confidence was differentiating factor between them and CSK, a team which has a better bilateral record. "Coming into this game, there

was a sense of quiet confidence about us, playing the defending champions, and the way we played we should be really proud," Karthik said. The senior wicketkeeper pointed out RCB's fielding aggressive batting, despite rain intervention, as the factors which worked for them.

"We can proudly say we are the best fielding team in this tournament without a doubt," he said.

"Even though it turned, we had a rain break, we had to go, start again, just the way Virat (Kohli) and Faf played the next three overs made it feel like 140-150 could be a decent total.

"Most teams would have thought about that and we would have thought about that for a second as well," he

Rayudu does not feel Dhoni has played his last match, puts ball in BCCI court

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India batter Ambati Rayudu doesn't feel MS Dhoni has played his last match in the IPL and wants the BCCI to continue with the contentious impact player rule as it could help the longserving legend to keep going in top-flight cricket.

Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings bowed out of this edition of $t\bar{h}e$ Indian Premier League following a 27-run defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru much-anticipated southern derby in Bengaluru on Saturday.

The five-time defending champions needed 17 in the final over to qualify for the playoffs on better net run rate, but bowler Yash Dayal, after being hit for monstrous six by Dhoni, held his nerves to help RCB prevail.

Later, speaking on Star Sports Cricket Live, Rayudu said, "I don't think this is his last game. I just don't see him wanting to end on this note

Even as the RCB players broke into wild celebrations, Dhoni hands with the shook opposition's reserves and support staff before quietly disappearing into the dressing

Rayudu said, "He looked a little frustrated, even when he got out. That's very unlike MS Dhoni, he just wanted to qualify and finish on a high. But you never know with MS

next year." Rayudu, who played under Dhoni at CSK, brought the BCCI into the picture.

Dhoni, he might come back

... With the impact player role as well, it gives him the opportunity to be able to come in those last few overs and

truly make that impact. "BCCI better not remove the impact player role because we still want to see MS Dhoni play. So, it's up to BCCI now. Do we want to see MS Dhoni play or

While the match ended in agony for Dhoni and Co, RCB continued their revival with a sixth straight win in a row, a remarkable feat that saw them rise from the bottom of the table to make the playoffs.

Speaking of Dhoni, former Australian opener Matthew

Hayden said, "Yeah, I suppose the thing is when you come to the end of your career, whether it is the last part of his career or not, what you don't want to see is diminishing returns as an athlete.

"Firstly, as a leader, he is The

Thala of the Chennai Super Kings. This is telling me that nothing here is about becoming anything else other than first place. He's desperately using his brains, all of that cricket knowledge.
"And of course, the power is

there and that's always been MS Dhoni. He's always hit balls at this stage of an innings. At the front, you can understand how players can hit it. But at the back, it's really hard to hit

Dhoni made 25 off 13 balls with the help of three fours and a huge six, showing that he can still send the ball a long, long

God's plan: Year after Rinku's rapidfire, Yash Dayal redeems himself

PTI ■ BENGALURU

₹ash Dayal couldn't shake Y the haunting memory of Rinku Singh's five consecutive sixes last year as MS Dhoni lofted his full-toss over the Chinnaswamy roof, before regaining his composure to complete the 20th over and clinch RCB's berth in the 2024 IPL playoffs.

Dayal, who cut a forlorn figure after being hammered for five sixes in a row by his Uttar Pradesh mate Rinku last season, redeemed himself on Saturday night by defending 17 in the final over against the likes of Dhoni and Ravindra

"God's plan baby," that was how Rinku summed the reversal of fortunes for Dayal.

The 26-year-old from Prayagraj was released by Gujarat Titans after the 2023 season but he found a new IPL home in RCB, who showed faith in him by paying a handsome Rs 5 crore at the

Dayal not only repaid the faith but also erased the scars of last season. When I got hit the first ball

(by Dhoni), subconsciously you reach that place (Rinku's five sixes off him). But I did well this whole season and I kept telling myself that I just had to bowl a good ball.

"I didn't have to look at the scoreboard. I just had to bowl well. I used that confidence in execution," said Dayal who kept RCB's remarkable comeback story alive in this

The last over also indicated the coming of age for Dayal, who learned from the mistakes he made against Rinku's onslaught. After the full toss that Dhoni duly dispatched out of the ground, Dayal returned to bowling slower balls into the pitch that resulted in the former India

"The last time what happened with me, it made me a little nervous. But since I have come in the RCB setup, I have worked very hard on practice and I have delivered in matches. I just wanted to focus on bowling two balls

captain's wicket and just one

run off the following four

well.
"Even if when plans were not



executed well, the seniors were standing, they did not scold me or anything. That was a positive thing and it helped me a lot on the ground."

