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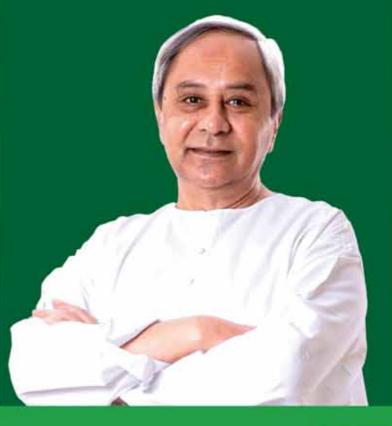
PROSPERING ODISHA'S CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND LANGUAGE

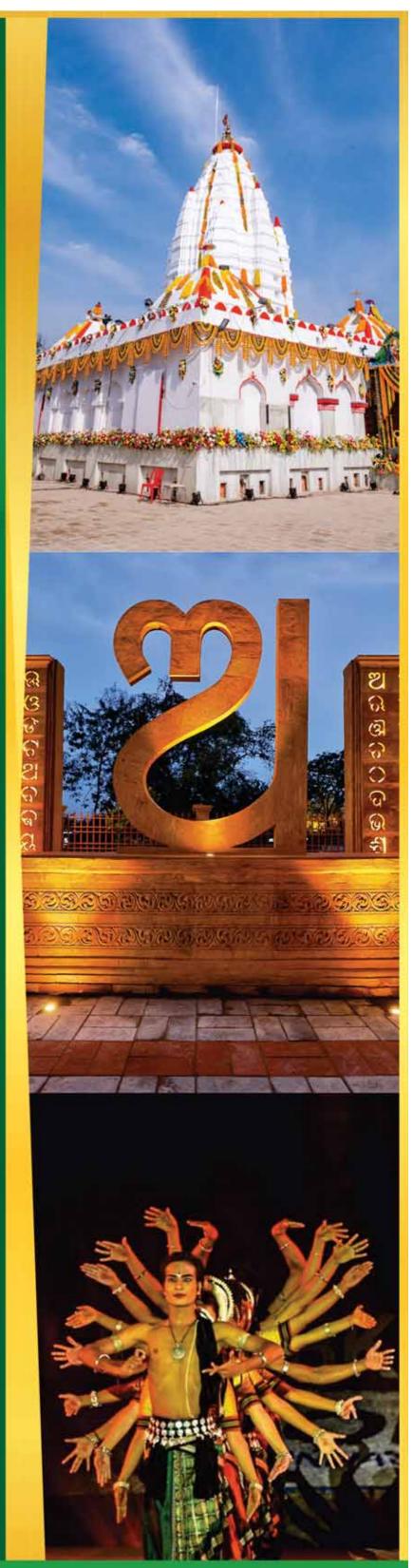
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<u>ne pioneer</u> BHUBANESWAR I WEDNESDAY I MAY 22 2024

Pandian invites Modi to witness Ratna Bhandar opening

Says event to take place during Rath Yatra

BHUBANESWAR

 ${\cal A}$ day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi raked up the issue of the missing keys of Jagannath Temple's Ratna Bhandar during his election rallies in Odisha, BJD leader VK Pandian on Tuesday dismissed it as a political statement by a party which is on a 'weak wicket'.

"The Prime Minister should find out where it (keys of Jagannath Temple) has gone if he has so much knowledge perhaps. I would humbly request the honourable PM (for this) as he has so many authorities under him... He can enlighten the people of Odisha. He's making a political statement; so, we will take it like that," Pandian said in repose to a query on Modi's remarks that 'the missing keys of the Ratna Bhandar have gone to Tamil Nadu'.

Pandian invited Modi to witness opening of the Ratna Bhandar during the Rath Yatra

Ratna Bhandar is the treasury of Jagannath Temple in Puri and it contains gold and jewelleries offered by devotees across the world through years. While the outer chamber



ables that are used for adorning Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath, the inner chamber has gold, diamond, gems, silver and other valuables.

On the judicial inquiry re-

port, Pandia said that an affidavit pertaining to it was filed with the Orissa High Court. "The HC ordered the Jagannath Temple administration to open the Ratna Bhandar. Accordingly, it was decided to open it during Rath Yatra when pilgrims won't be there (in the shrine) and Nitis (rituals) will not be affected. So, the SJTA headed by Puri Gajapati has decided to open it. The government's role was confined to appointing a retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, which has been done. The committee has been appointed and the date too has been fixed," Pandian

Aparajita reacts to CM's allegations 'Any proof that I stalled Lingaraj work?'

puppeteer' again resorting to deepfake videos of CM: Jay

PNS BHUBANESWAR

Local MP Aparajita Sarangi on Tuesday alleged that 'fake narrative' is being created in politics. Her statement was in response to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's allegations that the BJP MP tried to stall Lingaraj temple project work.

'I have respect for the CM; but is there any evidence written or oral regarding his state-



ments that I tried to stall the work of Lingaraj temple work? Under no circumstances had I discussed anything on the project. Rather, the project work has been done with a lot of funds from the ASI. The CM is only reading out a written speech. The allegations are baseless. Every year I have been releasing report cards. I urge the CM and the BJD to read to know what works have

been done by me," said

Earlier, in a video, CM Naveen was heard saying, You have seen that no major work has been done by the Bhubaneswar MP in the last 5 years. The MP has also tried to stop the Ekamra and Lingaraj transformation project."

Amidst the ongoing controversy, BJP national vicepresident and party's Kendrapara Lok Sabha candidate Baijayant Panda on the day questioned the authenticity of the CM's video.

Taking to his official X (formerly Twitter), Panda wrote, "The magic is long gone, no crowds at public rallies of Lumber 1 CM! So Tamil puppowered, computer-generated #DeepFake videos "by CM" to make entirely false allegations.

Panda further wrote, "Seriously doubt that the real CM is even aware of what his virtual avatar is purportedly saying." Panda further urged the media to check the context and question while asking Bhubaneswar MP to expose the fraudster orchestrating it.

"Media, please check the content and question. & @AprajitaSarangi you're a fighter, don't take this fakery lying down, push back and expose the fraudster orchestrating it," Panda tweeted.

Jawans, Maoists exchange fire in Nuapada

Explosives, Rs 4L seized from ultras' camp

NUAPADA

Amid Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Odisha, Maoists were engaged in an encounter with security forces in a forest in Nuapada district near the Chhattisgarh bor-

The Special Operation Group (SOG) received reliable information that a group of 20-30 Maoists were camping in the forest of Shivanarayanpur under the Komna police station in the district. SOG personnel launched an operation in the forest to trace the Maoist camp at around 3 am on Tuesday.

After the SOG jawans went to deep forest, the Maoists spotted them and opened fire. The SOG team also retaliated, and the exchange of fire continued for some time. An SOG jawan, identified as Prakash Sai, was injured in the fir-



ing. He was admitted to a private hospital in Raipur of Chhattisgarh.

Even as the security forces were advancing in the forest, the Maoists again attacked them by opening fire at around 8 am. This time, the SOG team resorted to heavy firing forcing the Maoists to flee the spot.

Later, the security forces found the Maoist camp and seized different materials of the group of ultras there. The seized materials included a country-made gun, 10 IEDs, household articles and Rs 4 lakh of Rs 2,000-denomination notes.

Nuapada SP GR Raghavendra said the personnel of SOG, COBRA and CRPF were continuing the search operation in the sanctuary of Sunabeda to trace the Maoists who had escaped during the fire

EOW arrests absconding proprietor in Rs 2-cr cheating

53 investors fell prey to his fraud scheme BHUBANESWAR

 $T_{
m he\ Economic\ Offences\ Wing}$ (EOW), Bhubaneswar, arrested proprietor of Quick Click Ad Media in a Rs 2 crore cheating case.

The accused, identified as Bimalananda Bhuyan of Malkangiri, was nabbed from Indiranagar in Lucknow on May 18 and brought to Bhubaneswar on transit remand. He will be produced before a designated court in Cuttack on Tuesday.

According to an EOW release, Bikash Podar of Sambalpur had lodged a complaint against Bhuyan and his wife Rammi Bhuyan for cheating 53 investors of Rs 1.2 crore on the pretext of supplying LED monitors for advertisements through their Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) firm, Quick Click AD Media. "Bhuyan and his wife, who were partners of LLP firm, induced people to invest through two of their schemes to purchase LED monitors by promising a share in the profits obtained from running the advertisements of different sale agencies on them in 2017-18. They collected public deposits of about

Rs 2 crore from more than 100 investors, and without purchasing any LED monitors, they absconded with the amount, and misappropriated the same," the release

In the first scheme, the investors were required to invest Rs 54,000 (for 3'x3' LED monitor) to get Rs 3,100 a month for 3 years. In the second scheme, the investors had to invest Rs 3 lakh (for 6.4"x6.4" LED monitors) to get 70% profit for 3 years after which the investors were to get 30% of profit with the rest 70% to the LLP.

It further informed that 'Quick Click Ad Media' was registered with ROC, Chhattisgarh in the year 2017. The LLP had its head office at Shyamnagar, Raipur, Chhattisgarh and the branch offices at Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh, and Jaydev Vihar, Bhubaneswar. It was mostly active in Khurda, Koraput, Nayagarh, Mayurbhanj, Baleswar, Rourkela, Sambalpur, and Ganjam dis-

tricts in Odisha.

To evade arrest, Bhuyan, who holds an MBA degree in marketing, went into hiding in Lucknow and started working for a snack

factory. During this period, he also stayed for one and a half years in Dubai and formed a company there, Empire Global Capital FZE.

Rammi was arrested a few days ago from Mumbai where she was working for a real estate company under a fake identity. "A lot of incriminating materials/documents have been seized from the arrested accused. Further investigation is underway," the release added.

Modi dwells in lies, false promises: Khera

'Cong to win B'swar MP seat for devpt bv ex-Min Jena' **UBACHAK MOHANTY BALESWAR**

ongress national spokesperson Pawan Khera on Tuesday launching a scathing attack on the BJP here said, "In last 10 years under Modiji regime, severe degradation is experienced in every sphere. Why he is not asking vote on the grounds of development? Either nothing is done or nothing substantial done. Each hour 4 women are being raped ,2 unemployed youths commit suicide in the want of job and 30 farmers commit suicide per day. The situation of the country is very grave.'

Modiji dwells in lies and makes false promises. The party's arrogance is at its peak and even their Puri MP candidate stokes controversy by making statements on Lord Jagannath, Khera alleged.

However, he abstained from any

direct attack on the BID Government or Naveen Patnaik. Stressing on the Congress manifesto, he said it (Nyaaya Patra) was prepared keeping in view of the welfare of all sectors which were elicited after the 10,000 km Naayaa Yatra of Rahul Gandhi.

He highlighted Rs 1 lakh per year to each woman of a family, filling up of existing 30 lakhs vacancies in Government sectors from August 15 and guarantee of MSP hike for farmers etc. He said within 5 years of Srikant Jena as Union Minister, a lot of developmental works including AIIMS, CIPET and APTTC were established with his initiatives.

vote for Jena due to his developmental work initiatives between 2009 and 2014," he asserted. Baleswar would go for twin polls

"The people of Baleswar would

on June 1, in the last phase. Besides Jena, Lekhasri Samantsingar and Pratap Sarangi respectively of BJD and BJP are in fray for the Baleswar Lok Sabha seat.

statement made by the BJP

Puri Lok Sabha candidate and

I appeal to the BJP to keep the

Lord above any political dis-

course. By this you have deeply

hurt Odia Asmita and this will

be remembered and con-

demned by people of Odisha

for a very long time," he added.

Patnaik not to make an 'issue out of a non-issue'. AICC

president Mallikarjun Kharge

also slammed Patra over the

development. "The comments

made by BJP's Puri candidate

is an insult to Mahaprabhu

Shree Jagannatha revered by

Patra, however, urged

Make Modi PM for 3rd time: Shah to voters

'Odisha to have BJP govt with young Odia CM' PNS KEONJHAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah at Keonjhar sought the support of voters to make Modi the Prime Minister for a third consecutive time and form a BJP Government in the State. In the Vijay Sankalp Samabes, Shah attacked both Congress and BJD saying the nation and Odisha

Raising the withdrawal of Article 370 in the country, he said now it is the turn to achieve in POK.

"Modiji has already won more than 310 seats to form the Government in the five phases of election already held. Now the target is to cross the



400-mark in the next elections," said Shah. He urged the voters to vote for MP candidate Anant Nayak and all BJP

done a lot for the development for the tribals. Modiji has increased the grant for the development of tribals in the nation from Rs 25,000 crore to Rs 1,25,000 crore. Shah announced that Kendu leaves pluckers will be paid fair value and 33 percent bonus if BJP

comes to power in Odisha. Besides, two 500-bed hospitals will be established in Keonjhar and in Sambalpur from the

He further said Modi has He also said while mineral resources from Keonjhar were developing in the country, Keonjhar remained undeveloped. Modi has worked to provide Rs 85,000 crore for the development of tribals by setting up District Mining Foundation (DMF) for Keonjhar

He criticised CM Naveen Patnaik and VK Pandian and asked whether there will be Tamil rule in Odisha and whether any Tamil Babu will rule in Odisha. However, if the BJP comes to power, a young Chief Minister who speaks Odia will rule. On the contrary, Naveenbabu is not able to work much because of his old age, he pointed out. Shah was joined by Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who flew down from Sambalpur.

Will observe fast for 3 days as penance: Sambit

 $B_{
m IP's\,Puri\,Lok\,Sabha\,candi}$ date Sambit Patra expressed regret over his remark that 'Lord Jagannath is a Bhakt of PM Narendra Modi' which evoked sharp reactions from several quarters, including CM Naveen Patnaik and Delhi CM Aravind Keiriwal. Patra had given this statement during PM Modi's roadshow at the

Puri Grand Road on Monday. However, Patra cleared the air around his statement by saying that he was apologetic for his 'slip of the tongue'. The saffron party leader also said that he will observe fast for three days for the mistake he has committed.

"After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's road show in Puri, I gave byte to many media channels and every-



where I said the same thing that PM Modi is an ardent devotee of Mahaprabhu Jagannath... Amid this, unknowingly, while giving byte to a news channel, I said the opposite, that Mahaprabhu is a devotee of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I have made this mistake unintentionally, it's a slip of the tongue," said Patra in a clarification on his social media account X.

"I pray to the Lord to for-

give me for the mistake that was made unintentionally... I need to seek forgiveness from Mahaprabhu Jagannath for this slip of the tongue and I have decided to do fasting for three days as an apology," he added.

Earlier, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik condemned Patra's remarks and deemed it an insult to Lord Jagannath. "Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannatha is the Lord Calling Universe. Mahaprabhu a bhakt of another human being is an insult to the Lord. This has hurt the sentiments and demeaned the faith of crores of Jagannath bhaktas and Odias across the world. The Lord is the greatest symbol of Odia Asmita. Calling Mahaprabhu a bhakt of another human being is totally condemnable." "I strongly denounce the

seat again after he had unsuccessfully contested from the

constituency in 2019.

amble which puts primacy on lib-

crores of people. We condemn it in the strongest possible words...," he wrote on X. Notably, Patra is contesting from the Puri Lok Sabha

Echoes of Deendayal, Golwalkar: Constitution at a crossroads

Pormer Congress president Rahul Gandhi flaunting a copy of the Indian Constitution and assuring the minorities and backward ward sections of the society that their rights would be protected, and PM Narendra Modi riding a wave of Hindu nationalism, bring to memory the contrasting perspectives of Dr Ambedkar and MS Golwalkar.

Ambedkar piloted a Constitution based on equality and brotherhood, while Golwalkar, the RSS ideologue, wanted the Indian Constitution to be based on the ancient Indian scripture, Manusmriti. Since Modi is an unabashed admirer of Golwalkar, it is ironic how he makes Ambedkar a centerpiece of his political campaign. Politics, as they say, is the art of the possible, where both Modi and Rahul swear by Ambedkar. India's ongoing general election has become the proscenium where the theatre of the absurd is played out by its principal

Golwalkar was an ardent admirer



SATYA NARAYAN MISRA

of both Hitler and Mussolini and was particularly moved by the ideological link between the Manusmriti and the philosophy of Nietzsche who, in turn, had inspired Hiler. To keep up the purity of the race and its culture, Germans purged the country of the semitic races, the Jews. The worst about the new Constitution, Golwalkar wrote, is that there is no Bharatiyata about it. Manusmriti is the scripture that is most worshipable after

Vedas for our Hindu nation, based on our ancient culture, customs, thoughts, and practice. Some of the tenets of Manusmriti are: women are an embodiment of the worst desires and deceit and should never be given freedom, and the Sudras have been prescribed only one occupation, to serve meekly the other three castes. Killing a woman, a Shudra, or an atheist is no sin.

No wonder Dr Ambedkar burnt the Manusmriti and called it a 'fountainhead of obscurantism, anti-Dalit and anti-women.' He ensured equal rights for all Indian citizens, irrespective of caste, sex, religion, or place of birth and protection of those citizens who were the oppressed section and minorities in an unequal society.

On December 12, 1949, as Ram Chandra Guha notes, a group of RSS protesters burnt the effigy of Ambedkar. Golwalkar argues in his book 'Bunch of Thoughts' that territorial nationalism is barbarism. A nation is not a bundle of political and economic rights, but an em-

bodiment of national culture, ancient and sublime Hinduism. He sneered at democracy which is alien to Hindu culture and lavished praise on the code of Manu, as the greatest and wisest lawgiver of mankind. Deendayal Upadhaya wanted that the Constitution should embody a Hindu political philosophy, befitting an ancient nation like Bharat. He wrote, "We aped the foreigners to such an extent that we failed to see our national ideals and traditions. Hinduism has been enslaved by inappropriate Westernization. Our Constitution, like an English child born in India, has become, Anglo-Indian in character, instead of being purely Indian." The absence of the Hindu Rashtra idea in the Constitution was unacceptable to these RSS ideologues.

Ambedkar responding to these vicious tirades against the Constitution wrote, "If we wish to preserve the Constitution in which we have sought to enshrine the principles of Government of the

people, by the people and for the people, let's resolve not to be tardy in the recognition of the evil that lies across our path, nor to be weak in our initiative to remove them." Savarkar rejecting the national flag had said, "It can be no other than the Bhargava (saffron flag)."

Though Ambedkar said that democracy in India is only a top-dressing which is essentially undemocratic, he never lost faith in Parliamentary democracy, rule of law, universal suffrage, and equality of all citizens in free India and firmly scripted them in the Indian Constitution, unlike Gollwalkar and Deendayal who wanted an unequal India based on ancient scriptures, languages like Sanskrit, Hindu supremacy and second class status to minorities like the Muslims.

It is indeed most disquieting that echoes of Deendayal and Golwalkar is heard when the nation celebrates Constitution Day on November 26. In a concept note in 2022 by the ICHR, it equates India with Hindu Rashtra. Bibek Debroy, Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council of PM, calls the Constitution a colonial legacy and questions provisions like secularism, justice, equality, and lib-

K Santhanam, a prominent member of the Constituent Assembly, had observed, "The Constitution must usher in a social revolution which will take India out of medievalism based on birth, religion, and community and reconstruct a modern foundation based on rule of law, merit and secular ideas. The resurrection of ideas of Golwalkar goes back to the medieval obscurantism of a society based on deep prejudices against women and minorities, which is the bedrock of Manusmriti.

Granville Austin in his epic commentary on the Indian Constitution 'Working a Democratic Constitution' (1999) observes that democracy, social revolution, and national unity are three strands that form a seamless web. The nation has to realize its goals in the Preerty, equality, socio-economic justice for all its citizens where a secular spirit should permeate and fraternity and brotherhood bind all its citizens. Despite the economic prosperity that we have achieved, rising inequality, lack of employment opportunities on a large scale, and most importantly denial of equal opportunity to avail of quality education, healthcare, skill, and vocational training still beset a vast majority of people. Famous sociologist Andre Beteille wrote, "A constitution may indicate the direction in which we are to move, but the social structure will decide how far we move and at what pace. Quite clearly, a social structure based on religious divide will only drive us in a path of disaster. Instead of one nation, one religion, and foisting cultural homogenization, the time for fostering brotherhood was never so keenly called

(Dr Misra is an Emeritus Profes-

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RR DESPERATE TO ARREST SLIDE AGAINST RCB 12 SPORTS

Power hungry but feeling the poll heat

SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

prevailing heatwave conditions and high humidity levels in the national Capital, giving a feel of temperatures hovering over 50 degrees Celsius, have not only pushed the peak power demand to an all-time high of 7,717 MW on Tuesday afternoon, but have also forced political parties to hold rallies in the evening to avoid the

Most of the candidates have taken to indoor meetings during the morning and afternoon hours. However, the buzz around the elections on May 25 has been negligible during the day. Political parties are worried of low turnout of voters due to extreme heat and summer vacations in the national

With only two days remaining before the end of campaigning in Delhi, all parties are trying to woo voters with mega roadshows. The weather conditions, however, are leaving the candidates high and dry with a very limited period of time for campaigning only during the evening hours.

The intense heatwave is playing a spoiler for the rallies and roadshows of top political leaders cutting across party lines. The BJP and its star campaigners are holding rallies and roadshows in the evening. The AAP convener



Delhiites use scarfs to shield themselves from the hot summer

Arvind Kejriwal, who is the star campaigner of his party, has also preferred to hold rallies and public gatherings in the evening. On Tuesday, Kejriwal held a

roadshow in support of Congress candidate Kanhaiya Kumar for North East Delhi in Bhajanpura at 8:00 pm. BJP president JP Nadda also held two roadshows in support of his party candidates -South Delhi's Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and Chandni Chowk's Praveen Khandelwal in between 6:00 pm and 9:30 pm.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also held roadshows during the same time for BJP candidates — Yogendra Chandolia for reserved North West seat and Harshdeep Malhotra for East Delhi, to avoid

the scorching heat.

Road Minister Nitin Gadkari also addressed three public meetings for BJP candidates which include West Delhi's Kamaljeet Sehrawat, New Delhi's Bansuri Swaraj and North east Delhi's Manoj Tiwari in the evening.

Likewise, former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj SIngh Chouhan and Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma have also held roadshows and addressed public gatherings in the national Capital. In the past week, top leaders like

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal have organised rallies and roadshows in the national Capital in the evening hours to escape extreme heat.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the national Capital on Tuesday recorded the maximum temperature of 42.4 degrees Celsius, which is 2.2 degrees Celsius above the normal. The maximum temperature recorded in Najafgarh stood at 43.9 degrees Celsius, Lodi road at 41.4 degrees Celsius, Mungeshpur and Palam at 41 degrees Celsius, Narela and Pitampura at 41.9 degrees Celsius and New Delhi at 41.2 degrees Celsius. The IMD has also issued a red

alert for the next four days. The maximum humidity stood at 62 in the national Capital.

According to the seven-day forecast, the maximum maximum temperature will be in the range of 44 to 47 degrees Celsius when Delhi goes to polls on May 25. A spell of intense heatwave, which has gripped the Capital, could impact voter turnout. In the last Lok Sabha elections, the voting percentage was 60.6 per cent. The mercury on May 12, 2019, was at 39 degrees Celsius. In the 2014 polls, the city saw a higher voting percentage of 65.1 per cent on April 10, 2014, when the day temperature was just 33 degrees



BJP notice to sulking **Jayant Sinha for not** voting, campaigning

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI/ RANCHI

Tharkhand BJP has issued a show-cause notice to sitting Hazaribagh Lok Sabha MP Jayant Sinha for not casting his vote in the election. The notice was issued by the party's State general secretary Aaditya Sahu who said the party's image had been maligned as Sinha did not exercise his right to franchise.

Sinha, who has served as the Union Minister in Narendra Modi's first tenure, has been given two days time to reply to the show-cause notice. Hazaribagh, along with two other

parliamentary seats, namely

Chatra and Koderma, went to polls in the fifth phase of polling across the country and the second phase in Jharkhand. Jayant's father and former Union Yashwant Minister

Sinha exercised his right

to franchise along with his wife. Meanwhile, sitting MLA from Dhanbad and five block presidents have also been served show-cause notices for not showing any interest in the election activities of the party and for not cooperating with the party candidate.

Ancient patterns in military culture to live again



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NFW DFI HI

n an effort to highlight India's **⊥**rich heritage in statecraft, the Army has explored the epic battles of the Mahabharata, heroic exploits of eminent military figures as part of a project that aims to enrich the nation's outlook in the defence domain, Army Chief General Manoj Pande said on Tuesday. General Pande said,

project 'Udbhav', launched last year, delved deep into ancient texts such as Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads and Arthashastra, and it has revealed substantial intellectual convergences between eminent Indian and Western scholars."
The Army chief made these

remarks at a conference titled "Historical Patterns in Indian Strategic Culture". The project "Udbhav" aims to

promote indigenous discourse in the Army by integrating India's ancient strategic acumen into contemporary military domain with a focus

on making the force "future-"The project has delved deep into ancient texts such as

Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads and Arthashastra, which are rooted in inter-connectedness, righteousness and ethical values," the Army chief said. "Furthermore, it has explored the epic battles of the Mahabharata and the strategic brilliance during the reigns of Mauryas, Guptas and Marathas, which has shaped

he said. The Defence Ministry last year said project "Udbhav" is designed to weave a strategic vocabulary and conceptual framework that is deeply embedded in India's philosophical and cultural India's

India's rich military heritage,'

heritage. "It is worth mentioning that project 'Udbhav' has revealed substantial intellectual convergences between eminent Indian and Western scholars, highlighting the resonance between their thoughts, philosophies and perspectives," the Army Chief

He said it has catalysed exploration into new areas, by unveiling India's tribal traditions, the Maratha naval legacy, and the individual heroic exploits of military figures, particularly women.

US says can't help Iran in crash probe

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The Iranian Government has requested the US to assist in probing the deadly helicopter crash that killed President Ebrahim Raisi, country's Foreign Minister, and six others but Washington won't assist Tehran largely due to "logistical reasons", according to a senior American diplomat. Raisi, 63, a possible successor for Iran's supreme leader, the 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, his Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and six others were found dead on Monday hours after their helicopter crashed in fog, leaving the Islamic Republic without two key leaders as extraordinary tensions grip the wider Middle East.

US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller at a Press briefing on Monday said the US when asked for assistance by the Iranian Government made it clear that it was ready to offer assistance, as it would do in response to any request by a foreign Government in this sort of situation, but was not able to provide any help. "I'm not going to get into the details, but we were asked by the Iranian Government for assistance," said Miller.

"We said we would be willing to assist. It's something that we would do with respect to any government in this situation. Ultimately, largely for logistical reasons, we weren't able to provide that assistance," Miller

In response to a question on the United States extending official condolences and participating in a moment of silence for Raisi at the UN Security Council, Miller said

the US had been quite clear that Raisi was a "brutal participant" in the repression of the Iranian people for nearly four decades but Washington regretted any loss of life in a helicopter crash like incident. "We regret any loss of life. We

don't want to see anyone die in a helicopter crash. But that doesn't change the reality of his record both as a judge and as the President of Iran and the fact that he has blood on his hands," Miller said. "Our fundamental approach

to Iran has not changed and will not change. We will continue to support the people of Iran, to defend their rights, their aspirations to an open, free society and democratic participation," he said.

Miller also responded to a remark by former Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif who blamed US sanctions for the incident. Iran has offered no reasons for the crash that brought down the helicopter, which fell into mountainous terrain in a sudden, intense fog. The crash on Sunday killed

all eight people aboard a Bell 212 helicopter that Iran purchased in the early 2000s, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

The Iranian Government has used its aircraft to transport equipment to support terrorism. So, we will continue to fully enforce our sanctions regime, including our sanctions regimes on aircraft for use by the Iranian government. Ultimately, it's the Iranian government that responsible for the decision to fly a 45-year-old helicopter in what was described as poor weather conditions," he said.

Maliwal shared trauma, distress with L-G **STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has for the first time reacted to the alleged assault on AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal on Tuesday, sharing that Maliwal called him a day earlier on Monday out of "sheer

Saxena on Tuesday said he was assault on Maliwal and said 'deafening silence" of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal"speaks volumes on his stance on safety of women". It wasn't a long time ago when Maliwal and Saxena were in the cross hairs for the removal of 223 Delhi Commission for Women (DCW), appointed by the former Chairperson of DCW.

In a public statement, the LG said he has been deeply distressed over the unfolding media narrative over the last few days on the issue and shared that Maliwal called him.

"Yesterday, she called me out of sheer anguish, describing at length her traumatic experience and the subsequent intimidation and shaming that she is being subjected to by her own colleagues. She also expressed concerns over reported tampering of evidence and coercion against her," he said. The alleged incident, which reportedly took place when



Maliwal visited the Chief Minister's residence alone, has sparked media frenzy and raised serious concerns about the safety and treatment of women in positions of power.

Making this assertion in a statement, Saxena also said, "I would have expected that at least for the sake of propriety, my Chief Minister would have come clean, rather than being evasive and dodgy. His deafening silence speaks volumes of his stance on safety of women." Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said LG's letter has proved that Maliwal is "working for the BJP"

Hitting back, the AAP said LG's letter proves "Maliwal is working at the behest of BJP". Responding to LG's statement, the AAP said the

BJP is hatching a "new conspiracy" every day in the lead up to the polls. "Sometimes they rake up the excise policy case, sometimes the Swati Maliwal incident and sometimes the allegation of party receiving foreign funding. BJP will use new tactics against us till polls. BJP is losing the polls badly and

In a statement on X by Raj Niwas, Saxena said the Delhi Police is investigating the matter and it will be brought to its "logical conclusion". He also called the alleged U-turn by the party on the matter "baffling".

'I have been deeply distressed over the unfolding media narrative over the last few days on the issue of alleged assault on Ms Swati Maliwal, MP, Aam Aadmi Party, at the residence of Chief Minister, when she went there to meet him all alone," LG said.

"Yesterday, she called me out of sheer anguish, describing at length her traumatic experience, and the subsequent intimidation and shaming that she is being subjected to by her own colleagues. She also expressed concerns over reported tampering of evidence and coercion against her," he said. On Kejriwal, Saxena said, "I would have expected that at least for the

sake of propriety, my CM would have come clean, rather than being evasive and dodgy. His deafening silence speaks volumes of his stance on safety of women." Delhi is the national Capital and is home to the entire diplomatic community from around the world and "such shameful incidents and they are trying to lift their status using Maliwal issue," the party contemptuous government safety, tarnishes India's image worldwide," he said.

"Had such an incident happened in any other Chief Minister's residence in the country, external forces with vested interests, inimical to India, would have unleashed a scathing global narrative around women safety in India. The absence of any outrage in this case leaves several questions

statement. Saxena rooted for Maliwal even, as he said, she has been "vociferous", "hostile" and "blatantly partisan towards me and my office, often criticizing me unjustifiably".

unanswered," he said in the

Saxena said it was "most disturbing" that the alleged scene of crime was the drawing room of the Chief Minister, even while he was allegedly present in the house, and that it was carried out by his "closest aide" on a woman who was

Low pressure likely in State today

Heavy rainfall predicted in Baleswar on May 25

PNS BHUBANESWAR

cyclonic circulation lies over the Southwest Bay of Bengal coast and a lowpressure area is very likely to form under its influence on May 22, informed the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on

As per the latest IMD forecast, the system is very likely to move northeast wards and concentrate into a depression over central parts of the Bay of Bengal by the morning of May 24. It would continue to move northeastwards and intensify further

Light to moderate rainfall at many places with heavy rainfall at isolated places is likely over North, and South 24 Parganas, East Medinipur districts of West Bengal and Baleswar district of Odisha on May 25. Light to moderate rainfall at many places with heavy rainfall at isolated places is likely over Mizoram, Tripura and South Manipur on May 25, the sources added.

member countries

Antarctic Treaty discuss

India leads campaign to control penguin tourism

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

 A^{s} Antarctica evolves from a scientific haven to a sought-after tourist hotspot, intensifying concerns about its ecological fragility all eyes are now on India which is leading discussions at the ongoing ten days 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) in Kerala, on regulating tourism to safeguard the icy continent's pristine wilderness. Similar deliberations are being held at the 26th meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP).

Discussions around regulating tourism have been ongoing in the ATCMs since 1966, but so far these have been just centered around items, sessions, papers, or resolutions. This is for the first time a dedicated working group for regulating tourism in the region has

been formulated at the 46th

ATCM, hosted by India in

Kochi from May 20. The gathering has over 350

participants from nearly 40 nations, deliberating on the climate change threats exacerbated by the increased tourists' footfalls at the continent's fragile ecosystem. This is leaving the continent's wildlife like Penguins at the receiving end. According to reports, the

surge in Antarctic tourism over the past four decades is staggering, with visitor numbers skyrocketing from just a few hundred to over 100,000 in recent seasons, predominantly arriving on cruises. In such concerning

backdrop, it has become crucial upon the countries to comprehensive regulations be framed to ensure the sustainable and responsible exploration of this unique and pristine region. India will be playing a key role as it is expected to bring a series of actionable



recommendations to be incorporated into the broader framework of the Antarctic Treaty System.

While addressing the session the meet, Dr M integrity Ravichandran, secretary of the Union Ministry of Earth and Sciences and Head of the Indian delegation, said, 'Antarctica represents one of the last frontiers of wilderness and scientific discovery. As tourism stewards of this extraordinary

responsibility to ensure that activities, including research and tourism, are conducted in a manner that ecological future generations."

Ďr Ravichandran said, "India being a committed member of the Antarctic Treaty System recognises the pressing need to address the growing activities Antarctica and their potential region, it is our collective impact on the continent's

fragile environment. He reiterated that India has always advocated for a comprehensive, proactive, and effective tourism policy anchored in precautionary

The collaborative efforts of nations within the Antarctic Treaty System are crucial in preserving the environment and advancing research scientific Antarctica. Through leadership and commitment, India continues to play a key role in shaping the future of Antarctic governance," said Ambassador Pankaj Saran, chairperson of the 46th ATCM and 26th CEP. The ATCM and CEP are

high-level global annual conducted meetings accordance with provisions of the Antarctic multilateral agreement of 56 Contracting Parties signed in 1959. An official from the Ministry

said during these meetings,

issues pertaining to the science, policy, governance, management, preservation and protection of Antarctica. The CEP was established under the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (the Madrid Protocol) in 1991. The CEP advises the ATCM on environmental protection and conservation in Antarctica. National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa under MoES Ministry, and Antarctic Secretariat jointly organising these meetings. Dr Thamban Meloth, director of NCPOR, said India has a legal framework to regulate India's activities Antarctica, tourism, through the Indian Antarctic Act enacted in 2022 but this is for the first time that regulations will be

Paddy purchase goof-ups: Bargarh farmers bear the brunt

▲n Bargarh district, about 80 percent of the people depend on farming, mainly paddy cultivation. However, the purchase of paddy has become a major problem, leading many farmers to protest on roads for their rights during both the rabi and kharif harvesting seasons.

Farmers struggle to sell their grain at fair prices, facing issues of short sales and poor pay. The main cause of these short sales is PC transactions (commission transactions), where unscrupulous workers and local leaders take off commission money meant for the

Corruption means that funds meant for farmers end up in the pockets of corrupt officials and public leaders in Bargarh district. Farmer entrepreneur Suresh Nekandi explains that many commission transactions occur through



false entry, where grain is sent straight to mills by departmental staff, avoiding the market. This behavior results in a loss of Rs 15 per quintal for farms. If there are cuts at the mill, this loss grows by another Rs 40 to 50 per quintal.

Hara Bania, secretary of the farmers' association Jay Kisan Movement, notes that while formal records show smooth paddy sales, the truth is differ-

ent. The grain marketing system is now so complicated and centralized that many farmers avoid taking their goods to mandis (markets). Various tricks are employed to stop farmers from taking their grain to market, and those who do face harassment. Cuts of 2 to 4 kg per quintal, and sometimes even 10 to 15 kg, are typical, greatly reducing

the amount for which they are

Farmers' associations have constantly protested against these problems, but with little effect. The Government's inactivity and new cuts in rice sales have worsened the situa-

Adviser for the District Farmers Association, Ramesh Mohapatra attacks the Government's lack of experience, knowledge, and responsible policy for grain collection. He claims that grain collection has become an income source for brokers, millers, public representatives, and officials, helped by manipulated issues like token cuts and ir-

In summary, farmers in Bargarh district face significant challenges in paddy buying due to corrupt practices and ineffective policies. Urgent changes are needed to ensure fair compensation and help for these farmers

8 arrested in murder case near polling booth

Prime accused still on the run PNS BARAGARH

Police have detained eight youths in connection with the murder of an auto-rickshaw driver transporting voters to a polling booth in the Bargarh Lok Sabha constituency while the prime accused is still on the run.

The Sadar police are interrogating the youths and also conducting simultaneous raids at several places to nab the others involved in the case.

According to sources, following a meeting of the Sambalpur RDC at the Sadar police station where the Additional Superintendent of Police and other officials were also present, a police team has been constituted to nab the prime in different places and phones are being tapped as Inspector General of Police Himanshu Lal and Bargarh SP Prahalad Sahai Meena are themselves monitoring the developments in the case.

and the murder of Mirdha.

While the police have said cept the police statement.

Auto driver Biswanath Mirdha was killed with a sharp weapon (bhujali) on Monday when he was on his way to the Sarsara polling booth. He was carrying the voters to the polling booth when he was stopped by a group from going to the booth. This led to a clash between the two groups

that the auto driver's murder was not related to election but the result of an enmity between two groups, the prime accused is yet to be arrested and locals are not ready to ac-

As per the reports, the

30 injured in police-public faceoff in Boudh after some BJP supporters al-

As BJP holds protests alleging bias by presiding officer

PNS ■ BOUDH

 $oldsymbol{A}$ s many as 30 persons were injured in a police-public face-off following allegations of favouritism by the Presiding Officer to the ruling party during the second phase of polling at Maheswarpinda area under Kantamal Assembly constituency in Boudh district on Monday.

All the injured were admitted to Manamunda hospital. Later, they were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital, Sonepur as their conditions deteriorated. At least five of the injured are reportedly criti-

unsavoury incident happened

leged that the presiding officer was showing favouritism to the ruling party and asking voters to vote in favour of BJD at booth number eight. Subsequently, they staged a protest led by BJP candidate Kanhai Charan Danga in front

Following the development, tension prevailed in the area as some voters allegedly threw stones at the police. The security personnel reportedly resorted to lathi charge and blank firing to bring the situation under control.

Meanwhile, responding to the development, the Boudh Tehsildar said that more information about the incident could be divulged following an investigation into the incident. Meanwhile, BJP candidate from the seat Kanhai Charan has demanded repolling in the booth.

Survey for AthagarhNew voters' first choice a young dynamic MLA

Recently, a survey was conducted taking more than 200 new voters of the Athagarh-Tigiria Assembly constituency where the respondents said they would like their MLA to be an educated dynamic

They didn't accept aged representatives despite a plethora of assurances given by parties. They also were for a new Chief Minister face.

Brahmananda Swain, a new voter who is going to cast his vote for the first time in the elections, said, "Since new voters are educated and aware of various nomenclature of Indian constitution and democracy, they do not want to waste their time in choosing a

wrong person.'

Moreover, they disagreed with repeating a representative who has been elected for more than two terms, saying that it is an evil for a democracy. Many said they wanted to change the political surroundings of Athagarh this time.

Abhaya Kumar Barik, a youth, who is contesting on a BJP ticket from Athagarh was acceptable to most respondents. BJP's Cuttack MP candidate Bhartruhari Mahtab has joined Abhaya in campaigning at different places, which has again augmented his stature. This apart PM Narendra Modi's Cuttack meeting and other Union Ministers' roadshow are going to impress the Athagarh voters, said

Triangular fight among BJP, BJD, Cong in Bhograi

Soro Assembly seat Ind candidate Malik may play spoilsport for BJP, BJD, Cong

Though Assembly seat has been a fort of BID since 2000 **UBACHAK MOHANTY BALESWAR**

bhograi, an Assembly constituency sharing a border with West Bengal, is likely to witness a triangular contest among the candidates of BJD ,Congress and BJP.

The prominent candidates

encies under Baleswar district,

multi corner contest. Rakesh

Malik, an independent candi-

date, has posed a challenge for

the other three candidates of

BJD, BJP and Congress. The

seat witnessed several twists

and turns ahead of filing

nominations by the candi-

BALESWAR

Satyasiba Das and Asish Patra, respectively of BJD, Congress and Congress

The Assembly seat has been a bastion of BJD since 2000 and Ananta Das won the seat four time from 2004 to 2019 The BJD this time has changed the candidate and instead of re-nominating Das due to his frail health has made Gautam Buddha Das, a scribe-turned spokesperson of its party as its candidate. The Congress on the other

its candidate. Satyasiba, another journalist and relative of Gautambuddh, had earlier unsuccessfully contested twice from the same constituency and garnered between 58,000 to 60,000 votes. On both the occasions he was defeated by Ananta.

prior to the nominations, that there would be a straight fight between

Although it was expected,

Gautambuddha Satyasiba, yet the scenario changed as BJP made Asish Patra its candidate who defected to the saffron party from Congress ahead of nominations . Besides these three candidates, two more candidates are in fray.

The BJD witnessed the highest share in terms of voting percentage in 2009 polling with over 53 percent in its favour. However, the percentage declined to 50.11 %and 46.79 % in subsequent elections in 2014 and 2019 respectively.

Hundreds join BJP in Mayurbhani



BARIPADA

Hundreds of active members and office-bearers from other organisations joined the BJP on Sunday. They were all welcomed into the party fold by BJP State president Manmohan Samal and party's senior leaders of the district.

A special function named "Mishran Parva", specifically meant for this, was held near the BJP district office at Takatpur here. While hundreds of Bhanjasena members joined the BJP under the leadership of Soumya Mishra, a large number of BJD youth activists were led by Sankarshan Panda in embracing the saffron party. Besides, Baripada town youth leader Tarun Palbabu, accompanied by a large number of young men

and women, also joined the

Samal exuded confidence that the BJP's coming to power in Odisha is a certainty. And once it is voted to power, it will implement several propeople welfare measures like Subhadra Yojana, Ayushman Bharat Yojana etc, he added. Before the Baripada func-

another public programme was addressed by Samal at Dubrajpur in Karkachia gram panchayat of Khunta Block in Baripada Assembly Constituency. Prominent among others who attended the programmes include Union Minister Engineer Bisweswar Tudu, BJP Mayurbhanj Loksabha nominee Naba Charan Majhi and all party's MLA candidates of

'Sad that world is now led by narrow-minded arms dealers'

Talk held on 153rd birth anniv of peace campaigner

BHUBANESWAR

Russell

The Freethought Party of India (FPI) celebrated its 12th Foundation Day along with the observance of the 153rd birthday of noted global peace campaigner and eminent freethinker Bertrand Russell who stood for atheistic humanism for the good of the entire mankind. Former MLA Advocate Sarat Mishra chaired the

To mark the occasion, a seminar was organised on the topic: "Russell's atheistic humanism must be cultivated worldwide to remove arms dealers like Prez Joe Biden, PM Modi, Prez Putin from power".