In what arguably has been the toughest season for bowers, Dayal has managed 15 wickets in 13 games at a decent economy rate of 8.94. Dayal was supposed to bowl the penultimate over but a last-minute change of plan saw him bowling one of the most important overs of his

"Actually, I was going to bowl the second last over. But suddenly DK bhaiya and Faf spoke. I don't know what they talked about. They said that Lockie will bowl and then I'll bowl the main over. I was fine with both?

Dayal feels the constant support that he has received from RCB has led to desirable results.

"I have got proper backing from RCB. When I came at the start, the management told me that I am an important player. I will be backed from the starting to the end, which is a very good thing.
"All the youngsters who were

picked, they were told the same thing. That is now visible in the results also." The home crowd was RCB's

12th man as usual and with a play-off berth on the line, the atmosphere fired up the team even more. Ît is difficult to keep emotions in check at such a juncture but

Dayal tried to calm himself down.

"There are so many people around you, there is a whole crowd. So, somewhere or the other, the mind gets diverted. But as a player, we are built for

He also gave due credit to the army of RCB loyalists.

'I had never felt like this since childhood. Whenever I used to watch a RCB match on TV, I never thought that I would be part of this team. Today I am here and I was feeling unreal on the ground. It is an unbelievable crowd and very supportive," added Dayal.

What was the turning point of the game? "I think Dhoni bhaiya's wicket was the turning point, as the first ball went for six.

OTHERS SPORTS

Satwik, Chirag win Thailand Open title

PTI ■ BANGKOK

China, here.

PTI SHARJAH

tournament here.

Iranian duo of Tabatabaei and Bardiya

In a confidence bottom performance ahead of Paris Olympics, star Indian shuttlers

Perbireddy and Chirag confidence-boosting Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on Sunday won the Thailand Open Super 500 badminton tournament with a straight-game win over Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi of

Satwik and Chirag, the world number three pair, prevailed 21-15 21-15 over Liu and Chen, ranked 29th, for their ninth BWF world tour title in men's doubles.

It was also the second title of the season for the Asian Games

Grandmaster

Indian Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram

defeated local star A R Saleh

Salem to emerge as the sole

leader on 4.5 points after the end of the fifth round of Sharjah Masters chess

Chithambaram is now

followed by four players, the

Daneshvar and Americans Hans Moke Niemann and Sam Shankland who all have

four points apiece. Top seed

Arjun Erigaisi is in the next

pack of eight players having

3.5 points each and giving

him company here is another Indian in Sankalp Gupta.

With four rounds still to be

played in the USD 52000

prize money tournament, as

many as 16 players have an

identical three points each.

The list includes Indians

Abhimanyu Puranik, Leon

Luke Mendonca, P Iniyan

It turned out to be a tough

day at the office for many but

Chithambaram was in his

element as he simply crushed

and V Pranav.

champions following their triumph at the French Open Super 750 in March. They had also finished runners-up at Malaysia Super 1000 and India Super

"It has been a lucky tournament for us. The journey started from here. We lifted this title in 2019 and again we are lifting it here now. After 2019, we went on to win many tournaments and, hopefully, it will give more boost to us in the upcoming important tournaments," Satwik said after the

"They keep on playing fast and we knew we couldn't relax. Overall, I think it's the best match we played throughout the tournament. We kept



everything calm and under control. So really happy that we played well." Asked about Paris Games, Chirag said: "Not just us but all athletes want to go out there in the Olympics and win that medal and we too want that and hopefully we will play well there." had the reputation of never losing a final.

However, it was always going to be a they had some low returns in the last

couple of tournaments.

The Indian pair lost in the second round at All England Championships and then missed the Asia Championships due to an injury to Satwik. The Thomas Cup campaign was also not too fruitful as they lost a couple of narrow matches to top pairs. Satwik and Chirag had come into the Thailand Open final without dropping a game and were favourites to claim the title, while Liu and Chen also produced some stunning wins in the run-up to the summit clash and

tough task to tame the top-seeded Indians, who didn't allow the Chinese to get into long rallies or sustain any

pressure. Satwik and Chirag made a superb start by quickly opening up a 5-1 lead. Chen and Liu clawed back with a

four-point burst. At 7-7, the Chinese pair won a 39-shot rally and surged ahead to 10-7 before spraying one long. Liu and Chen played a few intense rallies but Chirag unleashed a bullet return to draw level at 10-10 but Liu ensured they had a slender edge at the break.