Former Communication Officer of Government of India Sundhansu Dhada and State secretary of BSP Madhusunda Yadav were the key participants. While welcoming the guests, FPI general secretary B Ramchandra CST Voltaire highlighted the contributions that Nobel Laureate Bertrand Russell to atheistic humanism and world

To condemn the military occupation of South Vietnam and slaughter of human beings in North Vietnam by the US, Russell held an International Mock-trial at Stockholm, Sweden, 1966-1967 and US President Lyndon B Johnson was found guilty of massacre of the Viet-

Voltaire lamented that with

the death of Russell on February 2, 1970 the world has gone without any champion for world peace and he pointed out that the world is being largely governed by small-minded arms dealers like President of the US Joe Biden, PM Modi of India, President of France Emanuel Macron and President of Russia Vladimir Putin. These leaders are making money by producing, selling and purchasing military weapons, he said. The call for disarmament

that was uppermost in the minds of the world leaders who founded the UN on October 24, 1945 has now been given a big goodbye. The SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) has pointed out that the world is now wasting every year huge public money in the name of national defence. It is a matter of shame that India during 2023 has made purchases of military weapons worth of 8.5 Billion US dollar from the USA. It has purchased heavy military weapons from France. Human survival can be well guaranteed if atheistic humanism, as expounded by Russell becomes the basis of education all over the World, opined Voltaire.

sion, Dhada said that through his enormous writings and public speeches, Russell was the conscience keeper of mankind. Indeed, he was the ethical ruler of the world. Yadav observed that

ment and world peace. Swapna Bijayini, cofounder of AMOFOI, pro-

Russell's name really got in-

Welfare Dept PNS BHUBANESWAR panchayat Rayagada district. For this enterprising tribal

Participating in the discus-

tertwined with freethought and campaign for disarmaposed the vote of thanks.

Malik contested on BIP ticket in 2019 elections and lost to Parsuram Dhada of Of all Assembly constitu-BJD. This time he was very much confident of getting Soro (SC) is likely to witness a party ticket.

> Yet Malik was denied ticket by the BJP and instead, ticket was given to Rajendra Das.

Malik even after making desperate efforts failed to convince the leaders at the helm of affairs and filed papers as an independent candidate.

On the contrary, Parsuram,

denied ticket by BJD, joined the BJP ahead of filing nomination paper and was given ticket altering the previous announcement by the BJP. The party had initially announced Rajendra as its nominee but after a high drama Parsuram filed nomination papers on BJP ticket. Rajendra, a native of Dhamnagar area in Bhadrak and a BID rebel during the bypoll in Dhamnagar last time, later

Besides Parsuram, Madhab Dhada and Subrat Dhada respectively have filed nomination from BJD and Congress

Although it was expected that the contest would be triangular among three Dhadas, Malik may play spoilsport for the trio. Last two terms, Parsuram was the MLA of the constituency while prior to it Surendra Parmanik (Cong) was elected in 2009. From 1985 till 2009 the seat was with Congress

TYME: Empowering tribal youth as micro entrepreneurs

Initiative by ST,

Development, Minorities and **Backward Classes**

nce having migrated to Kerala and worked in a shop as a sales assistant for over a year and a half, business ideas were there within the mind of Subash Pidisika of Alanda village in Budaguda gram under Kalyansingpur block of

youth, assistance under Tribal Youth Micro Entrepreneurship (TYME) by Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) Rayagada, changed the course of his life and right at his own village from his mobile phone repair centre, now he earns a decent income. An expansion plan is also on cards and Subash is hopeful to extend IT-related services for his community as well from his centre.

Currently, Subash is catering his services to GPs like Majhiguda, Karpa, Budaguda, Sikarpai, Dhamunipanga and Narayanpur of Kalyansingpur block. With business acumen, good behaviour and tendency

to help people he has started earning nearly Rs 15,000 a month and hopes to increase it three to four folds within a vear's time.

Tours and travels

Kabiraj Kanhar, a degree holder from Phiringia Degree College in Kandhamal district and a diploma degree holder with electrical work from ITI, lives in Saitingia village, within the Pobinigia GP. With a family of five Kabiraj had worked as a part-time taxi driver. However, his earnings were restricted as he was getting limited trips in a month. But a recommendation from Rupsinghar Janajati Jeevika Parishad (JJP), under Mukhya

Mantri Janajati Jeevika Mission (MMJJM), to ITDA Phulbani as a suitable candidate for TYME, has changed Kabiraj's life completely.

With the fiscal support of Rs1 lakh facilitated by ITDA Phulbani, and his personal contribution of Rs 80,000, Kabiraj could get a new car and has become a micro-entrepreneur. His story is a testament to the power of perseverance in achieving one's dreams. His success not only inspires others facing financial hurdles to pursue their micro-entrepreneurial dreams, but also highlights the pivotal role of MMJJM in empowering tribal youth and fostering new eco-

nomic progress in local communities.

Within the first 20 days of operation, Kabiraj managed to earn Rs 35,000 from 10 trips. He intends to set aside Rs13,500 for his monthly installment and utilize Rs10,000 for purchasing a car mat and other ceiling work, still maintaining a net profit of Rs 11,500.

Event management

Ratnakar Halba, hailing from Keraput within Jeypore block of Koraput district and an active member of the Randapali JJP is known for his interpersonal skills. His event management business began to flourish as he could manage

to get contracts. In one of the JJP meetings organised by ITDA Jeypore, Ratnakar was introduced to TYME. He applied for assistance and there is no looking back.

"Now from my first three events, I could earn Rs15,000 and plan to touch around Rs1.85 lakh in a year," adds Ratnakar explaining the fact that with his affordable costs, families of his locality can now celebrate special occasions without facing additional financial burden.

Bamboo craft

Raghunath Mahali of Shilphadi village under Pathuri gram panchayat in Sarasakana block of Mayurbhanj district

beds, dining tables and fancy items like fruit baskets, pen stand, bamboo glass, flower stand/vase and dustbin, thanks to the financial aid of Rs 1 lakh and training through ITDA Baripada under TYME initiative. Creating tribal "Juba Udyogis"

craftsman and was earning

between Rs 150 and Rs 200.

Now, he earns Rs 200 to Rs

400 a day and aims to upgrade

his craft to produce high-end

products like sofa sets, chairs,

Commissioner-cum-Secre-

tary Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare Department Roopa Roshan Sahoo says, "The overall objective of promoting TYMEs is to empower the tribal youth of needy households, as microentrepreneurs (Juba Udyogis), by developing their potential, and enabling them to earn their livelihood and become role models for others in micro-entrepreneurship building initiatives."

The TYME is not confined to traditional ideas and fiscally supporting the conventional business and livelihood modules as it has also helped tribal youth in having other new avenues to learn their bread and butter and set examples

Nation's strength resides in its ability to leverage its heritage: MoS Defence

NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt on Tuesday said here the strength of a country resides not only in its military might but also in its ability to adapt to changing circumstances and leverage its cultural heritage as a source of power.

He made this assertion while addressing an event at the National Museum to mark the culmination of Project Udbhav, which aims to promote indigenous discourse

India's ancient strategic acumen into a contemporary military domain with a focus on making the force "futureready". The project is a collaboration of the Indian Army and Delhi-based think-tank United Service Institution of India (USI).

Praising the Army and USI, Bhatt said, "The aim of this project envisioned by USI is to find invaluable insights into our strategic culture by finding ancient texts and oral traditions... The geopolitical landscape is continuously

evolving and it is necessary for our armed forces to be adaptive and innovative in their thinking.'

In his address, the minister also praised the ancient Indian philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', which was part of the tagline used by India during its year-long presidency of the G20. "The ancient principle of 'Vasudhaiva Kutambakam'...

Has transcended cultural boundaries and become a guiding light in international diplomacy," Bhatt said. Bhatt said in the last decade,



started a significant journey towards promoting indigenisation initiatives in various

Today, we are nearly atmanirbhar, we are progressing to become fully selfreliant in future. And, Project Udbhav is going to play an important role in this," the minister said.

'There is a need to honestly make efforts to imbibe Indian thoughts and values even in our works and decisions. The dream of 'Viksit Bharat'

can only be realised when we

wisdom of our ancient past and implement it contextual-Bhatt also said India's histoly in shaping modern ambi-

ry is an amalgamation of different thoughts and accomplishments which is a source of inspiration not only for Indians but also for people around the world.

Bhatt also inaugurated an exhibition themed on the 'Evolution of Indian Military Systems, Warfighting, and Strategic Thought -- from Antiquity to Independence', which showcases the evolution of India's military systems and strategy.

VP Dhankhar to represent India at Raisi's funeral

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar is likely to represent India at the funeral of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash, sources said on Tuesday. They said Dhankhar is likely to leave for Iran on Wednesday. A one-day state mourning is being observed across India on Tuesday as a mark of respect for Raisi.

The Iranian president, the country's foreign minister and several other officials were found dead on Monday, hours after their helicopter crashed in a foggy, mountainous region in the northwestern part of the country, Iran state media reported.

Raisi, 63, and his entourage were heading to the city of Tabriz after returning from a visit to a locality on the Azerbaijan-Iran border on

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Congress president Malliarjun Kharge on Monday expressed shock and sadness at the demise of Iranian President Raisi. Modi said "India stands with Iran in this time of sor-

Prime Minister Modi said "Deeply saddened and shocked by the tragic demise of Dr. Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Modi said

"His contribution to strengthening India-Iran bilateral relationship will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to his family and the people of Iran. India stands with Iran in this time of sorrow," the prime minister said. India stands with the people of Iran at this time of tragedy, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar said while expressing shock over the death of Iranian President Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

"Deeply shocked to hear of the passing away of Iran's President Dr Ébrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister H. Amir-Abdollahian in the helicopter crash," Jaishankar said on X. 'Recall my many meetings with them, most recently in January 2024. Our condolences to their families. We stand with the people of Iran at time of this tragedy," he

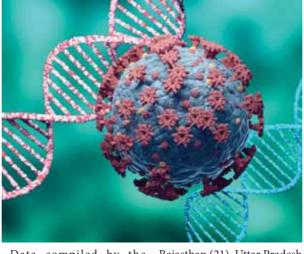
Surge in new COVID 19 variants: No reason to panic, says Health Ministry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

A midst surge in sub-lin-eages of COVID-19 — 290 cases of KP.2 and 34 cases of KP.1 in India— the Union Health Ministry here has clarified that they are all sub-variants of JN1, with no associated increase in hospitalisation or severe cases. It also stressed that mutations are expected in viruses like SARS-CoV-2.

"So there is no reason for concern or panic. The mutations will keep happening at a rapid pace and this is the natural behaviour of viruses like SARS-CoV2," said a senior official from the Ministry.

Singapore is seeing a new COVID-19 wave as the authorities recorded more than 25,900 cases from May 5 to 11 with KP.1 and KP.2 accounting for over twothirds of cases in that country. However, the officials here said that there was nothing to worry as the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) surveillance is sensitive and is able to pick up the emergence of any new variant and samples are also picked from hospitals in a structured manner to detect any change in the severity of disease due to virus.



Data compiled by the INSACOG showed that 34 cases of KP.1 have been found across seven states and UTs with 23 cases registered from

West Bengal. The other states are Goa (1), Gujarat (2), Haryana (1), Maharashtra (4) Rajasthan (2) and Uttarakhand (1). As many as 290 cases of KP.2 have been registered with Maharashtra reporting the highest number at 148, according to the data.

The other states and Union territories are Delhi (1), Goa (12), Gujarat (23), Haryana (3), Karnataka (4), Madhya Pradesh (1), Odisha (17), Rajasthan (21), Uttar Pradesh (8), Uttarakhand (16) and West Bengal (36). Globally, the predominant

COVID-19 variants are still JN.1 and its sub-lineages, including KP.1 and KP.2. KP.1 and KP.2 belong to a group of COVID-19 variants scientists have nicknamed 'FLiRT', after the

technical names of their

The strains in FLiRT are all descendants of the JN.1 variant, an offshoot of the Omicron variant. KP.2 was classified by the World Health Organization as a Variant Under Monitoring.

Rajnath slams Rahul at rally

tions and policies," he said.

The event was also attended

by Army Chief General

Manoj Pande and other senior

Bhatt further said that by

delving into India's ancient texts and traditions, Project

Udbhav "not only enriches

our understanding of strate-

gic culture but also lends a

valuable discerning thinking

on unconventional war

strategies, diplomatic tradi-

officials of the force.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE BOKARO (JHARKHAND)/NEW

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday attacked Rahul Gandhi, questioning whether a leader who has been "praised by the enemy" be allowed to form the Government.

Singh, while addressing an election rally in Jharkhand's Bokaro, was referring to former Pakistan Minister Fawad Hussain Chaudhry's praise for the Congress leader.

"Former Pakistan minister Fawad Hussain Chaudhry, who had claimed that Pakistani terrorists were behind Pulwama and Uri attacks, had not praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi but had praised Rahul Gandhi with comments such as 'Rahul on fire'.

"I want to ask you (people) whether such a leader who has been praised by the enemy be respected or allowed to form the government? Which direction do they want to take the country? I appeal to everyone to save the country," Singh said.

Chaudhry, who was a minister in the Imran Khan government in Pakistan, had shared a video featuring Rahul Gandhi on X, with a caption 'Rahul on fire'. Singh asserted that "no force on earth" can prevent the estab-



India.

Singh said that under the Congress rule, banks ran into losses but under the BJP government, all banks recorded huge profits.

He also attacked the Congress, stating that the grand old party was promising reservations on the basis of religion, which is not permissible under Constitution

Singh said all prime ministers of the Congress had promised to eradicate poverty and failed but under Modi rule, 25 crore people have been brought out of poverty.

Attacking the JMM-led alliance and jailed former chief minister Hemant Soren for "plunder of wealth", he said corruption peaked in Jharkhand under the present regime and without the CM's

patronage it was not possible. He appealed to the people to show the "exit door" to the ruling coalition in the state. The CM who mysteriously went missing for 24 hours, which is unprecedented in India's history, is languishing in jail," he said, while referring

to Hemant Soren. Singh said although INDIA bloc accuses BJP of misusing ED and CBI against opposition but these agencies could seize only Rs 32 lakh under the previous Congress regime, whereas under Modi government, they seized Rs 1 lakh crore besides property worth Rs 22,000 crore.

'In our party, if any worker or leader is found indulged in corruption, he will be sent to jail. Ñobody could raise an accusing finger at any of the CMs of BJP-ruled states," he

Need to create joint culture of three services, says CDS Chauhan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

hief of Defence Staff (CDS) Tuesday called upon the three services to create a joint culture as they move towards forming Joint Operational Structures to fight modern day war.

Speaking 'Jointmanship: The Way Ahead' as part of 22nd Major General Samir Sinha Memorial Lecture organised at United Service Institution(USI), the CDS termed developing Joint Culture in Armed Forces as Jointness 2.0, which is the way forward.

Chauhan said General Jointness 1.0 was about better bonhomie and consensus among the services, and as there were no major differences, there is an impetus to move towards the next level of Jointness which is Jointness 2.0. Acknowledging the distinct culture of all the three Services,



the CDS underscored that there was a need to create a fourth culture in the services.

"Joint Culture though different from Service specific Culture, needs to respect the uniqueness of each service. We must be able to distill the best of each service, and incorporate the Highest Common Factor, rather than settle for the Least Common Denominator," said the Chief of Defence Staff. He mentioned various initiatives of symbology that were being processed towards fostering the Joint Culture, including Tri-Services participation in

national events. The CDS termed Jointness and Integration as pre-requisites to the creation of functional Integrated Theatre Commands, and explained the significance of such Commands. "The creation of such commands will separate the 'operational' functions from the Raise-Train-

Sustain (RTS) and other administrative functions, and will allow greater focus of the operational commander to The CDS said the Theatre Commands will not be an end state but the beginning of the next set of reforms. He said, **Integrated Theatre Commands** will lead to many reforms like Single to Multi Domain operations, fusing space and cyber space into traditional domains, digitisation of battlefield information and visualisation, net centric to data centric among others. Stressing that the reforms in

Indian defence eco-system are necessity, the CDS said, nation states across the globe are facing a new set of challenges, and current flux in world order is forcing nations to review their security strategies. The rapid and unbridled march of technology is transforming the way future wars will be fought, he

Modi, Congress pay tributes to Rajiv on death anniversary



Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi pay tributes to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his death anniversary at Veer Bhumi, in New Delhi, on Tuesday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday paid tributes to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his death anniversary. India's Prime Minister between 1984 and

1989, Rajiv was assassinated by LTTE cadres at Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu in 1991 during an election campaign.

"On his death anniversary, my tributes to our former PM Shri Rajiv Gandhi Ji," Modi said in a post on X. The Congress leaders also paid tributes to Rajiv.

Baggage delivery time improves at major airports in last four months in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■

▲ at Delhi, Mumbai and four other major airports has improved significantly in the last four months, with more

than 90 per cent of the passengers getting their baggage arriving within 30 minutes of an aircraft landing. The Ministry of Civil Aviation has also advised all domestic and international airlines operating at other airports to improve baggage delivery timings. "From 62.2 per cent of passengers getting on-time baggage delivery in January, the number increased to more than 90 per cent from March 2024 onwards...The percentages of bags arriving within 30 mins has reached a high of 92.5 per cent in May 2024," the

Ministry said. In January, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) started an exercise to boost the baggage delivery system of the domestic airlines at the coun-Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai,

Hyderabad and Bengaluru. The exercise under the aegis of the civil aviation ministry was started after it was noticed that baggage was getting delivered late after the landing of a plane. As per the global standards prescribed (International Air Transport Association) and the provision under the OMDA (Operation, Management and Development Agreement) with airports, baggage should be delivered to passengers within 30 minutes of the arrival of the aircraft.

In a release on Tuesday, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) said that when the exercise was started on January 14, only 62.2 per cent of the passengers were getting their baggage within IATA-prescribed

Disturbed sleep, hallucinations warning signs of onset of lupus: Research

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Mental health and neuro-logical symptoms such as disturbed dream sleep, hallucinations or depression and loss of balance may act as a warning signal for the onset of autoimmune disease such as lupus, also known as Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), according to an international research team. Lupus is an autoimmune inflammatory disease known for its effect on many organs, including the brain.

The team led by researchers at the University of Cambridge and King's College London in the UK, maintained that such symptoms can act as an early warning sign that an individual is approaching a "flare," where their disease worsens for a period.

For the study, they surveyed 676 people living with lupus and 400 clinicians, as well as carried out detailed interviews with 69 people living



with systemic autoimmune rheumatic diseases (including lupus) and 50 clinicians.

The results, published in the journal eClinicalMedicine, showed that disrupted dream sleep was the most common symptom experienced by

three in five patients. Of these, a third went on to develop lupus disease a year

later. Just less than one in four patients reported hallucinations, seen in 85 per cent of people with lupus.

Further, three in five lupus patients and one in three with other rheumatologyrelated conditions also reported increasingly disrupted dreaming sleep - usually vivid and distressing nightmares -

tions. The patients reported that the nightmares were often vivid and distressing, involving being attacked, trapped, crushed, or falling. Melanie Sloan from Cambridge University called on doctors to speak to their patients about these types of symptoms and write down each patient's progression.

just before their hallucina-

Patients often know which symptoms are a bad sign that their disease is about to flare, but both patients and doctors can be reluctant to discuss mental health and neurological symptoms, particularly if they don't realise that these can be a part of autoimmune diseases," said Melanie, the lead author from the varsity's Department of Public Health and Primary Care.

Dr Rudrarpan Chatterjee and Dr Amita Aggarwal, both from Department of Clinical Immunology Rheumatology, Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of

Medical Sciences, Lucknow in

a separate review published in ScienceDirectlate last year noted that while the lupus is treatable, most patients in India bear healthcare costs as out of pocket expenses. 'While this has been recently addressed by a new policy (Ayushmaan Bharat scĥeme) that offers low-cost insurance at the national level to everyone within the social security scheme of the Indian Government, a lot of rheumatological conditions at present do not have coverage under this scheme."The review titled, 'Challenges in the diagnosis and management of SLE in India,' further attributed the lack of financial aid to the rare nature of these diseases and a lack of awareness even in policy making circles. "Though SLE has recently been included in this scheme, the benefits are available only once the diagnosis is made and only for inpatient care."

"Canada-based Arshdeep Singh alias Arsh Dala and his Indian agents Harjeet Singh alias Harry Maur, Ravinder Singh alias Rajvinder Singh alias Harry Rajpura, and Rajeev Kumar alias Sheela have been charge sheeted before the NIA Special Researchers estimate that over Court, New Delhi (on 1 million cases of Lupus are Monday)," said the statement diagnosed in India every year. issued by the anti-terror agency.

NIA files chargesheet against pro Khalistani Arshdeep, three others PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed charge sheet against Canadabased pro-Khalistani terrorist Arshdeep Singh and three of his aides for being part of a con-spiracy to unleash terror attacks in various parts of Punjab and Delhi, the agency Tuesday said. The action marks a big leap in NIA's efforts to destroy sleeper cells operated by Singh alias Arsh Dala to unleash terrorist attacks in various parts of Punjab and Delhi, it said.

While Maur and Rajpura were the gang's shooters and had the mandate of executing targeted



The three aides were running a major terror-gangster syndicate in India on the directions of Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) terrorist Dala. Accused Maur and Rajpura

were operating as sleeper cells and were being harboured by Rajeev Kumar, and the trio had planned to carry out a series of terror attacks on Dala's directions and with funds received from him, the NIA said.

Harry Maur and Harry Rajpura, the statement said. NIA investigations have further revealed that Kumar was also providing logistics support and arranging weapons for the other two on the instructions of Dala. The probe agency had arrested Maur and Rajpura on November 23, 2023 and Kumar on January 12, 2024. "Investigations are continuing to destroy the entire terroristgangster syndicate," the NIA killings, Rajeev Kumar alias

from Arsh Dala for harbouring

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Iran at crossroads

Ebrahim Raisi leaves behind a rich legacy and an uncertain future for his country

■ ran is grappling with an unprecedented political crisis as both President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian were tragically found dead in a helicopter crash under mysterious circumstances. The sudden loss of these key figures has plunged Iran into uncertainty, creating a significant leadership void and fuelling various speculations and conspiracy theories. Raisi, known for his hardline stance and involvement in controversial actions, leaves behind a complex legacy. His death, alongside Amir-Abdollahian, not only creates a leadership void but also raises questions about the trajectory of Iranian politics and foreign relations. The circumstances surrounding the helicopter crash, which occurred in heavy fog near the Azerbaijan border, have fuelled speculation. Given Raisi's past, including his involvement in mass executions in 1988 and some contentious actions such as uranium enrichment and missile attacks on Israel, the possibility of foul play cannot be easily dismissed. Conspiracy theories abound, rang-



ing from internal power struggles to foreign interference. President Raisi had numerous domestic adversaries, from moderates marginalised by his policies to conservatives critical of his presidency. Israel, a longstanding rival of Iran, also enters the conjecture. Recent escalations, including the assassination of an Iranian General by Israel and subsequent missile exchanges, add fuel to speculations of Israeli involvement. Mossad has conducted such operations, but assassinating a head of state is a risky move even by Israel's standards. Both Israel and US Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer have denied involvement. The big question is Raisi's succession and Iran's tra-

jectory going forward. Md Mokhber has been appointed the Acting President, while Ali Bagheri Kani, who was Deputy Foreign Minister, has been elevated in the Ministry. The election date has been set for June 28. Raisi was a hardliner cleric but by no means a saint. During the summer of 1988, Raisi was a key member of the "Death Commission" responsible for the execution of thousands of political prisoners, primarily members of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (MEK) and other leftist groups. A prominent figure in Iran's power structure, Raisi was poised for further advancement until his horrifying death. While his demise creates speculation about the successor to Supreme Leader 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, it's unlikely to significantly alter Iran's political trajectory. The conservative-dominated system will prioritise continuity and stability, albeit amidst internal jockeying for influence. Raisi's successor faces a daunting agenda amid economic turmoil and societal discontent, with the spectre of continued international sanctions looming large. With internal dissent simmering and external pressures mounting, the succession process becomes pivotal. The coming days will decide if any discernible change takes place or if the old order continues where moderates and leftists have no role to play.



A man feeds a parrot's chick that fell off a tree, in Guwahati

Can AAP survive its ultimate resilience test?



As Kejriwal presents himself as an underdog fighting against perceived persecution, this election will be pivotal in determining the trajectory of both his career and the AAP

elhi's Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, overcome numerous obstacles in the past decade. Yet, his unwavering resilience has been a beacon of inspiration. He and his party are currently facing the biggest crisis in the liquor policy case.

Despite the challenges, Kejriwal's political journey is a testament to his indomitable spirit. From a brief 49-day tenure and losing all seven seats in Delhi in 2014, he orchestrated a remarkable comeback, securing 67 out of 70 seats in the 2015 Delhi Assembly polls.

The arrest of Kejriwal in the Delhi liquor policy case last month, which involves allegations of corruption and misuse of power, has cast a shadow of uncertainty over the future of the Aam Aadmi Party. Will this be the end of the party's road, or can they weather this storm and continue their political journey?

The Apex court's decision to grant bail to Kejriwal, allowing him to campaign for his party in the ongoing elections, is a beacon of hope for Kejriwal's sup-porters. This positive development paves the way for Kejriwal's success, especially if he garners

public sympathy.
Kejriwal presents himself as the underdog, highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's alleged persecution and his colleagues' imprisonment. Kejriwal and his party have been trying to show the public how he was mistreated in prison and how he was denied insulin and his diabetes medication.

Kejriwal's arrest is the biggest crisis for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) since its founding in November 2012. The party has faced numerous challenges, including internal conflicts, allegations of corruption and the need to maintain its image as a party for the common man. Over the years, many of Kejriwal's associates from the India Against Corruption (IAC) days have been dumped and he remains a desįpt. Kejriwai nas introduced a personality cult centred around him.

power has been quite dramatic. cies. Kejriwal's national influ-



and Kejriwal's resilience. Kejriwal has always been ambitious. He positioned himself as a prime ministerial candidate and even ran against Modi in Benares in 2014 but lost. This bold move significantly boosted Kejriwal's and his party's proboosted

have sparked curiosity about

the party's political trajectory

In the recently formed INDIA coalition, a significant political alliance that aims to challenge the dominance of the BJP., the AAP. stands out as the only party other than Congress to rule more than one Štate. This alliance could pave the way for his party's expansion beyond Delhi and Punjab.

However, currently, AAP. will have a significant political The Aam Aadmi Party's rise to impact in only 20 constituen-



THE AAM AADMI PARTY IS NOT JUST A POLITICAL ENTITY. IT IS POISED TO FILL THE VOID LEFT BY **CONGRESS AND** TARGET POLITICALLY **BIPOLAR STATES** LIKE HIMACHAL PRADESH, HARYANA, RAJASTHAN

ence depends on his party's performance.

The AAP. currently holds one seat in the Lok Sabha and ten in the Upper House. The party has expanded its influence to other States and was granted national party status in April 2023.

The Aam Aadmi Party's rise to power in Indian politics is fascinating. Unlike the BJP. or the Left parties, it has no solid ideological stance. It has not relied on regional or socialist backgrounds like the AIADMK, DMK, Samajwadi Party, Biju Janata Dal, or Rashtriya Janata Dal. Instead, it has gained power by championing development and the freebie culture.

The AAP is now contesting elections in Delhi with the Congress party, while Punjab is contesting 13 seats independently. These alliances offer a promising outlook for Kejriwal's political journey. The Aam Aadmi Party is not just a political entity. It is poised to fill the void left by Congress and target politicalolar States like Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan

Modi has promised a "Modi ki guarantee," while Kejriwal

"freeing" Indian land from Chinese occupation if the I.N.D.I.A. bloc forms the Government at the Centre, attaining Statehood for Delhi, ensuring a 24/7 power supply and providing free education. These promises reflect Kejriwal's focus on national issues. The Delhi liquor policy case has become inconvenient for the AAP. and convenient for the BJP. as elections are underway. It raises questions like, is it the end of the road? Can the second rung of leaders like Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bhardwaj, Sandeep Pathak, Raghav Chadha and Atishi Run the party, or will Kejriwal, with his usual luck, return? Kejriwal is optimistic and hopes that luck will be on his side. This positive outlook has served him well so far. His popularity will rise if his party secures a respectable number of seats in the current Lok Sabha polls. Only the voters can decide and their deci-

has outlined a ten-point agen-

da. This agenda includes

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

sion will shape the future of

Kejriwai and the Aam Aadmi Party in Indian politics.

THE EDITOR

AND GUJARAT

The rise of online internships for students



Students are opting for online internships to gain practical experience, develop crucial skills and prepare themselves for the evolving job market

n today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, Lstudents are increasingly recognising the importance of proactive engagement in shaping their future careers. Embracing the adage of "building a door" to their professional aspirations, school students are turning to online internships as a means to gain valuable experiential learning opportunities and prepare themselves for the dynamic job market that awaits them upon graduation.

Online internships have witnessed a surge in relevance in recent years, offering school students an array of benefits that extend beyond traditional in-person placements. Flexibility and Accessibility: Unlike traditional internships with fixed schedules, online internships provide students with a flexible work environment tailored to accommodate their schedules. This flexibility allows them to optimise productivity according to their peak hours of concentration while balancing other commitments such as classes or extracurricular activities. Additionally, the absence of commute time associated

with virtual internships fur-



ity to dedicate time to their

Skill Development : Engaging in tasks aligned with their field of interest, interns acquire practical experience and hone essential competencies crucial for professional success. By demonstrating initiative and selfreliance in completing assigned projects remotely, interns showcase their readiness to thrive in diverse work environments. These experiences not only deepen their expertise but also bolster their

resumes, setting them apart in competitive job markets. Access to Talent Beyond Geographical Boundaries: Online internships offer employers access to a diverse pool of talent unrestricted by geographical boundaries. This expanded reach enriches organisations with diverse

perspectives, skills and cultur-

al insights, fostering innovation and collaboration within teams. Additionally, it prepares companies for the evolving dynamics of the modern workforce by developing remote work capabili-

Exploration of Career Paths: Online internships serve as a platform for students to explore different career paths and gain insight into various industries. This exploration phase allows students to clarify their interests, identify strengths and weaknesses and make informed decisions about their future career goals.

Networking Opportunities: Despite being remote, online internships provide students with networking opportunities that can be instrumental in their career development. Interacting with professionals within their chosen industry, connecting with fellow interns and building relationships with mentors and supervisors can lead to mentorship opportunities, job referrals and valuable insights into industry trends.

Innovative Learning Experiences: Through interactive projects, virtual meet-

ings and online training sessions, online internships offer innovative learning experiences that complement traditional classroom education. These immersive experiences bridge the gap between theory and practice, fostering critical thinking.

Cultural Exposure: Working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds exposes students to different perspectives, communication styles and work cultures, enriching their understanding of the global economy's interconnected-

Engaging in online internships significantly boosts students' resumes and bolsters their prospects for future employment. These experiences serve as tangible evidence of their initiative, adaptability and capacity to thrive in dynamic work environments, positioning them as desirable candidates poised for success in their chosen career paths. Thus, online internships not only enrich students' skill sets but also empower them to navigate the complexities of the modern job market.

(The author is the Founder, Zamit; views are personal)

MALIWAL CASE

Madam — Apropos the editorial, "An Intricate Puzzle," published on May 20. Wherein the Pioneer has truly asserted that the incident is likely to have ramifications beyond immediate political dynamics, potentially influencing voter perception and future elections. The cases booked under IPC Sections 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), 354D (stalking), filing the FIR under sections 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) and 509 (word, gesture or intent to insult) against Bibhav Kumar aide Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the attack on Kajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal reflect seriousness.

Picking up Bibhav Kumar from the official residence of the Chief Minister and seizing CCTV, DVR, mobile etc. can prove helpful in revealing the secrets of the crime. But it seems that as part of a conspiracy, Bibhav Kumar was hiding at Chief Minister Kejriwal's house and was engaged in destroying the evidence. Delhi Police should make every effort to collect crime data by using the latest digital technology and present concrete evidence before the court. So that the perpetrators of this serious crime can be punished as per the rule of the law.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

RISING LIFE EXPECTANCY

Madam — An individual's life span is dictated by a myriad of factors. According to the Global Burden of Disease(GBD) study, global life expectancy is expected to increase by 4.9 years in men and 4.2 years in women by the year 2050. From 73.6 in 2022, there may be a jump to 78.1 in 2050. This trend will tend to be more exemplified in nations with a history of very low life expectancy. It is no secret that nowadays people are more cautious about their health. While diseases and disorders have taught them lessons, mortality and morbidity around them have disciplined their lives. Past pandemics, in particular

Secularism over politics tion of religion from politics. This gave birth to



propos the news article, "Economic crisis takes a backseat in elections", published on May 20, this is my response. It is a pity that religion rather than economic issues take the stage in the election campaign for the ruling party at the Centre in our secular country. Earlier in feudalism, a king or a feudal lord used to favour his religion over other religions. History witnessed that such a practice spelt disaster on every occasion. The people felt the need for a complete separa-

as well as responsibility in them like never

An extended lifespan increases susceptibility to non-communicable diseases like cancer, diabetes and hypertension. As life expectancy in India is projected to rise, addressing behavioural and metabolic risks is crucial for healthy aging over the next two decades. Health outcomes can be significantly improved by efficiently addressing the risk factors. Furthermore, a safe environment and adequate vaccina-

tion can go a long way.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

HAPPINESS IS A SKILL

Madam — Apropos the feature article, "Connecting the Mind and Body," by Ravi Valluri, published on May 20, this is my response. Happiness is a skill that human beings must teach themselves. A lot of people spend so much time ruminating about the past or thinking about the future that they forget to enjoy the most beautiful gift they have received from God—the present moment. Our society is structured COVID-19, have instilled a sense of fear in a way that keeps reminding us of our

secularism. All modern progressive nations have embraced secularism after learning how painful it would be to deviate from its path. Mixing religion and politics destroys accountabil-

ity, enables corruption and favours one religion over others, undermining democracy. Politicians should be elected based on policy, not religion and churches should focus on spirituality, not politics. It divides the citizens and damages the unity and integrity of the country. It does not allow the policymakers to follow the progressive ideals of equality and fraternity. Rather, it attracts negative things such as discrimination, marginalisation, conflict and unrest. Some of our neighbouring countries have experienced the danger of not walking in the path of secularism. India must follow secularism and let religion be a personal matter between God and a person.

Sujit De | Kolkata

failures in the past and makes us anxious about our future. We need to consciously make efforts to silence our minds by incorporating daily practices into our daily

routines. Spending time in nature is one of the bestknown ways to reconnect with your inner self. Meditating for 20 - 30 minutes daily can also provide you with a treasure trove of peace. Journaling can help you manage your emotions and teach you to focus on the present moment. Expressing gratitude to loved ones for being a part of your lives also goes a long way in nurturing the relationships you have with peo-ple that eventually become a source of joy for you. Exercising daily is also a good way to take care of your health. Staying away from social media and all the unrealistic expectations it imposes on you is imperative. All these practices when done every day can help you augment your happiness levels and enjoy life to the fullest.

Charvi Kathuria | Delhi

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FIRST COLUMN

SPIRITUALITY CAN HELP US AVOID DEAD ENDS

Through spiritual purity, we can rise above limitations and obstacles



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

e all end in death, i.e. our material bodies must die at some time in future, but we should avoid a dead end also, i.e. that leads to something not so good. We, souls, will go on in new bodies, but the problem is in what bodies and where. Are we going to a place where there is perpetual unrest? There are many areas in the world, which are in perpetual turmoil. Place of birth is one problem. Then, in what bodies are we born? Even in human bodies, there can be many handicaps like deformities, genetic defects and surely not-so-good looks, personality, level of intelligence, etc. There is a world of difference between ourselves and our material bodies. We, souls, are journeying eternally in various bodies, but our bodies have limited lifespans only. This thought should be uppermost in our minds. We should try to make sure that we make progress and avoid our end in a worse situation, condition, form

Let us see how we can ensure it. We, souls, are parts of God. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 15.7) What does this mean? That we are very special, being parts of God. Imagine being the son of a very rich and cultured person. God is infinitely superior than any parent can be. God will always be favourable to us if we take His shelter because we have free will. In the case of parents, we receive shelter automatically, but in the case of God, it is a matter of choice. It shouldn't be too difficult to make this choice, but it is. Why? Taking shelter requires some basics. We must give up our egos; we need to do spiritual practices to qualify for God's attention. There is another big problem. Our lives are almost entirely controlled by our fate, which is what we have accumulated in our previous life/lives. One may question this premise. Yes, there is free will and liberty to do what we desire, feel or decide. But all these are controlled by our natures, which again are parts of our fate. What is the evidence? A person given to get angry readily continues to do so throughout his life, unless God intervenes on his or her behalf. And God wouldn't unless we take His shelter. Where does it leave us? In not a pleasant place. Life will go on almost automatically with not much improvement.



Are we doomed? We are not. God is very kind; He has left an opening for us; we just have to get started. We must have a desire. God has arranged to preach everywhere. If we bother to go and listen, we will be convinced. And the start is very simple. We just need to become better in whatever we do, not just in our work. In spiritual parlance, we must try to increase the mode of goodness in ourselves. Our whole being is made up of three modes, which are goodness, passion and darkness. They are in different percentages, with the mode of passion being predominant in most of us. It is no wonder that we are quite passionate about what we think, do, etc. Now we should try to be good in everything. For example, if we are habituated to eating foods, which are bitter, sour, salty, very hot, pungent, horse, etc. (17.9), we should choose tasty, not dry, not having too much liquid foods. (17.8) Similar improvements are required in what we speak, see, hear, etc. As purity increases, we will begin to get attracted to God and spiritual acts.

The next big decision is to control our egos. This is the biggest hindrance in taking shelter from God. Arjuna had a similar problem. His ego would not allow him to accept God's instructions. Lord Krishna had to warn him, "If you will not heed on account of the feeling of being the doer, you will perish." (18.58) Is this not the fate of almost all of us? Who can change fate? God can and only He can in a substantial way. There is no one to share one's tough times. The solution again suggests itself. Love God and you will be able to love others as well. You won't always look for faults in others. This attitude change will help in becoming friends with family members. The conclusion is: that God is the solution if we wish to avoid the dead ends of our lives. Will we take God's shelter? (The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Raisi's tragic demise clouds Iran's future



The enigmatic President of Iran breathed his last in a helicopter crash, leaving behind a legacy as complex as the country he governed



n the heart of the Middle East, where history and geopolitics are deeply intertwined, a towering figure met a tragic end, sending shockwaves across the globe. Ibrahim Raisi, the enigmatic President of Iran, breathed his last in a helicopter crash, leaving behind a legacy as complex as the region he governed. Raisi's rise to power was nothing short of remarkable. Born in 1960, he emerged from humble beginnings to become one of Iran's most influential figures. His journey began in the hallowed halls of Tehran's judiciary, where he earned a reputation for his unwavering commitment to Islamic principles and his uncompromising stance against corruption.

Raisi truly made his mark on the political stage. In June 2021, he ascended to the presidency, promising to usher in a new era of prosperity and stability for his beloved nation. His tenure was marked by bold foreign policies and ambitious domestic reforms, as he sought to solidify Iran's position as a regional powerhouse. At the heart of Raisi's vision was irans role as a champion of Shia Islam, a beacon of resistance against oppression and injustice. Under his leadership, Iran forged alliances with like - minded nations, offering support to movements and groups fighting for their rights across the Middle East.

However, amidst the triumphs and accolades, tragedy struck with devastating force. On a fateful day, as Raisi embarked on a routine journey to Azerbaijan, fate intervened. His helicopter plummeted from the sky, claiming his life and those of several others onboard. The crash sent shockwaves rippling through Iran and beyond, leaving a nation in mourning and the world reeling from the loss of a visionary leader.

As the dust settled and the wreckage was cleared, the full extent of Raisi's legacy came into focus. His death left a void in Iran's political landscape, one that would be difficult to fill. But beyond the borders of his homeland, Raisi's impact was felt far and wide. In the halls of power



RAISI WIELDED **IMMENSE** INFLUENCE. SHAPING IRAN'S DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES WITH A FIRM HAND. HIS PRESIDENCY WAS MARKED BY A SERIES OF INITIATIVES AIMED AT **STRENGTHENING** IRAN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND REDUCING **RELIANCE ON** FOREIGN POWERS

as a stalwart ally, a steadfast defender of Iran's interests on the global stage. Russia and Turkey had lent their support to the rescue efforts, a testament to the enduring bonds forged between nations in times of crisis.

Meanwhile, in distant New Delhi, Raisi's passing was met with a mixture of sorrow and reflection. India had enjoyed a burgeoning partnership with Iran under his leadership, particularly through collaborative efforts at the Chabahar Port. His absence would be keenly felt in the corridors of diplomacy, where his influence had helped shape the course of history. But perhaps most intriguing were the whispers of conspiracy surrounding Raisi's untimely demise. Some speculated that external forces were at play, seeking to destabilise Iran and undermine its leadership. Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, was mentioned in hushed iones, its snadowy nand suspected of orchestrating the tragedy.
As the world mourned the loss of Ibrahim Raisi, it also grappled with the uncertainty of what lay ahead. His death cast a pall of uncertainty over Iran's future, raising questions about the country's leadership and its place on the global stage. But amidst the darkness, there remained a glimmer of hope, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. For in the legacy of Ibrahim Raisi, there lay the seeds of inspiration, a reminder that even in the face of tragedy, the indomitable spirit of humanity endures, ready to rise again, stronger and more determined than ever before.

Raisi's sudden demise not only revealed the depth of his ultraconservative beliefs but also showcased his unwavering commitment to populism, positioning him as a champion of the people

and the right-hand man of Ayatollah Khamenei. As the Ayatollah's trusted confidant, Raisi wielded immense influence, shaping Iran's domestic and foreign policies with a firm hand. His presidency was marked by a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening Iran's economic independence and reducing reliance on foreign powers. He focused on bolstering the country's industrial base, improving infrastructure and promoting technological

innovation. On the international front, Raisi pursued a policy of strategic partnerships, particularly with Russia and China. These alliances were seen as a counterbalance to Western influence and as a means of securing economic and military support. Raisi's administration also prioritised the expansion of Iran's influence in regional conflicts, providing support to allied groups in Lebanon, Syria and remen. His efforts to position Iran as a regional leader were often viewed through the lens of resistance against Western hege-

Despite his achievements, Raisi's tenure was not without controversy. His hardline stance on social and political issues drew criticism from both domestic and international observers. Human rights organisations frequently condemned his administration for its treatment of political dissidents and minority groups. The suppression of protests and the enforcement of strict social codes were seen as hallmarks of his governance.