A.R. Saleh Salem (Uae, 3.5);

Hans Moke Niemann (Usa, 4)

drew with Alexey Sarana



Messi held scoreless but Inter Miami extends unbeaten string

AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE

T ionel Messi was kept off the Lescoresheet for the second consecutive match, but Inter Miami extended its unbeaten string with a 1-0 win over DC

United. Leo Campana scored four minutes into second half stoppage time as Miami, 6-0-3 since a 4-0 loss at the New York Red Bulls on March 23, avoided a second consecutive scoreless draw. Campana, who entered the match a minute earlier, received a pass from Sergio Busquets on the right wing and converted on a shot that landed inside the left post. Miami had used its allotted five substitutions but was allowed an additional replacement

produced a league-high 36 goals, Miami secured its second straight shutout.

"We were not as fluid offensively and they formed a solid defense," Miami coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said. "Defensively we worked very well." The win improved Eastern

Conference-leading Miami to 9-2-4 with 31 points. DC United dropped to 4-5-5 and 17 points.

Messi returned to the lineup after missing Wednesday's match at Orlando because of

knee soreness. The Argentine star forward had at least one goal and assist in five consecutive matches until a 3-2 win at Montreal on May 11. Messi began Saturday with a league-leading 12

assists. Tightly marked for most of the match, Messi found a slight opening in the 71st minute, but his shot from 22 yards sailed

shot from United's Jacob Murrell in the 86th minute and then denied Cristian Dájome's inside the box four minutes

Aravindh Chithmabaram beats Salem to claim sole lead in Sharjah



Salem in all departments of the game.

It was a King's Indian defense by Salem who played black and the middle game saw Chithambaram

pressure on the queen side. It was on the 17th move that the Chennai-based unleashed a brilliant tactical game saw sequence, giving up two exerting minor pieces for a rook.

As things turned out, white's position remained better for the rest of the game and Salem was outdone eventually in the endgame wherein white's rook proved

Erigaisi was in a spot of bother at some point against Volodar Murzin, the upcoming talent from Russia who has to play under FIDE flag here. After attaining an optically better position in the middle game out of a Queen pawn game, Erigaisi was on the defensive as Murzin made some steady recovery. He had to liquidate to a rook and pawns endgame where the draw was a just result.

Sankalp continued with his impressive run, holding highly regarded Teimour Radjabov of Azerbaijan to a draw while Abhimanyu Puranik could not keep up with his form and lost to Amin Tabatabaei of Iran. Important and Indian results Round 5 (Indians unless specified): Aravindh Chithambaram (4.5) beat specified):

(Srb, 3.5); Erigaisi Arjun (3.5) drew with Volodar Murzin drew with Volodar Murzin (Fid, 3.5); Abhimanyu Puranik (3) lost to Amin Tabatabaei (Iri, 4); Sankalp Gupta (3.5) drew with Samuel Sevian (Usa, 3); Shreyas Royal (Eng, 3) drew with Nihal Sarin (3); Leon Luke Mendonca (3) drew with Nikolas Theodorou (Gre, 3); P Iniyan (3) drew with Teimour Radiabov (Aze, superior. The game lasted 48 with Teimour Radjabov (Aze, 3); V Pranav (3) beat Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 2); Abhimanyu Mishra (2.5) Bharath drew with Subramaniyam Benjamin Gledura (Hun, 2.5) drew with Pranav Anand (2.5); Aditya Mittal (2.5) with Siddharth drew Jagadeesh (Sgp, 2.5); B Adhiban (3) beat Pouya Idani (Iri, 2); Abhijeet Gupta (2.5) drew with Mahdi Gholami Orimi (Iri, 2.5); D Harika (1.5) lost to Emre Can (Tur, 2.5); Yilmaz Mustafa (Tur, 1.5) drew with Raja Rithvik (1.5); S P Sethuraman (1) lost to Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus (Tur, 2).

when United's Martin Rodriguez left the match because of a concussion. Second half stoppage lasted 10 minutes. "I know that lately I have not

been getting too many minutes but it is my responsibility to be ready," Ćampana said in Spanish. "Whether it's 30, 20, 15 or one minute you have to be ready. Thankfully, we had the time to score the goal." For a team known for its highpowered offense that has

high above the crossbar. Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender preserved the shutout when he stopped a