Raisi's death left a nation at a crossroads. The mourning period was marked by both grief and reflection, as Iranians contemplated the future of their country without the man who had steered it through turbulent times. The

question of succession loomed large, with potential candidates vying for the position of leadership. The uncertainty surrounding Iran's political future was palpable, with analysts speculating on the potential shifts in policy and power dynamics.

In the international arena, Raisi's

passing was met with a range of reactions. Allies expressed their condolences and reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining strong ties with Iran. In contrast, adversaries viewed his death as an opportunity to reassess their strategies towards the country. The geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, already fraught with complexity, faced the prospect of further upheaval. Despite the challenges, there was a sense of resilience among the Iranian populace. The nation's history of overcoming adversity served as a reminder of its enduring strength. Raisi's legacy, with its blend of conservatism, populism and strategic acumen, would continue to influence the country's trajectory. His vision of an Iran that stands firm against external pressures and champions the cause of Shia Islam would remain a guiding principle for future leaders. As the world continued to navigate the aftermath of Raisi's death, one thing was clear: his impact on Iran and the broader Middle East would be felt for years to come. The region, shaped by his policies and leadership, would continue to evolve, reflecting the enduring legacy of a man whose life and career were as multifaceted as the history of the land he loved. In the end, Íbrahim Raisi's story was a testament to the complexities of leadership in a region where past and present are forever intertwined.

(The writer is an associate professor, views are personal)

Rajasthan healthcare challenges despite Government efforts

The Government's health programmes fail to sufficiently support rural women and girls affected by anaemia, a significant public health concern

n Rajasthan, the healthcare system is facing significant challenges, particularly in rural areas. Despite numerous Government initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access and quality, the benefits of these programs are not reaching their intended targets.

This issue is especially pronounced among women and adolescent girls suffering from anaemia. While the State Government has enacted the Right to Health Act and conducts monthly campaigns to combat anaemia, these efforts have yet to bring about substantial improvements in the health sector across rural Rajasthan.An example of this can be seen in the village of Manoharpura located just four kilometres



from the heritage city of Udaipur. This village falls under the Badgaon Panchayat and has a population of around one thousand.

Predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Tribes, the village has a low level of education, which impacts the awareness of its residents. Despite its proximity to the district headquarters, Manoharpura lags significantly in the health sector. Many families in the village lack even basic identification documents, which prevents them from accessing healthcare services.

The reason for not having documents is that most children in the village were born at home rather than in hospitals, resulting in the absence of birth certificates and Aadhar cards. For young girls



and women, the State Government has launched the 'I Am Shakti Udaan Yojana.' This scheme aims to empower economically weaker women and girls and the goal is to include about 2.8

million women and adolescents in this benefit by 2024. As part of this scheme, menstruating girls and women aged 11 to 45 receive sanitary pads. However, most adolescent girls and women miss

out on this benefit. Due to both a lack of awareness and poverty, many girls still use dirty clothes during menstruation instead of buying pads. Additionally, about half of the adolescent girls and women in the village suffer from anaemia, despite the State Government's monthly Shakti Diwas events aimed at eradicating anaemia in Rajasthan.It is important to note that various activities are organised under this campaign to reduce anaemia rates among children, women and adolescents. 'Shakti Diwas' events are held at Anganwadi centres, Government schools, health and wellness centres, sub-health centres, primary health centres, CHCs, dispensaries and sub-district and district hospitals. These department's monthly review

events include anaemia screenings, haemoglobin tests and treatment, distribution of iron tablets and activities to raise awareness and promote behaviour change regarding anaemia.

On 'Shakti Diwas,' targeted activities are conducted for children aged 6 months to 59 months, out-of-school children aged 5 to 9 years, adolescents aged 10 to 19 years and married women aged 20 to 24 years. Efforts are also made to combat anaemia in pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers.

However, this issue extends beyond Manoharpura village to the entire Udaipur district, where ineffective implementation has affected district rankings. During the health

meeting last November, the CEO Kirti Rathore expressed dissatisfaction with the situation. She emphasised the urgent need to ensure that benefits reach all children, adolescents and women and to strictly enforce measures to make the district anaemia-

These shortcomings reveal that Manoharpura residents are still not receiving full healthcare benefits and the village has not met its health targets. Addressing this requires both administrative action and increased community awareness, involving as many families as possible.

(The writer is a social worker from Grameen Awam Samajik Vikas Sansthan, Ajmer; views are personal. Charkha Features)

Mourners begin days of funerals for Iran's pres killed in chopper crash

Mourners in black began gathering Tuesday for days of funerals and processions for Iran's late president, foreign minister and others killed in a helicopter crash, a government-led series of ceremonies aimed at both honoring the dead and projecting strength in an unsettled Middle East.

For Iran's Shiite theocracy, mass demonstrations have been crucial since millions thronged the streets of Tehran to welcome Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979 during the Islamic Revolution, and also attended his funeral 10 years later. An estimated 1 million turned out in 2020 for processions for the late Revolutionary Guard Gen Qassem Soleimani, who was slain in a US drone strike in

Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Hossein Amirabdollahian and others draw the same crowd remains in question, particularly as Raisi died in a helicopter crash, won his office in the lowestturnout presidential election in the country's history and

presided over sweeping crack-

downs on all dissent. Prosecutors already have warned people over showing any public signs of celebrating his death and a heavy security force presence has been seen on the streets of Tehran since the crash. But Raisi, 63, had been discussed as a possible successor for Iran's supreme leader, the 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. His death now throws that selection into question, particularly as there is no heir-apparent cleric for the presidency ahead

Baghdad. Whether President of planned June 28 elections. "Raisi's death comes at a moment when the Islamist regime is consolidated," wrote Alex Vatanka, an Iran expert at the Middle East Institute. "In short, there will be no power vacuum in Tehran; nonetheless, post-Khamenei Iran suddenly looks far less predictable than it did just a few days ago. A procession Tuesday morning led by a semitruck carrying the caskets of the dead slowly moved through the narrow streets of downtown Tabriz, the closest major city near the site of the crash Sunday. Thousands in black slowly walked beside the coffins, some throwing flowers up to them as an emcee wept through a loudspeaker for men he described as martyrs.

On Wednesday, a funeral presided over by Khamenei will then turn into a procession



Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Movahedi Kermani arrives to attend the first session o Assembly of Experts after an election that decided the new assembly, in Tehran, Iran, Tuesday. Under Iranian constitution the 86-member all-cleric assembly has the right to monitor the performance of supreme leader, and choosing or dismissing him.

as well. The caskets later Tugendhat echoed that in his arrived in Tehran to an honor guard at the airport. They will go on to the holy Shiite semi-nary city of Qom before returning to the Iranian capi-It remains unclear what inter-

national presence that funeral will draw, as Raisi faced US sanctions for his part in mass executions in 1988 and for abuses targeting protesters and dissidents while leading the country's judiciary. Iran under Raisi also shipped bomb-carrying drones to Russia to be used in its war on Ukraine. "I don't feel comfortable sending condolences while Iran is sending drones that are used against civilians in Ukraine,"

Gabrielius Minister Landsbergis on the social platform X. United Kingdom Security Minister Tom

wrote Lithuanian Foreign

own message on X: "President Raisi's regime has murdered thousands at home, and target-ed people here in Britain and across Europe. I will not mourn him.

On Thursday, Raisi's hometown of Birjand will see a procession, followed by a funeral and burial at the Imam Reza shrine in the holy city of Mashhad, the only imam of the Shiite's faith buried in Iran. That shrine has long been a center for pilgrims and sees millions visit each year. Over the centuries, its grounds have served as the final burial site for heroes in Persian history. It's an incredibly high, rare honor in the faith.

Iranian President Mohammad-Ali Rajai, the only other president to die in office when he was killed in a 1981 bombing, days of mourning, encouraging people to attend the public mourning sessions. Typically, government employees and schoolchildren attend such events en masse, while others take part out of patriotism, curiosity or to witness historic events. Across Iran, its rural population often more closely embraces the Shiite faith and the government. However, Tehran has long held a far different view of Raisi and his government's policies as mass protests have roiled the capital for years. The most recent involved the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini, a woman detained over her allegedly loose headscarf, or hijab. The monthslong security crack-down that followed the demonstrations killed more than 500 people and saw over 22.000 detained.

Iran's theocracy declared five

Israel faces fallout as allies back warrant requests

I srael sought Tuesday to contain the fallout from a request by the chief prosecutor of the world's top war crimes court for arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders, a move supported by three European countries, including key ally France.

Belgium, Slovenia and France each said Monday they backed the decision by International Criminal Court prosecutor Karim Khan, who accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, and three Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh — of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and

While no one faces imminent arrest, the announcement deepens Israel's global isolation at a time when it is facing

Police use water cannon to disperse demonstrators blocking a road during a protest against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, and calling for the release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas militant group, outside the Knesset, Israel's parliament in Jerusalem on Monday

growing criticism from even its closest allies over the war in sions in the West's approach to Gaza. Support for the warrants from three European Union

countries also exposes divi-

Israel Israeli Foreign Minister Israel

Katz headed to France on Tuesday in response, and his meetings there could set the tone for how countries navigate the warrants — if they are eventually issued — and whether they could pose a threat to Israeli leaders.

Israel still has the support of its top ally, the United States, as well as other Western countries that spoke out against the decision. But if the warrants are issued, they could complicate international travel for Netanyahu and Gallant, even if they do not face any immediate risk of prosecution because Israel itself is not a member of the court

As Israeli leaders came to grips with the prosecutor's decision, violence continued in the region, with an Israeli raid in the occupied West Bank killing at least seven Palestinians including a local doctor, according to Palestinian health

Universities, student groups lobby PM Sunak to protect post-study visa offer

PTI LONDON

Universities and student groups on Tuesday urgently lobbied British Prime Minister Ŕishi Sunak to safeguard the country's post-study visa offer, which has been dominated by Indians to gain work experience for around two years at the end of their university degree. Amid reports that Sunak is considering either restricting or ending the Graduate Route to curtail soaring migration statistics ahead of a general election, a group of nearly 30 university vice-chancellors and the National Indian Students and Alumni Association (NISAU) UK have issued detailed letters of appeal to 10 Downing Street. They list a series of factors in favour of keeping the Graduate visa scheme unchanged, including the benefits that international students bring to the UK economy in a competitive global higher education marketplace. 'Modelling by consultancy

London Economics shows that

a single cohort has a net economic benefit of GBP 37 billion to the UK economy; as well as through the soft power that Britain's international graduates generate for the country over time, including through furthering ties of trade and diplomacy," reads the NISAU UK letter

addressed to Sunak. "Indeed, 70 per cent of Indian students have told us that the ability to gain meaningful work experience is a critical element in their decision to choose between competing international destinations, of which the UK is one... the Graduate Route allows the opportunity to gain this work experience for a temporary period. It is nonextendable and does not count towards permanent settlement. This means that neither students nor Graduate visa holders should be considered 'immigrants' in the context of the longterm picture of migration," it

Their appeal comes a week after the influential Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) advised the government to let the scheme continue as it found no abuse of this post-study work offer. It also confirmed that Indians topped its tally, accounting for 89,200 visas between 2021 and 2023, or 42 per cent of the overall grants, and were likely to be "most affected by any restriction on the Graduate Route". In their letter to Sunak, universities in the north of England - from Sunderland to Sheffield, Leeds to Lancaster, Liverpool to Teesside, Bradford to Huddersfield, and York to Newcastle - said they will all be harmed by the removal or reduction of this visa as it is an "intrinsic part of the educational offer that has made the UK so attractive to brilliant students from all around the world".

'The Graduate Visa Route is regarded by students in key markets like India as an integral part of their educational experience. The MAC review made clear that the removal of this route would make the UK less attractive and thus would cause considerable financial detriment to universities around the country," reads their joint letter.

"International student tuition fee income has long cross-subsidised underfunded research and has increasingly become critical to cross-subsidise the teaching of UK undergraduate students because of the frozen tuition fee. Universities cannot continue to absorb the costs of teaching UK undergraduates without some form of alternative funding source," they caution. On top of their visa fees, international students who find work and start businesses contribute billions of pounds in income tax national insurance and VAT annually. The university chiefs point out that they are also usually net contributors to the National Health Service (NHS) through the NHS surcharge. The Russell Group of the UK's leading universities issued its appeal over the weekend, with CEO Tim Bradshaw warning that there has already been a 10 per cent decline in internation-

al applications for post-graduate

courses starting this September

in the wake of the clampdown

on students being able to bring

dependant family members.

Israeli officials seize AP equipments

Jerusalem (AP): Israeli officials seized a camera and broadcasting equipment belonging to The Associated Press in southern Israel on Tuesday, accusing the news organisation of violat-

The Qatari satellite channel is among thousands of clients that receive live video feeds from the AP and other news organisations. The denounced the move.

"The Associated Press decries in the strongest terms the actions of the Israeli government to shut down our longstanding live feed showing a view into Gaza and seize AP equipment," said Lauren Easton, vice president of corporate communications at the AP. "The shutdown was not based on the content of the feed but rather an abusive use by the Israeli government of the country's new foreign broadcaster law. We urge the Israeli author ities to return our equipment and enable us to reinstate our live feed immediately so we can continue to provide this impor tant visual journalism to thousands of media outlets around the world.

Officials from Communications Ministry arrived at the AP location in the southern town of Sderot on Tuesday afternoon and seized the equipment. They handed the AP a piece of paper, signed by Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi, alleging it was violating the country's new foreign broadcaster law.

Shortly before the equipment was seized, it was broadcasting a general view of northern Gaza. The AP complies with Israel's military censorship rules, which prohibit broadcasts of details like troops movements that could endan ger soldiers. The live shot has generally shown smoke rising over the territory. The seizure followed a verbal

order Thursday to cease the live transmission which the news organisation refused to

Israeli officials used the new law to close down the offices of the Qatar-based broadcaster on May 5 and confiscated of its equipment, banned the channel's broadcasts, and blocked on its websites.

US Police break up pro-Palestinian camp at Michigan University

broke up a pro-Palestinian with ties to Israel. But the uniencampment Tuesday at the versity insists it has no direct University of Michigan, less investments and less than \$15 than a week after demonstra- million placed with funds that tors showed up at the home of might include companies in body bags on her lawn.

Video posted online by Detroit-area TV stations showed police moving people away from the camp on the Diag, a common site for campus protests. The encampment had been set up in late April near the end of the school year. President Santa Ono said in a statement that the encampment had become a threat to safety, with overloaded power sources and open flames. Organisers had refused to comply with requests to make changes following an inspection by a fire marshal, he said. "The disregard for safety directives was only the latest in a series of troubling events," Ono said. Protesters have demanded that the school's endowment

Ann Arbor (US) (AP): Police stop investing in companies the total endowment.

> There's nothing to talk about. That issue is settled," Sarah Hubbard, chair of the Board of Regents, said last week.

A group of 30 protesters showed up at her house before dawn last week and placed stuffed, red-stained sheets on her lawn to resemble body bags. They banged a drum and chanted slogans over a bullhorn.

Masked protesters also posted demands at the doors of other board members

This conduct is where our failure to address antisemitism leads literally — literally — to the front door of my home," Mark member Bernstein, a Detroit-area lawyer, said at a board meeting

Greek judge dismisses case against nine in shipwreck

AP ■ KAMALATA

Greek judge dismissed Acharges against nine Egyptian men accused of causing a shipwreck that killed hundreds of migrants last year the European Union's border protection and asylum operations, after a prosecutor told the court Greece lacked jurisdic-

Shortly after the trial opened in the southern Greek city of Kalamata, public prosecutor Ekaterini Tsironi recommended that the charges be dismissed, saying that Greek jurisdiction could be established because the overcrowded trawler sank outside Greek territorial waters. More than 500 people are believed to have gone down with the fishing trawler, which had been travelling from Libya to Italy. Following the sinking, 104 people were rescued — mostly migrants from Syria, Pakistan and Egypt — and 82

hodies were recovered. Supporters clapped and cheered as the judge announced the dismissal of a case that had faced criticism from international human rights groups, who argued that was compromised because they faced judgment while an investigation into the Greek coast guard's rescue attempt is still under way.

Earlier, a small group of protesters clashed with riot police outside the courthouse. There were no reports of serious injuries but two people were detained. Officers from the special police forces maintained order in the courtroom. The defendants, most in their 20s, faced up to life in prison if convicted on multiple criminal charges over the sinking of the "Adriana" fishing trawler on June 14 last year off the southern coast of Greece.

Defence lawyer Spyros Pantazis had earlier asked the court to declare itself incompetent to try

the case, arguing that the sink ing occurred outside Greek territorial waters.

The court should not be turned into an international punisher," Pantazis told the panel of three judges. defendants through an inter-

preter. The accused said their

intention was to travel to Italy.

not Greece, and several declared their innocence. Kontaratou acknowledged that there "were no Greeks on board, it was not under a Greek flag and all the documents refer to the (vessel being)

47 nautical miles away." United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres last year described the shipwreck as 'horrific." The sinking renewed pressure on European govern-ments to protect the lives of migrants and asylum seekers trying to reach the continent, as the number of people traveling illegally across the

Mediterranean continues to

Macron makes surprise trip to New Caledonia Paris (AP): French President

Emmanuel Macron is making a surprise trip to riot-hit New Caledonia, the French Pacific territory that has been gripped by days of deadly unrest and where indigenous people have long sought independence. segregation policies and wide-

"He will go there tonight," gov-Thevenot said after a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday where the president said he'd decided to make the more than 33,000kilometre (20,000-mile) round trip himself to the archipelago east of Australia.

Six people have been killed, including two gendarmes, and hundreds of others injured in New Caledonia amid armed clashes, looting and arson, raising new questions about Macron's handling of France's colonial legacy. There have been decades of tensions between indigenous Kanaks who seek independence for the archipelago of 270,000 people, and descendants of colonisers who want to remain part of France. The unrest erupted May 13 as the French legislature in Paris debated amending the French Constitution to make changes to New Caledonia voter lists. Opponents fear the measure will benefit pro-France politicians in New Caledonia and further marginalise Kanaks who once suffered from strict

The violence is the most severe to shake New Caledonia since the 1980s, when France also imposed emergency measures on the island that became French in 1853 under Emperor Napoleon III.

Paris last Wednesday declared a 12-day minimum state of emergency on the island and rushed in 1,000 reinforcements to bolster security forces that lost control of parts of the cap-

ital, Nouméa 'Faced with the outbreak of violence, the priority is the return of order to allow dialogue to resume in New Caledonia," Thevenot, the government spokeswoman, said. We are clear: Much remains to be done before the return to

Congo names third American in foiled coup plot

AP KINSHASA

ongo's army spokesman on Tuesday released the name of the third American involved in a foiled coup plot in Kinshasa, while family members in Utah gathered to mourn Christian Malanga, the eccentric leader of the brazen and illfated attack targeting the presidential palace over the weekend. Brig Gen Sylvain Ekenge told The Associated Press the third American was Taylor Thomson. It wasn't immediately clear whether Thomson was among those arrested or killed on Sunday morning following the attack on the palace and another on the residence of a close ally of President Felix Tshisekedi.

Malanga, described as a naturalized American by Ekenge, was killed in a shootout at the palace after resisting arrest. The State Department said it could not confirm Malanga was a US citizen. The other two

Americans involved were a convicted marijuana trafficker and Malanga's 21-year-old son, Marcel. Authorities were still trying to untangle how the young man went from playing high school football in Utah to allegedly trying to unseat the leader of one of Africa's largest countries.

'My son is innocent," his mother, Brittney Sawyer, wrote in an email to The Associated Press on Monday, declining to elab-

Sawyer had regularly posted proud family photos on social media, including one in December showing Marcel, a young sister and a toddler hugging in matching Christmas pajamas. In 2020, she posted photos of Marcel lifting weights and dancing during COVID lockdown.

In a Facebook post early

boy following his father. I'm so

tired of all the videos being posted all over and being sent to me. God will take care of you people!' One video that circulated on social media over the weekend

showed her son alongside a bloodied white man, whose identity was unclear, both covered in dust and surrounded by Congolese soldiers. Marcel has his hands raised and a frightened look on his face.

On Monday, at the West Jordan home of Malanga's mother, Chantal Malanga, relatives gathered to mourn the deceased leader. A steady flow of friends dropped by with plates of food and to offer condolences.

Sydney, a cousin of Christian Malanga's who answered the door, told AP the family was feeling "heartbroken" and "so raw" after learning of his death. Monday, Sawyer angrily wrote They were discussing plans for a possible funeral in Utah, that her son had followed his she said, without giving further father. "This was an innocent

Slovak Parl votes to condemn political violence

Bratislava (AP): Slovakia's Parliament voted unanimously on Tuesday to condemn politically motivated violence following an assassination attempt on Prime Minister Robert Fico, who is recovering from multiple wounds from last week's shooting, hospital officials said.

Fico "remains conscious and communicative" and "further actions are being taken to improve his health condition", said the hospital treating him in the central city of Banská Bystrica.

The hospital says that Fico, 59, is no longer in life-threatening condition after being shot in the abdomen as he greeted supporters last Wednesday in the town of Handlova, about 140 km (85 miles) northeast of the capital, Bratislava.

Fico underwent five-hour surgery immediately after the shooting, followed by another two-hour operation last

Haiti's main airport reopens

AP PORT-AU-PRINCE

rise every year.

Haiti's main international airport reopened Monday for the first time in nearly three months after relentless gang violence forced authorities to close it. The reopening of the Toussaint-Louverture airport in the capital of Port-au-Prince is expected to help ease a critical shortage of medications and other basic supplies. The country's main seaport remains badly affected. Gangs control

80% of the capital. U.S.-based airlines are not expected to start using the airport until late May or early June.

The first commercial passenger flight since March left for Miami nearly two hours behind schedule, with sweating passengers complaining to local carrier Sunrise Airways about the lack of air conditioning until

takeoff. Before Monday, the sole airport operating in Haiti was located in the north coastal city of Cap-Haitien. It was out of reach for many seeking to flee the country, with roads leading from



Port-au-Prince controlled by gangs that have opened fire on cars and buses passing through. The U.S. government had evacuated hundreds of citizens by helicopter out of a hilly neighborhood in Port-au-Prince, as did nonprofit organizations, as gangs laid siege to parts of the capital.

The attacks began on Feb. 29, with gunmen seizing control of police stations, opening fire on the Port-au-Prince airport and storming Haiti's two biggest prisons, freeing more than 4.000 inmates.

Gangs since then have directed their attacks on previously

More than 2,500 people have been killed or injured in Haiti from January to March, a more than 50% increase compared to the same period last year, according to the United Nations. At the Couronne Bar near the sole airport gate operating on

ing thousands homeless.

Monday, 43-year-old manager Klav-Dja Raphael welcomed her first clients. But her smile belied her fear.

"We are scared because they can still attack us here," she said. "We must come in. It's our job, but we're afraid."

British man dies, passengers hurt in Singapore airlines turbulence

An elderly British man died and more than two dozen passengers were injured when a Singapore Airlines flight from London was struck by severe turbulence and plunged 6,000 feet in the span of some a few minutes Tuesday over the Indian Ocean.

The flight was then diverted and landed in stormy weather in Bangkok. Authorities said the British man may have suffered a heart attack, though that has not been confirmed. His name was not immediately released.

The Boeing 777-300ER flight from London's Heathrow airport to Singapore, with 211 passengers and 18 crew members aboard, landed at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport at 3:45 pm local time, the airline said in a Facebook post. Emergency medical crews rushed to help the passengers. Videos posted on the LINE messaging platform by Suvarnabhumi Airport showed a line of ambulances streaming to the

In a statement posted on Facebook, Singapore Airlines said that as of four hours after the emergency landing, 18 people remained hospitalized while another 12 were treated on outpatient basis. 'The remaining passengers and crew are being examined and given treatment, where necessary," at the airport, it

Airports of Thailand group said the lightly injured and non-injured passengers are being assisted at a specially assigned location inside the terminal Suvarnabhumi Airport.

Thailand's Transport Minister Suriya Jungrungruangkit said in a statement that Singapore would dispatch another plane later Tuesday night to trans-

port the lightly injured and non-injured passengers to the city-state's Changi airport. He said that plane was expected to arrive in Bangkok at 9:45 pm. Kittipong Kittikachorn, general manager of Suvarnabhumi Airport, told

a news conference on Tuesday night that the British man was 73 years old and appeared to have suffered a heart attack. Tracking data captured by FlightRadar24 and analysed

by The Associated Press show the Singapore Airlines flight SQ321 cruising at an altitude of 37,000 feet (11,300 metres). Just after 0800 GMT, the Boeing 777-300ER suddenly and sharply plummets to 31,000 feet (9,400 metres) over the span of some three minutes, the data shows.

He said his ministry and Singapore's Foreign Ministry, as well as the country's Civil Aviation Authority and Changi Airport officials, along with airline staff, "are providing support to the The aircraft then stayed at 31,000 feet (9,400 metres) for under 10 minutes before providing support to the diverting and landing in Bangkok less than half an affected passengers and their

Amnesty chief criticises military trial of civilians in Pakistan

Military courts in Pakistan should not try more than 100 people for their alleged role in attacks on army installations during the riots that followed former premier Imran Khan's arrest on May 9 last year, Amnesty International chief has said, urging the govern-ment to uphold its international obligations.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights clearly state that civilians should not be tried by military courts, Amnesty International's Secretary General Dr Agnes Callamard said.

The Amnesty chief, who is on her first regional visit to South Asia, was on Tuesday quoted by Dawn News as saying that although military trials for civilians are a "no-no" under international law, "sadly it has happened throughout Pakistan's political history... [and] is not a novelty".

Pak court rejects petition to disqualify Imran over election nomination allegations

Islamabad (PTI): A Pakistani court on Tuesday rejected a petition seeking jailed for-contesting the 2018 general mer prime minister Imran Khan's disqualification in a case in which he allegedly pro-vided incorrect information while submitting his nomina-tion papers for the general tion papers for the general elections held in 2018.

The petition filed by an individual, Mohammad Sajid, had alleged that the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder had not disclosed his alleged daughter -

Callamard, emphasising the principles of transparency, due process and judicial independence, urged Pakistan to uphold its international obligations and safeguard constitutional guarantees ensuring the elections, the Geo News reported.

Khan's PTI party won the 2018 general elections and the former cricketer-turnedpolitician served as the prime minister of Pakistan from August 2018 to April 2022. Sajid alleged that Khan provided incorrect information while submitting his nomination papers for the general elections held in 2018.

right to a fair trial. The use of military courts is threatening the constitutionality of what's happening right now," she said.

Regarding the ban on X (formerly Twitter) in Pakistan,

Callamard said Amnesty was quite alarmed by the shrinking space for freedom of expression

in the country.
Calling the ban "disproportionate, unnecessary and against international law", Callamard said it was particularly bad for individuals unable to access Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). "Everything is being targeted, the means of expression and the people who are expressing themselves. This

includes journalists." "The space for free speech in Pakistan is shrinking," Callamard said, noting that criticism of state institutions did not constitute a crime under international law.

"Pakistan should do the oppo site of what it is doing right now," she said. Her statement came amidst the decision by Pakistan to conduct the trial of more than 100 civilians for their alleged role in attacks on army installations during the riots that followed jailed former premier Imran Khan's arrest on

Germany's foreign minister visits Kyiv

Germany's foreign minister arried in Kyiv on Tuesday in the latest public display of support for Ukraine by its Western partners, although deliveries of promised weapons and ammunition from NATO countries like Germany have been slow and have left Ukraine vulnerable to a recent Russian push along parts of the front line Annalena Baerbock renewed

Berlin's calls for partners to send more air defense systems, as Russia pounds Ukraine with missiles, glide bombs and rockets. Germany is the second-biggest supplier of military aid to Ukraine after the United States. Ukraine's depleted troops are trying to hold off a fierce Russian offensive along the eastern border in one of the most critical phases of the war, which is stretching into its third year. Germany recently pledged a third US-made Patriot battery for Ukraine, but Kyiv officials say they are still facing an alarming shortfall of air defenses against the Russian onslaught. The Kremlin's forces have used their advantage in the skies to debilitate Ukraine's power grid, hoping to sap Ukrainian morale



Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock speaks to Ukrainian Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko during official visit to a thermal power plant which was destroyed by a Russian rocket attack in Ukraine, Tuesday.

and disrupt its defense industry. Baerbock, accompanied by Ukrainian Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko, toured a thermal power plant in central Ukraine that was heavily damaged on April 11. In the plant's scorched interior, workers of Centrenergo, a state company that operates the plant, were still scooping up rubble several weeks after it was hit.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the Kremlin's forces are still focusing their efforts on the eastern Donetsk province and northeastern Kharkiv region, where explosive-laden Russian glide bombs are wreaking destruction on mil-

itary and civilian areas. "This brings us back again and again to the need for air defense for additional defense systems that could significantly mitigate the difficulties for our warriors and the threat to our cities and communities," Zelenskyy said late Monday on social media. Zelenskyy claimed Ukraine's forces are still in control of the

in turbulence happened as

the flight was over the

that time, an international emergency signal. "Singapore Airlines offers its deepest

condolences to the family of the deceased," the airline said. "We are working with

the local authorities in

Thailand to provide the nec-

essary medical assistance,

and sending a team to Bangkok to provide any addi-

Singapore Transport Minister

Chee Hong Tat also extend-

ed condolences on his

tional assistance needed."

Facebook page.

Sea, Myanmar. The aircraft sent a "squawk code" of 7700 at

Andaman

contested areas, though Russia says it has captured a series of border villages. It was not possible to independently verify either side's battlefield claims. Baerbock had planned to visit Kharkiv on Tuesday but the trip had to be called off for security reasons, German news agency dpa reported. Almost 11,000 people have been evacuated from Kharkiv

border areas since Russia launched its offensive actions there on May 10. A Russian overnight drone attack hit transport infrastructure in Kharkiv city, the regional capital, damaging over 25 trucks, buses, and other vehicles, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Tuesday.

Ukraine's general staff said the frequency of Russian attacks in

Seven people were injured, he

Kharkiv slowed on Monday, though fighting continued. Russian troops are also conducting reconnaissance and sabotage raids in Ukraine's northern Sumy and Chernihiv regions, shelling border settlements and laying more minefields, according to Dmytro Lykhovii, Ukraine's general staff spokesman. The front line is some 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) long. Baerbock was due to meet with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba in Kyiv. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has been resisting appeals from Ukrainian officials to provide Taurus missiles, which are equipped with stealth technology and have a range of up to 500 kilometers (300 miles).

The German- and Swedish-made missiles would be able to reach targets deep in Russia from Ukrainian soil. But Berlin has balked at that prospect, saying that sending the missiles would bring a risk of it becoming directly involved in the war.

The restriction on not allowing Ukraine to fire at Russia has denied Kviv the ability to strike at Russian troops and equipment massing for attacks on the other side of the border, a Washingtonbased think tank said.

4.4 magnitude quake hits Italy, prisoners evacuated

Awomen's prison near Naples was evacuated as a precaution Tuesday following a 4.4 magnitude quake with an epicentre at an active volcano west of the southern Italian port city that forced hundreds of residents to sleep in tents or cars. No injuries and only minor damage was reported following the Monday evening temblor. The quake was the strongest in recorded history around the Phlegraean Fields, a sprawling area of ancient volcanic centres near the Tyrrhenian Sea in a zone that encompasses western neighbourhoods of Naples and its suburbs, said Giuseppe De Natale, a volcanologist of Italy's INGV National Geophysics and Volcanology Centre.

During the last major event in 1984, 40,000 residents were evacuated during a period of intense seismic activity as a precaution against a feared eruption that did not occur. Some 140 inmates at a women's

prison in the Pozzuoli suburb were evacuated while officials



A dozen apartment buildings also were evacuated for structural checks, displacing about 40 families, RAI state TV reported.

Some 150 smaller tremors overnight kept the population on edge. At least 500 people slept in tent cities erected by the civil protection agency, while others stayed in cars. Major traffic jams were reported as people tried to flee the area. The area around the Phlegraean Fields is both seismically and volcanically active.

The surface has been pushed up 1.3 metres since 2006, which is higher than prior to the last major event in 1984, but De Natale emphasised it was impossible to predict when an eruption or stronger quake might occur.

At least 500,000 people live in the zone most at risk should the volcano erupt, and the INGV is calling for a governmental plan to ensure that structures can withstand a quake of at least a

Vatican makes fresh overture to China, reaffirms that Catholic Church is no threat to sovereignty

AP MOSCOW

The Vatican made another big overture to China on Tuesday, reaffirming it poses no threat to Beijing's sovereignty and admitting that Catholic Western missionaries had made "errors" in past centuries in their zeal to convert the Chinese faithful.

The Vatican hosted the head of China's bishops conference to an unprecedented, high-level commemoration of a landmark 1924 meeting that affirmed the need for foreign missionaries in China to give way to local leaders of the Catholic Church. The presence of Shanghai Bishop Joseph Shen Bin alongside the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, at the Pontifical Urbaniana University was in itself noteworthy. It marked the first time in memory that a mainland bishop has been allowed by Beijing to participate in a public Vatican event



as the keynote speaker. It was also significant given the controversy over Shen's 2023 appointment. Pope Francis in July was forced to recognize China's unilateral appointment of Shen as bishop of Shanghai. The appointment seemingly violated the Holy See's 2018 accord with Beijing over bishop appointments. Francis

video message in which he made no mention of recent troubles but instead pointed to the 1924 meeting in Shanghai as a turning point for Vatican-China relations. The first and only Chinese church council, he said, recognised that the church in China must "increasingly have a Chinese face".

"But the Council of opened the conference with a Shanghai did not only serve to

forget the erroneous approach es that had prevailed in previous times," Francis said. "The participants of the first Chinese Council looked to the future And their future is our present."

It was a reference to the French, Italian and other Western missionary religious orders that evangelised China over the centuries but refused to cede leadership authority to local Chinese clergy. Their atti-tudes helped fuel the anti-Western and anti-Christian sentiment behind the Boxer Rebellion, which aimed to rid China of foreign influences.

The Vatican has been working for years to try to improve relations with China that were officially severed over seven decades ago when the Communists came to power. The aim is to unite the country's estimated 12 million Catholics, who were divided into an official, state-recognised church and an underground church that stayed loyal to

a virtual conference. The online

summit will be followed by an in-

person meeting of digital minis-

ters, experts and others on

Wednesday, according to organ-

Trump campaign calls 'The Apprentice' 'blatantly false,' director offers to screen it for him

AP CANNES

Donald Trump's reelection campaign called "The Apprentice," a film about the former US president in the 1980s, "pure fiction" and vowed legal action following its pre-miere at the Cannes Film Festival. But director Ali Abbasi is offering to privately screen the film for Trump.

Following its premiere Monday in Cannes, Steven Cheung, Trump campaign spokesperson, said in a statement that the Trump team will be file a lawsuit "to address the blatantly false assertions from these pretend filmmakers."

This garbage is pure fiction which sensationalises lies that have been long debunked, Cheung said.

The Apprentice" stars Sebastian Stan as Trump. The central relationship of the movie is between Trump and Roy Cohn (Jeremy Strong), the



counsel to Joseph McCarthy's 1950s Senate investigations of suspected communists.

Asked about the Trump campaign's statement Tuesday in

send a representative to

Cannes, Abbasi told reporters: "Everybody talks about him suing a lot of people — they don't talk about his success rate though, you know?' But the Iranian Danish director

of Mount Fuji!

No more cute snaps

also struck a less combative tone as he discussed the film at its festival press conference. He offered to screen "The Apprentice" for Trump and talk it over.

"I don't necessarily think that this is a movie he would dislike," said Abbasi. "I don't necessarily think he would like it. I think he would be surprised, you know? And like I've said before, I would offer to go and meet him wherever he wants and talk about the context of the movie. have a screening and have a chat afterwards, if that's interesting to anyone at the Trump campaign?

In the film, Cohn is depicted as a longtime mentor to Trump, coaching him in the ruthlessness of New York City politics and business.

Early on, Cohn aided the Trump Organisation when it was being sued by the federal government for racial discrimination in housing.

Seoul summit opens with Google, Meta pledging safe Al development

The world's leading artificial Intelligence companies pledged at the start of a mini summit on AI to develop the technology safely, including pulling the plug if they can't rein in the most extreme risks.

World leaders are expected to hammer out further agreements on artificial intelligence as they gathered virtually Tuesday to discuss AI's potential risks but also ways to promote its benefits and innovation

The AI Seoul Summit is a low-key follow-up to November's highprofile AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park in the United Kingdom, where participating countries agreed to work together to contain the potentially "catastrophic" risks posed by breakneck advances in AI.

The two-day meeting — co-hosted by the South Korean and UK governments — also comes as major tech companies like Meta, OpenAI and Google roll out the latest versions of their AI

They're among 16 AI companies that made voluntary commitments to AI safety as the talks got underway, according to a British government announcement. The companies, which also include Amazon, Microsoft, France's Mistral AI, China's Zhipu.ai, and G42 of the United Arab Emirates, vowed to ensure safety of their most cutting edge AI models with promises of accountable governance and public transparency. The pledge includes publishing safety frameworks setting out how they will measure risks of these models. In extreme cases

where risks are severe and "intol-

erable," AI companies will have to hit the kill switch and stop developing or deploying their models and systems if they can't mitigate the risks Since the UK meeting last year,

the AI industry has "increasing-ly focused on the most pressing concerns, including mis- and dis- information, data security, bias and keeping humans in the loop," said Aiden Gomez CEO of Cohere, one of the AI companies that signed the pact. "It is essential that we continue to consider all possible risks, while prioritising our efforts on those most likely to create problems if not properly addressed. On Tuesday evening, South

Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol

and British Prime Minister Rishi

Sunak are to meet other world

leaders, industry bosses and heads

of international organisations for

"It is just six months since world leaders met at Bletchley, but even in this short space of time, the landscape of AI has changed dramatically," Yoon and Sunak said in a joint article published in South Korea's JoongAng Ilbo

newspaper and the UK's online news site Monday. "The pace of change will only continue to accelerate, so our work must accelerate too." While the UK meeting centred on AI safety issues, the agenda for this week's gathering was expanded to include "innovation and inclusivity," Wang Yun-jong, a deputy director of national secu-

rity in South Korea, told reporters

Wang said participants will subsequently "discuss not only the risks posed by AI but also its positive aspects and how it can contribute to humanity in a balanced manner."The AI agreement will include the outcomes of discussions on safety, innovation and inclusivity, according to Park Sang-wook, senior presidential adviser for science and technology for President Yoon.Last year's Bletchley meeting attracted world leaders and tech luminaries like Elon Musk and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman. The Seoul summit, serving as an interim meeting until another in-person event next year in France, drew less important representatives from government and tech companies. China, which attended the

Wednesday's in-person meeting, the South Korean presidential office said. Governments around General Assembly has approved its first resolution on the safe use of AI systems, while the US and China recently held their first high-level talks on AI and the European Union's world-first AI Bletchley gathering, isn't joining Act is set to take effect later this the virtual summit though it will

is now up — no more snapping cute photos of Mount Fuji the world have been scrambling from a popular sidewalk spot to formulate regulations for AI in the Japanese town of even as the technology makes Fujikawaguchiko. rapid advances and is poised to transform many aspects of daily life, from education and the workplace to copyrights and privacy. There are concerns that advances in AI could take away jobs, trick people and spread disinformation. This week's meeting is just one of a slew of efforts to draw up AI guardrails. The UN

Known as a place that offers some of the best views of the iconic Japanese mountain, the town last month started erecting a large black screen on a stretch of a street to block the

Tokyo (AP): Sorry, the screen

view and deter tourists from overcrowding the place.

A particularly popular photo location was outside a Lawson convenience store, from where a photograph taken at a particular angle would make it seem as if Mt Fuji was sitting atop the store roof.

The tourists, mostly foreigners, even dubbed the spot "Mt Fuji Lawson." But the townspeople

were unhappy — visitors would block the narrow sidewalk, take photos on the busy road or walk into neighbors' properties in pursuit of their shot, officials On Tuesday, construction of

the 2.5 meter (8.2 feet) high black mesh net — stretching for 20 meters (66 feet) along the sidewalk — was completed. Still, there are other places tourists can find their sweet

photo spot. The Yamanashi prefecture, also home to the Yoshida Trail—the most popular of the four

routes to summit the 3,776meter (12,300-feet-) high mountain — introduced a booking system ahead of this year's Fuji climbing season to ease overcrowding, littering and safety risks.

Markets regulator Sehi changes rule India's global travel and tourism to determine m-cap of listed firms

 $M_{
m has}^{
m arkets}$ regulator Sebi the method for calculating the market capitalisation of listed companies under the Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) rules. Instead of using the market capitalisation of a single day (currently March 31), listed companies will now use the market capitalisation" for a six-

month period. Market experts believe the market capitalisation of a listed entity keeps fluctuating on a daily basis based on market dynamics and, therefore, an average of market capitalisation figures over a reasonable period of time (six months) would more accurately reflect the market size of the listed entity and consequently the ranking, vis-a-vis its peers.

The changes came after a recommendation of an expert committee chaired by Sebi's former whole-time member S K Mohanty in a bid to promote ease of doing business. The amendment aims to specify a defined



period for calculating market capitalisation.

The new amendment would come into force with effect from December 31, 2024, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a notification on May 17. The ranking of compliance would be based on average market capitalisation from July 1 to December 31, with December 31 as the cut-off date.

determining market capitalisation on December 31, there would be three-month transition period, or from beginning of the immediate

financial whichever is later, before the relevant provisions become

applicable.

Amending LODR norms, Sebi said, "Every recognised stock exchange shall, at the end of the calendar year i.E., December 31, prepare a list of entities that have listed their specified securities ranking such entities on the basis of their average market capitalisation from July 1 to December 31 of that calendar vear".

In case ranking of an entity changes for three consecutive years, the new provisions would cease to be applicable

providing relief to entities experiencing fluctuations in market capitalisation.

In addition, Sebi has given relaxation pertaining to filling up vacancies of key managerial personnel (KMP) with increasing the time limit to six months in certain cases from the current three months.

In cases where the listed entity is required to obtain approval of regulatory, government or statutory authorities to fill up such vacancies, these should be filled up by the listed entity at the earliest and in any case not later than six months from the date of vacancy, Sebi said.

uniformity, the timeline for prior intimation of board meetings has harmonised to two working days for al types of events. Current LODR regulations require a listed company to intimate stock exchanges about board meetings for certain proposals such as financial results, share buyback, fundraising, etc,

In order to maintain

index rank rises to 39th: WEF

India's rank on the World ▲Economic Forum's Travel Tourism Development Index 2024 has risen to 39th place, with global tourism activities returning to pre-pandemic levels, the annual report showed on Tuesday. While the US topped the list,

India is ranked highest in South Asia and among the lower-middle-income economies, the WEF said. India was ranked 54th in the

previously published index in 2021, though changes made to the index parameters limit its comparability to earlier

After the US, Spain, Japan, France and Australia figure among the top five in the 2024 list. The index, prepared in collaboration with the University of Surrey, showed India is highly pricecompetitive (18th) and boasts competitive Air Transport (26th) and Ground Port infrastructure.

In particular, India's strong Natural (6th), Cultural (9th) Non-Leisure (9th) Resources help drive travel and the country is only one of three to score in the top 10



for all the resource pillars, the WEF said.

Moreover, despite a decline compared to 2019, the country still scores well for travel and tourism demand sustainability, especially thanks to more sustainable long stays among inbound visitors.

It further said that as with many economies, travel and tourism enabling conditions in India have been impacted by global inflationary supply-

net profit jumps 19 times in

side trends for the sector, with price competitiveness declining, while air transport tourist services infrastructure are yet to recover to the 2019 level.

As a result, the country's overall TTDI (Travel and Tourism Development Index) score is 2.1 per cent below its 2019 level. High-income economies in

Europe and Asia-Pacific continued to lead the index. "International tourist arrivals sector's contribution to global GDP are expected to return to pre-pandemic levels this year, driven by the lifting of COVID-19-related travel restrictions and strong pent-

up demand," the WEF said. The Middle East had the highest recovery rates in international tourist arrivals (20 per cent above the 2019 level), while Europe, Africa and the Americas all showed a strong recovery of around 90 per cent in 2023.

The biennial index analysed the travel and tourism sectors of 119 countries around a range of factors and

Germany was ranked 6th, followed by the UK, China, Italy and Świtzerland in the ten. highlighted that high-income economies generally continue to have more favourable conditions for travel and tourism development.

This was business conducive environments, dynamic labour markets, open travel policies, strong transport and tourism infrastructure, and well-developed cultural and non-leisure

Sensex declines by nearly 53 points in volatile trade amid weak global trends

Benchmark BSE Sensex declined by nearly 53 points in a volatile trade on Tuesday amid weak trends from Asian and European markets and fresh foreign fund outflows. 30-share Sensex

declined 52.63 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 73,953.31. During the day, it hit a high of 74,189.19 and a low of 73,762.37

The broader Nifty of NSE, however, closed higher by 27.05 points or 0.12 per cent

Among Sensex components, Nestle, Maruti, IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank were the major laggards.

Tata Steel, JSW Steel, Power Grid, Tech Mahindra and State Bank of India were among the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong settled lower. European markets were trading in the negative territory. Wall Street ended mostly higher on Monday. Institutional



equities worth Rs 92.95 crore The Saturday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.55 per cent to USD 83.25 a barrel The BSE benchmark climbed

88.91 points or 0.12 per cent to end at 74,005.94 in a special trading session on Saturday. The NSE Nifty advanced 35.90 points or

Investors (FIIs) offloaded 0.16 per cent to 22,502. National Exch conducted a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments

> at the primary site. Markets were closed on Monday due to general elections in Mumbai

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

within 2-11 working days.

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation's (ONGC) March quarter net profit soared 19 times as the yearago period had a one-time exceptional provision, while it posted a record earning for the full fiscal.

The company's standalone net profit of Rs 9,869 crore in January-March — the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2023-24 compared with a profit of Rs 528 crore in the same period of the previous financial year, according to a company

India's top oil and gas producer had made a provision of Rs 9,235 crore in the January-March 2023 quarter towards disputed taxes for the period from April

1, 2016, to March 31, 2022. ONGC reported a 4.3 per cent rise in crude oil production in the fourth quarter this year to 4.71 million tonnes. The price realised for the same also was higher at USD 80.81 per barrel compared to USD 77.12 a barrel in January-March 2023. Gas price was, however, lower at USD 6.50 per million British thermal units as opposed to USD 8.57 in the previous year. Also, gas production fell 2.4 per cent to 4.95 billion cubic metres. Its revenue from operation

was 4.6 per cent lower at Rs 34,637 crore. For the full 2023-24 fiscal

(April 2023 to March 2024),



ever standalone net profit of Rs 40,526 crore on a revenue of Rs 1.38 lakh crore. This compared with Rs 40,097 crore net profit on a revenue of Rs 1.55 lakh crore. On a consolidated basis after

taking into account the earnings of subsidiaries, including listed companies Hindustan Petroleum MRPL, ONGC had a record consolidated net profit of Rs 57,101 crore for FY24. Oil production for the full year was 0.7 per cent lower at 18.4 million tonnes while gas

output fell 3.2 per cent to

Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and

19.97 bcm. The company declared a total dividend of 245 per cent (Rs 12.25 per share of face value Rs 5 each) with a total payout of Rs 15,411 crore. This includes an interim dividend of 195 per cent (Rs 9.75 per share) already paid during the year and a final dividend of 50 per cent (Rs 2.50 per share) recommended by the Board.

ONGC said it has invested

around Rs 37,000 crore of

capex in FY24 (2023-24 fiscal)

in the previous fiscal. Its overseas arm, ONGC Videsh Ltd ended the year with 7.178 million tonnes of crude oil production and 3.34

compared to Rs 30,208 crore

bcm of gas output. This compared with 6.349 million tonnes of crude oil production in FY23 (2022-23) and 3.822 bcm of gas output. OVL posted a net profit of Rs 639 crore against Rs 1,660 crore in FY23, mainly due to

higher impairment, the company statement said. Its turnover decreased 18.2

per cent to Rs 9,553 crore mainly due to nonaccounting of revenue from Sakhalin-1 (project in Russia) and lower crude realisation", it added.

Tata Power DDL, India Smart Grid Forum sign MoU for vehicle to grid technology demonstration project

PTI NEW DELHI

Tata Power Distribution Power Delhi Limited power utility supplying electricity to a populace of million in North Delhi, on May 18 to check their signed a Memorandum of preparedness for handling Understanding (MoU) with major disruptions or failures the India Smart Grid Forum (ISGF) to collaborate on a ground-breaking Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G) Technology Demonstration Project on



15th May 2024 in Delhi. The MoU was signed by Gajanan S Kale, Chief Executive Officer, Tata Power-DDL and Reji Kumar Pillai, President - India

Smart Grid Forum in the presence of Praveen Agrawal, Chief HR & IR, Tata Power-DDL, Reena India Smart Grid Forum and Vivek Kumar- Manager, Technical Services, India Smart Grid Forum.

The Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G) Technology Demonstration pilot project aims to showcase the basics of how electric vehicles (EVs) can interact with the grid.

FSIB defers interview for SBI chairman's position New Delhi: FSIB — the However, sources said, the

headhunter for directors of new date for the interview state-owned banks and will be decided after the financial institutions in an unexpected move has deferred the scheduled interview to select a suitable candidate for the post of SBI chairman.

The last-minute postponement comes hours before the scheduled interview, sources said. The exact reasons for postponement could not be ascertained immediately.

formation government after June 4. The Financial Ser

Financial Institutions Bureau (FSIB) will schedule the interview well in advance to select a replacement for Dinesh Khara, who will be superannuating on August 28, when he turns 63, the upper age limit for the position of SBI Chairman. *PTI*

Glenmark unit ties up with BeiGene to market cancer drugs in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Pharmaceuticals Tuesday said its unit has inked a marketing and distribution agreement with BeiGene to commercialise latter's oncology medicines, Tislelizumab and Zanubrutinib in India. Glenmark Specialty SA, a

unit of Mumbai-based drug maker, has inked exclusive marketing and distribution agreement with BeiGene.
"The addition addition

Tislelizumab and Zanubrutinib our portfolio oncology underscores our dedication to the cancer patients' and commitment to provide access to novel therapies across India," said Alok Malik, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals President and Business Head, India Formulations.

As per the collaboration, Glenmark will be responsible locally required development, registration and distribution providing access to the two medicines for cancer patients across

BeiGene Vice President and Head of Asia-Pacific Adam



is a testament to both companies' shared vision of enhancing healthcare access across Asia.

'We take great pride in advancing mission-driven access, especially given the significant disease burden in India, where rising cancer rates require comprehensive healthcare solutions - a commitment we share with our partners at Glenmark," he added.

said Glenmark statistics indicate that India has the third highest number of cancer cases worldwide, with predictions suggesting this could reach 2.08 million cases by 2040 — a 57.5 per cent increase from 2020. Currently, cancer claims 9,00,000 around annually in India.

Global Vaishya Federation demands social security for high tax paying traders: Goyal

Tai Bhagwan Goyal, chairman of the Global Vaishya Federation, senior BJP leader, and International executive president of the United Hindu Front, strongly raised the long-standing demand for social security by traders and professionals at a seminar held today at Constitutional Club, Marg, New Delhi. He emphasised that those who fill the nation's coffers have

never received due attention from government Although the issue of their social security has been discussed. concrete measures have implemented Government.

The Global Vaishya Federation organised this special seminar to bring this demand to the government's notice. Traders, Chartered Accountants (CAs), and other professionals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) **L**on Tuesday said the revamping of the built-operate-transfer (BOT) model is a tactical move to attract private capex, which is estimated to surpass Rs 1 trillion by 2030, as per the government. According to the rating agency, during the past seven years, the government has successfully rolled out about 400 Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) road projects in India, worth over Rs 4 trillion.

Revamping of BOT model tactical

This approach has balanced risk appropriately between private and public partners, thereby boosting public-private partnership activity in the

move to attract private capex: Ind-Ra

Also, the government's enhanced focus on monetisation via the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) has attracted foreign investors, including various sovereign wealth funds and pension funds, it added.

Ind-Ra asserted that developers need to be mindful of aggressive bidding, taking projects beyond the appetite of their balance sheet, and overestimating toll revenue for greenfield projects to protect them from volatilities in the longer run. The road sector in India has been at the forefront of performance and innovation and has played a crucial role in shaping the country's economic growth trajectory, with a CAGR of about 14 per cent over the past decade, it said.

Custom Manufactured Chemicals phase Il expansion on track: Chemplast Sanmar

hemplast Sanmar Ltd, part of the SHL Chemicals Group on Tuesday said the phase II expansion of the Custom Manufactured Chemicals division was on track for completion.

The city-based company, engaged in the manufacturing of specialty chemicals declared revenues of Rs 1,051 crore for the January-March 2024 quarter as compared to Rs 1,147 crore registered during the same quarter of last year. Net loss for the quarter under review stood at Rs 31 crore as against a net profit of Rs 46 crore registered in the same period of last

İn a statement, the company said Custom Manufactured Chemicals business was adversely impacted during the year by the overall slowdown in the global agrochemicals industry.

"The impact was partly offset by the division continues to be robust," he said commencement of supplies of new in the statement. products under the first two Letter of Intents (LoI) signed in the last 12-15 months. As a result Custom Manufactured Chemicals division revenues were lower by 13 per cent," the company said.

The positive impact of the new products would be seen in the upcoming quarters,

On the status of the company's projects, Chemplast Sanmar Ltd Managing Director Ramkumar Shankar said, "Construction of Phase 2 of the CMC expansion project is underway and we expect to complete this by the end of Q1-

"With the recent signing of the 4th Letter of Intent, the CMC division continues to make significant strides in growing the business. The pipeline of the CMC

On the financial performance, Shankar said, "FY'24 has been one of the toughest years for the company in recent times. The year was marked with challenges on all fronts including pricing and margin pressures due to excessive dumping of PVC resins by China and other countries, the sharp correction in prices of Caustic Soda due to oversupply situation.

"Amidst these headwinds, we closed FY'24 with a topline of Rs 3,923 crore and an EBITDA of Rs 26 crore," he said. On the outlook for the future, he said, 'while the short-term challenges persist, we have laid the foundation to capitalise on the long-term prospects of each of our businesses and are confident of delivering a stronger performance in the

Rupee rises 6 paise against US dollar as crude oil prices ease

The rupee appreciated 6 paise to close at 83.31 against the US dollar on Tuesday following a weak greenback against major currencies overseas and softening crude oil prices in international markets.

However, a sluggish trend in the domestic equity markets restricted the sharp upside in the local currency, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened strong at 83.32 and touched an intraday high of 83.26 and a low of 83.36. The domestic unit finally settled at 83.31 (provisional), a gain of 6 paise from its previous close.

On Friday, the rupee had settled at 83.37 against the US dollar. The forex market was closed on Monday on account of general elections. "A decline in crude oil prices

and fresh foreign inflows also supported the rupee. US Dollar softened on rate cut expectations by Fed but hawkish comments by Fed officials supported the US dollar at lower levels," Anuj Choudhary – Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, On the domestic equity market

front, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 52.63 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 73,953.31, while the broader NSE Nifty rose 27.05 points or 0.12 per cent to 22,529.05.

WFI EXEMPTS OLYMPIC QUOTA WINNERS FROM TRIALS BUT WILL ASSESS THEM IN HUNGARY

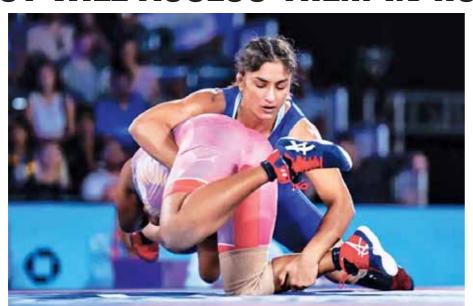
he Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) on Tuesday decided to exempt all six Olympic quota winners from selection trials but their form and fitness will be assessed at the upcoming Ranking Series event and the subsequent training camp in

Hungary.
The WFI said the decision to not hold trials has been taken under peculiar circumstances and should not be used as a precedent in future.

The WFI also made it clear that if any wrestler is found to be lacking in fitness, the federation would consider a replacement through trials before July 8, the deadline for sending entries.

India have got six quotas for the Paris Games where Aman Sehrawat (57kg) will be the lone male wrestler in fray from the country.

Vinesh Phogat (50kg), Antim Panghal (53kg), Anshu Malik (57kg), Nisha Dahiya (68kg) and Reetika Hooda (76kg) are the women wrestlers who have



The wrestlers had requested the WFI not to hold trials, arguing that it could lead to injuries and the selection committee, led by President Sanjay Singh, accepted the

plea. "We discussed the issue and both chief coaches were also of the view that trials could lead

to injuries and impact India's medal chances. So we have decided not to hold trials," Sanjay Sngh told PTI after the

The quota winners will compete in a UWW Ranking Series in Budapest from June 6-9 and will also participate in a training camp after the conclusion of the tournament from June 10-21.

We have to ensure that no wrestler carries any injury into the Olympics. So, instead of trials, the Indian coaches will assess the quota winners at the Ranking Series event and at the following training camp in

someone is not fit, we may then look for a replacement in that particular category. We will hold selection trial before July 8 in that weight class," the president added.

president added.
The WFI decision has shut the Paris Olympic door on Tokyo Games silver medallist Ravi Dahiya (men's 57kg) and World Championship bronze winner Sarita Mor in women's (57kg) who were represented for (57kg), who were preparing for trials

It also means that Vinesh Phogat will now have to compete in women's 50kg event only. She had the chance to compete in 53kg also if she defeated Antim in trials.

Women's head coach Virender Dahiya and freestyle head coach Jagmander Singh also attended the selection

committee meeting.
London Olympic bronze medallist Yogeshwar Dutt, former wrestler Geetika Jakhar, WFI vice-president and Olympian Jai Prakash, WFI treasurer Sandeep Deshwal also attended the meeting. Geetika attended the meeting through video call.

Juventus rallies from 3-0 down to draw with Bologna in first match without Allegri

In its first match since Massimiliano Allegri was fired, Juventus came from 3-0 down to draw with Bologna 3-3 in Serie A on Monday.

Allegri was sacked on Friday, two days after berating the referees while winning the Italian Cup final. Under-19 coach Pablo Montero agreed to oversee Juve's last two

Bologna, third, and Juventus, fourth on goal difference, have already qualified for the Champions League next season but played like they hadn't.

A double by Riccardo Calafiori helped a dominant Bologna to 3-0, and in their grasp was a first home win over Juve in 26 years.

But Juventus began its comeback with 14 minutes left of regulation time, starting with Federico Chiesa's goal. Within eight more minutes, Arkadiusz Milik struck from a free kick and the equalizer was by Kenan Yildiz, the 19-yearold forward who Juve consider a star in the making.

In this breakthrough season, Yildiz debuted for Juventus and became its youngest foreign scorer, and debuted

Verona's third win in five

and scored for European Championship-bound Turkey. Meanwhile, Verona guaranteed its Serie A status

for another season after

beating Salernitana 2-1. Marco Baroni's men are four points clear of the relegation zone with one game to go. Salernitana and Sassuolo are already down and Verona's win means Udinese, Empoli, Frosinone and Cagliari are

fighting to avoid joining them.

games was timely given its last league match is against champion Inter Milan, which has lost only twice all season. Tomas Suslov's second goal in the league was the opener, and Darko Lazovic crossed for Michael Folorunsho to poke home from close range on the stroke of halftime.

Giulio Maggiore scored a consolation for the home side in the final minute.



Messi in, Dybala out in Argentina squad for preCopa America friendlies

AP BUENOS AIRES

ionel Messi is in and Paulo Lionel Messi is in and Paulo Dybala is out of Argentina's squad for friendlies against Ecuador and Guatemala before defending its Copa America title next month.

The squad of 29 players announced on Monday will be Lionel Scaloni when he finalizes the group on June 12.

Midfielder Dybala was part of World Argentina's winning squad in 2022. Argentina will play Ecuador

on June 9 in Chicago, and five days later Guatemala in Landover, Maryland. Argentina begins at the Copa

America on June 20 against Canada in Atlanta. Chile and Peru are also part of Group A. ARGENTINA:

Emiliano Goalkeepers: Martínez (Aston Villa), Franco Armani (River Plate),

Gerónimo Rulli (Ajax). Defenders: Gonzalo Montiel (Nottingham Forest), Nahuel

Molina (Atletico Madrid), Leonardo Balerdi (Marseille), Cristian (Tottenham), Germán

Pezzella (Real Betis), Lucas Martínez Quarta (Fiorentina), Nicolás Otamendi (Benfica), Lisandro Martínez Lisandro Martinez (Manchester United), Marcos Acuña (Sevilla), Nicolás Tagliafico (Lyon), Valentín

Midfielders: Guido (Real Rodríguez Betis), Leandro Paredes (Roma), Alexis Allister (Liverpool), Rodrigo De Paul (Atletico Madrid), Exequiel Palacios (Bayer Leverkusen), Enzo Fernández (Chelsea), Giovanni (Tottenham).

Strikers: Ángel Di María (Benfica), Valentín Carboni (Monza), Lionel Messi (Inter Miami), Ángel Correa (Atletico Madrid), Alejandro Garnacho (Manchester United), Nicolás González (Fiorentina). Lautaro Martínez (Inter Milan), Julián Alvarez (Manchester City).

Rafael Nadal returns to Roland Garros

 $R^{\text{afael Nadal returned to}}_{\text{Roland Garros on Monday}}$ to practice and try to figure out whether to compete at the French Open, a tournament he

rrench Open, a tournament he has won a record 14 times.

The 37-year-old Spaniard showed up late in the afternoon with his coach, Carlos Moya, and a couple of sparring partners at Court Philippe Chatrier, which was open to the public.

About 6.000 fans were there at

About 6,000 fans were there at the French Open's main stadium, cheering loudly as Nadal stepped onto the court.
After the practice, which lasted about an hour and a half, autographs disapper several before through disappearing

doorway and into a tunnel that leads toward the locker rooms. The training session gave

audi Arabia's move into tennis will now

Sinclude a multiyear deal to sponsor the

WTA women's rankings. The WTA released word of its partnership

Tennis has been consumed lately by the

debate over whether the sport should

rankings.



Nadal a chance to reacquaint himself with the red clay at Roland Garros - he hasn't played a match there in two years - and test his fitness. The tournament begins on

Sunday and it remains uncertain if Nadal will enter. He is still regaining his match readiness after missing nearly

all of 2023 with a hip injury that required surgery, and much of this season because of problems with a hip muscle and an abdominal muscle.

His recent loss in his second match at the Italian Open - 6-1, 6-3 against Hubert Hurkacz left Nadal unsure about whether he would consider

himself ready for the French

"Let's see what's going on, how I feel myself mentally tomorrow, after tomorrow, and in one week," Nadal said in Rome. "If I feel ready, I (am) roing to try to be there and going to try to be there and fight for the things that I have been fighting (for for) the last 15 years, (even) if now (that) seems impossible."
As of Monday, Nadal still had

not announced whether or not he would play in Paris. This is expected to be his final season on tour - and so this would be his final appearance at a tournament he has won more times than any other tennis player has won any Grand Slam title.

He won the French Open in 2022 for his 22nd major championship overall, which ranks second among men to Novak Djokovic's 24.

CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE

Chandru G knocks out Jaskaran to win WBC India national title

Tamil Nadu's rising star Chandru G clinched the WBC India Cruiserweight Championship title with a spectacular fourth round knockout victory over Punjab boxer Jaskaran Singh.

Entering the fight with a flawless 10-0 record, the 27-year old Chandru had a slow start, allowing Jaskaran (9-3) to take advantage of his height. However, by the second round. Chandru began to dominate, landing heavy three-punch combinations and crosses

In the decisive fourth round, a powerful right cross from Chandru hit Jaskaran square in the face, sending him crashing to the ropes. Referee Kevin David halted the fight and declared Chandru the winner. "This victory is not just for me, but for the whole of Tamil Nadu, for my team, my family, and all my supporters who have stood by me throughout this journey," Chandru said.

opponent, and a very hard puncher. But training over the past 40 days paid off. I hope this win inspires more boxers from Tamil Nadu to start making a move to Pro Boxing. "This is just the beginning, I have a possible shot at the WBC Asian title in the coming few months. Thank you to everyone who believed

he added.

"Jaskaran Singh is a formidable

The eight-round contest between Akshay Chahal (14-0) and Ram Singh (3-0) ended in a draw. Both fighters, who are seasoned amateurs, showcased their skills in a thrilling bout. Ram Singh dominated the early rounds, while Akshay made a strong comeback in the final rounds, resulting in a dramatic fight.

Haryana's Ashish Choudhary triumphed over Punjab's Manish Sharma by unanimous decision.

Renu Phogat of Haryana pulled off a technical knockout victory over Delhi's Ruby in the

Liverpool confirms Arne Slot as With Djokovic awaiting the winner, Murray Jurgen Klopp's replacement

rne Slot will take on one of most daunting challenges in soccer by replacing Jurgen Klopp as Liverpool manager Slot was confirmed on Monday

after he signed a long-term contract with the six-time European Cup winner and 19time English champion. He will follow in the footsteps

of an Anfield icon in Klopp, who ended Liverpool's 30-year wait for the English title in 2020 and won a full set of major trophies in his time at the Merseyside club.

Slot comes in with a winning record of his own after leading Fevenoord to the Dutch title last year and following that with the Dutch Cup this season

He will formally take up his role on June 1 and his contract runs through to 2027, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the details of the contract have not been made public.



expected for some time, as the 45-year-old Dutchman said he was in talks with Liverpool in April and announced he would be Klopp's successor last week. Slot has coached Feyenoord since 2021 and was previously with AZ Alkmaar. His work with both clubs has seen his reputation rise for his coaching methods and achievements in

a short time. Klopp stunned the world of soccer when he declared in his faith in Slot.

January he would step down at the end of the season. The German established himself as one of the finest managers of his generation.

He won the Champions League in 2019, the Premier League in 2020, and the English League Cup and FA Cup in 2022. He departed with one final trophy, the League Cup in February.

Under his watch, Liverpool also won the UEFA Super Cup and Club World Cup and was a beaten finalist in two more Champions Leagues

Liverpool took its time identifying Klopp's successor.
Michael Edwards, its former sporting director, returned in March as chief executive of football for the club's American owners Fenway Sports Group and led the search

Edwards was a key figure in Klopp's success — overseeing the signings of star players like Mohamed Salah, Alisson Becker, and Virgil van Dijk. Liverpool fans can only hope he is as adept at identifying coaching talent after putting

agreement with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) on Monday, a move that follows last month's news that the kingdom will host the tour's seasonending championships in Riyadh starting this year and February's announcement that it will sponsor the ATP men's follow golf and others in making deals with Saudi Arabia, where rights groups say Both tours'rankings deals are for five years. women continue to face discrimination in most aspects of family life and The PIF is the first naming-rights partner for the WTA rankings and the new homosexuality is a major taboo, as it is in arrangement also includes plans to promote tennis at lower levels of the sport.

much of the rest of the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia going to sponsor WTA women's

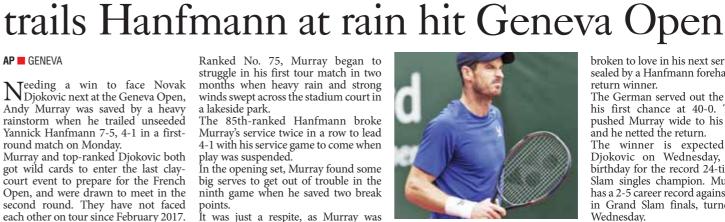
OPIF WTA RANKINGS

tennis rankings under new partnership

Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova are among those who urged the WTA to stay out of Saudi Arabia, while another former

pioneer Billie Jean King, advocated for The WTA Finals will be in Saudi Arabia as part of a three-year deal that will increase

the prize money for this November's season-ending championship to a record \$15.25 million, a 70% increase from 2023. Saudi Arabia's Private Investment Fund formed the LIV Golf tour and put money into soccer, for example, and the kingdom's role in tennis has been rising. The ATP Tour moved its Next Gen Finals for leading 21-and-under players to Jedda in November; 22-time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal recently became an ambassador for the Saudi Tennis Federation; he will join 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic and rising stars Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner at an exhibition event in Rivadh in October.



broken to love in his next service game, sealed by a Hanfmann forehand service return winner.

The German served out the set taking his first chance at 40-0. The serve pushed Murray wide to his backhand

and he netted the return. The winner is expected to play Djokovic on Wednesday, the 37th birthday for the record 24-time Grand Slam singles champion. Murray, who has a 2-5 career record against Djokovic

in Grand Slam finals, turned 37 last

PTI ■ ANTWERP

AP GENEVA

Needing a win to face Novak Djokovic next at the Geneva Open,

Andy Murray was saved by a heavy rainstorm when he trailed unseeded

Yannick Hanfmann 7-5, 4-1 in a first-

Murray and top-ranked Djokovic both

got wild cards to enter the last clay-

court event to prepare for the French

Open, and were drawn to meet in the

second round. They have not faced

each other on tour since February 2017.

round match on Monday

Shardanand Tiwari struck twice as the Indian junior men's hockey team beat Belgium via penalty shootout in the opening match to kick off its tour of Europe with a thrilling win here.

Tiwari (3', 27') scored a brace as the two teams ended the regulation time 2-2 before India won the penalty shootout 4-2 on Monday. India took the lead early with Tiwari firing in a penalty stroke. They maintained their tempo throughout the first

Europe tour with thrilling win over Belgium auarter to hold onto their lead

points.

a lakeside park.

play was suspended.

going into the break. In the second quarter, Tiwari (27') doubled the lead with yet another penalty stroke as the first half ended with the visitors leading 2-0.

Belgium converted a penalty corner early in the third quarter to reduce the goal deficit to one.

No further goals were scored in the game, the Belgians convertthe quarter as the score read 2-1 in favour of the Indian team equalise. at the end of the third quarter. Although the Indian colts had a one-goal lead going into the final quarter, Belgium didn't give them much breathing space and kept the pressure on them.

With just a few minutes left in

Indian junior men hockey team begins

ed yet another penalty corner to

As no more goals were scored in the regulation time, the fourth quarter ended with the scoreline reading 2-2, taking the game into a shootout. Gurjot Singh, Sourabh Anand Kushwaha, Dilraj Singh and Indian colts in the penalty shoot-out while goalkeeper Prince Deep Singh made two brilliant saves as they won the penalty shoot-out 4-2 to begin their Europe tour with a win. India will play their next match against Belgium in Breda,

Manmeet Singh scored for the

Netherlands on Wednesday.

RR desperate to arrest slide against RCB

Sanju Samson's Rajasthan Royals will face a stern test of character as they look to arrest a shocking slide in a do-or-die IPL Eliminator against an in-form Royal Challengers Bengaluru, here on Wednesday.

The Royals, at one stage, had looked set for a top-place finish in the league stage before a string of four defeats and a washout in the last game against KKR resulted in Sanju Samson's side finishing third behind Sunrisers Hyderabad.

On the other hand, RCB have sensationally fought their way back from the brink of elimination. After losing seven of their first eight games this season, the team led by Faf du Plessis hit a dream run and finally knocked out defending champions Chennai Super Kings a few nights ago to seal a playoffs berth.

If Rajasthan Royals are coming off four losses and a rained-off game, RCB have notched up six consecutive wins to sound a warning to their rivals that they mean business in the

RR, the 2008 IPL winners, suddenly find themselves as the underdogs, when a couple of weeks ago they were red-hot favourites.

When on song, Rajasthan Royals have shown they are unbeatable, but the last four games have exposed frailties in their batting and bowling.

The exit of Ios Buttler has taken a lot of firepower out of their batting and a lot will depend on Yashasvi Jaiswal



(348 runs), skipper Samson (504) and Riyan Parag (531) to halt the slide. Samson and Parag will once again be expected to deliver the goods for RR, with England's Tom Kohler-Cadmore expected to partner Jaiswal in what seems like a frail opening pair going by form and experience.

Shimron Hetmyer is expected to be available for the contest giving Rajasthan solidity in the lower order, which has not made a big

contribution with the bat this season. RRs strong bowling lineup could come in handy given the venue for the Eliminator has not been a batting paradise like the other grounds, where shorter boundaries and docile tracks have made the bowlers' job

The 200-run mark has been breached only twice in 12 innings this season at the Narendra Modi Stadium, which means the team having a disciplined

bowling attack and a strong batting lineup is more likely to win here. On the other hand, RCB's Virat Kohli continues to be the highest run-getter this season with 708 runs from 14

matches and could make the

difference in the contest. After initial struggles, RCB skipper Faf du Plessis has also found form with the bat to forge a dominating partnership at the top with Kohli, while Rajat Patidar (five half-

centuries this season) has also given solidity at the top. RCB have not been impacted much by the exit of England's Will Jacks, while veteran Dinesh Karthik is firing on all cylinders with a strike rate in excess of 195 lower down the order. In their last match, left-arm seamer Yash Dayal turned around his fortunes to dish out a splendid final over against CSK to deny them a win and lead RCB into the playoffs.

For a bowler who was devastated after conceding five consecutive sixes in an over last year, Dayal has proved his mettle this year.
TEAMS (FROM):

Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c&wk), Abid Mushtaq, Avesh Khan, Dhruv Jurel, Donovan Ferreira, Kuldeep Sen, Kunal Singh Rathore, Nandre Burger, Navdeep Saini, Ravichandran Ashwin, Riyan Parag, Sandeep Sharma, Shimron Hetmyer Sandeep Sharma, Shimron Hetmyer, Shubham Dubey, Rovman Powell, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Trent Boult, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Yuzvendra Chahal, Tanush Kotian

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



McGurk, Short offer something different: Australia coach on pairs inclusion as travelling reserves for World Cup

PTI SYDNEY

Australian cricket team coach Andrew McDonald said on Tuesday that charismatic young batter Jake Fraser-McGurk and all-rounder Matthew Short have been added as travelling reserves with the squad for the T20 World Cup in the Americas because they bring something different to the

Fraser-McGurk, 22, in only his debut IPL season, gave an excellent display of explosive batsmanship for Delhi Capitals smashing four halfcenturies in nine games at an astronomical strike rate exceeding 234. He hit 330 runs, including 32

boundaries and maximums, prompting several Australian greats to pitch for his inclusion in the 15-member squad. But after being overlooked for the World Cup in the West Indies and USA next month, he has been finally included as a travelling received.

travelling reserve. "I think they're (Fraser-McGurk and Short) slightly different in what they offer. quadriplegic spinal cord injury and is wheelchair-bound ever Fraser is an out-and-out opener and the way we've grown Matthew Short into the since, six other students were team is through the middle order and that spin (bowling) ability as well," McDonald told Sen Radio.

McDonald indicated that Short could come in handy in the event of Glenn Maxwell getting injured.

We feel like he's (Short) a spinning all-rounder much like Glenn Maxwell if anything should move there, and obviously Jake Fraser-McGurk is an out-and-out top player,"

The two reserves will, however, not be able to play unless there is an injury in the

The Australian team is set to fly out for the World Cup on wednesday.

"Both exciting, I think they both add a lot.

Those guys sit outside of the 15, the only way they can come onto the selection table is if there was to be an injury, we've got two options there depending on what we lose or what may unfold in terms of injuries," McDonald added. The coach said that apart

from the two players, Australia had several other options as well, should a player in the 15-member squad get injured or indisposed.

"We've also got some other options in Spencer Johnson, Xavier Bartlett that are playing in the UK as well, so if we were to lose a bowler those guys are up and running in the UK... and they can come in, it's only a short flight into the West Indies from England. On opener David Warner's fitness concerns, McDonald said the 37-year-old was doing

'No, not at this stage. We believe he's fully fit, everything he says is he's fully fit, we know that he missed the last game for Delhi (Capitals in IPL), clearly that was a selection mechanism there with the way they want to play late in the tournament, I think he played the second last round... We have no fears he won't be fit and fully available."

Australia play their opening out top group stage match against added Oman in Barbados on June 6.

OTHER SPORTS

Ekta wins gold with season's best effort in club throw at World Para Athletic Championships

India's Ekta Bhyan secured the gold medal with a season's best throw of 20.12m in the women' F51 club throw competition at the World Para Athletic Championships here.
A day after Deepthi Jeevanji clinched the gold medal in women's 400m T20 category race, Indian athletes continued their impressive run with Ekta producing the goods to finish in the top, while Kashish Lakra took the silver with an effort of 14.56m. Nadjet Boucherf of Algeria won the bronze with a score of 12.70m. Ekta, a Haryana Civil Services

(HCS) officer, had won a bronze medal in the Asian Para



Games China. The 38-year-old, who took up

sports after her selection in the Haryana government as HCS officer, also won gold medal in the club throw event at the 2018 Asian Para Games in Jakarta. She had also qualified Paralympics.

Ekta wanted to pursue a career in medical stream but a tragic accident in 2003 cut short her dream. The accident happened near Kundli in Sonepat district when a truck overturned on

killed in the accident. On Monday, Deepthi, Para

Asian Games gold medallist, had smashed a world record time of 55.07 seconds in the women's 400m T20 category race en route to her gold medal.

suffered

On Sunday, Nishad Kumar (T47 high jump) and 200m runner Preethi Pal (T35 200m race) won a silver and bronze respectively.

India's tally has now swelled to five medals — 2 gold, 3 silver and 2 bronze.

Vennam fourth in rankings, takes India to second spot in qualifying round

PTI ■ YECHEON (SOUTH KOREA)

 $R_{\text{champion Jyothi Surekha}}^{\text{eigning Asian Games}}$ Vennam's fourth place finish lifted compound women's team to second spot in the qualifying rankings of the Archery World Cup Stage 2 that got underway here on Tuesday.

Fresh from winning a hat-trick of gold medals at the seasonopening Shanghai leg of the World Cup last month, Jyothi missed the top-three spot in the rankings by just three points, finishing behind South Korea's Oh Yoohyun, who shot

Han Seungyeon took the pole position at 711, followed by Luxembourg's Mariya Shkolna one point adrift.

At eighth and 15th places respectively, Parneet Kaur (704) and world champion Aditi Swami (702) were the next best Indians as overall as a team India grabbed the second seed behind South Korea. The Indian women's team will get a bye into the quarters where they will face seventh seeded Italy.

It was a forgettable outing for the compound men archers and Priyansh at 16th place in the leaderboard was the best among the Indians.

Prathamesh Fuge and multiple World Cup gold medalist Abhishek Verma, who seemed to have past his prime, were the next best Indians finishing lowly at 20th and 24th places. It impacted the team ranking as they slipped to fourth place. Priyansh and Jyothi combined to get a fourth spot in the mixed team ranking as well. The qualifiers for the recurve archers will begin Wednesday.

Indian men's recurve team are coming back after upsetting South Korea for the first time in a World Cup final in the Shanghai leg in April.

India topped the medal standings at the Stage 1 World Cup with five gold medals, two silver and one bronze, pushing South Korea to second spot (two gold, three silver and two bronze medals).

Treesa, Gayatri enter second round of Malaysia Masters; Indians falter in singles qualification

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Indian shuttlers Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand progressed to the second round of women's doubles competition after securing a straightgame win over Chinese Taipei's Huang Yu-Hsun and Liang Ting Yu at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 here on

Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Treesa and Gayatri, seventh seeded, notched up a fine 21-14 21-10 win over Huang and Liang, ranked 104, in the round of 32. There were four Indians in men's singles qualification round but none could make the cut for the main draw. Sathish Kumar Karunakaran, who won his

maiden BWF Super 100 title at Odisha Masters last December, beat Malaysia's Cheam June Wei 21-15 21-19 before going down 21-13 20-22 13-21 to Indonesia's Shesar Hiren Rhustavito.

Ayush Shetty, a bronze medallist at the World Junior Championships, beat compatriot Kartikey Gulshan Kumar 21-7 21-14 but lost 21-23 21-16 17-21 Thailand's Panitchaphon Teeraratsakul

Former World Junior Championships silver medallist S Sankar Subramanian suffered 12-21 17-21 to Rhustavito in the opening round of qualification. In women's singles qualifiers, Tanya Hemanth went down 21-23 8-21 to Lin Sih Yun of Chinese Taipei.

In women's doubles, Palak Arora and Unnati Hooda lost 10-21 5-21 to Chinese Taipei's Hsu Yin-Hui and Lin Jhij Yun to

also bow out of the competition.

becoming a wrestler. His father,

employed in Indian Air Force,

died when he was seven.

Paralympics champion Sumit defends F64 javelin world title, India jump to third abandon his dream

PTI ■ KOBE (JAPAN)

Reigning Paralympics Champion Sumit Antil on Tuesday defended his F64 javelin throw world title while Thangavelu Mariyappan and Ekta Bhyan also grabbed gold medals in their respective events as India jumped to third place in the World Para Athletics Championships here. With five medals won on a productive fifth day, India's tally swelled to 10 (4 gold, 4 silver, 2 bronze) and the country is currently placed below China (15 gold, 13 silver, 13 bronze) and Brazil (14 gold, 6 silver, 5 bronze).

Athletics

68.08m.

won the bronze medal in the

same event with a throw of

60.41m. Sri Lanka's Dulan

Kodithuwakku took the silver

Antil was the leader all

through the event in the nine-

man field as he opened with a

68.17m effort before coming

up with his day's best jump of

69.50m in the second attempt.

His next four attempts read

64.04m, 65.58m, 69.03m and

Sonipat's Antil wanted to

pursue a career in wrestling,

but in 2015, when he was 17

his motorbike was hit by a

with a throw of 66.49m.

Antil, who had won gold medals in the Tokyo Paralympics and 2023 World Para Athletics Championships, sent his spear to a distance of 69.50m to stand on top of the

podium. The 25-year-old Haryana athlete thus continued his global domination in the F64

javelin event. He is the current speeding truck while he was world record holder also, courtesy his massive 73.29m returning home from a tuition class. As a result, his left leg was throw while winning gold in amputated and he had to the Para Asian Games in Hangzhou, China last year.

Election to Member of Parliament From-05-Mayurbhanj (S.T) P.C He also holds the World Para Championships record of 70.83m which he had I, Naba Charan Majhi S/o Late Dhuma Majhi of At-Mahuldiha, Ward No.01, produced while winning the gold in the last edition in Paris in 2023. Compatriot Sandeep

Rairangpur, Po/Ps- Rairangpur Town, Dist-Mayurbhanj in the state of

As per the judgment Dt.25th Sept 2018 of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in WP(C) No.536 of 2011 in the matter of public Interest foundation and others Vrs-Union of India

Town P.S

public function

The following criminal case is/ are pending against me.

(a) F.I.R No with name of the police : F.I.R No.92/2010 Rairangpur

(b) Case No. with name of the Court : G.R. case No.443/2010 Court of

(c) Section(s) of concerned Acts/

(d) Brief description of offence

against the proceedings

the S.D.J.M, Rairangpur u/s 342, 186 and 34 of I.P.C u/s 342-Wrongfully confinemen u/s 186-Voluntarily obstructs any

public servant in discharge of his

Naba Charan Majhi

u/s 34-Common intention (e) Whether charges have framed?

(f) Whether any appeal/ application: No for revision has been filed

pitch and win all our matches," the skipper added. Besides Argentina, the Indian men's team will also test their Olympic preparations against

Belgium, Germany and Great The Indian women, currently placed sixth on the Pro League

table, have a chance to climb up the table when they take on world No.7 Argentina on Wednesday. The world No.6 side has earned eight points from an

equal number of games in the

Hockey Pro League: Indian

PTI ■ ANTWERP (BELGIUM)

Tndian men's hockey team

Lewill hope to iron out the

flaws ahead of the Paris

Olympics, while the women's

team under new skipper

Salima Tete will look to

overcome the disappointment

of not qualifying for the Summer Games, when the

gruelling European leg of the FIH Pro League commences

here with matches against

The men's team under drag-

flicker Harmanpreet Singh is

coming into the tournament following a 0-5 Test series

whitewash at the hands of

Australia and would look to

make the most of the

opportunity in Europe to get

back to winning ways ahead of

"Undoubtedly, we are focused

on the Olympics but we also

need to give our best to finish

as champions (in Pro League)

and secure direct qualification

for the 2026 Hockey World

Harmanpreet, whose team is

currently placed third with 15

points from eight Pro League

Netherlands are leading the charts with 26 points (12

matches), while Australia are

'To achieve both these targets

(doing well ahead of Olympics

and secure direct qualification

for 2026 World Cup), we will

strive to give our all on the

on 20 points (8 matches).

well;

as

the Paris Games

Argentina on Wednesday.

men's, women's teams hope

to make most of European leg

League home leg, registering victories against the United States and Australia. Newly-appointed captain Salima said the friendlies against South Africa in India earlier this month had helped her team prepare for the European leg of the Pro

"We played practice matches against South Africa (in India) to prepare for these Hockey Pro League matches. The point difference between us and second-placed China is just seven points," said Tete in a Hockey India release.

"We (will) aim to close this gap in the remaining matches against Argentina, Belgium, Germany, and Great Britain in a bid to finish as high as we can," she added. China are placed second on the

table with 15 points from eight games, while leaders Netherlands are on 36 points with an all-win record in 12 Following the matches against

Argentina, the women's team

will play Belgium on May 23, while the men's side will take on the hosts a day later. The women's and men's teams will face Belgium again on May

India women and men will end their first half of the European tour with matches against Argentina on May 26, before moving on to the final leg in London where they play Germany on June 1 and 8 and take on hosts Great Britain on June 2 and 9.