

OPINION 6

DEMOCRACY, ECONOMICS
AND GOVERNANCE

WORLD 8

BLINKEN URGES ISRAEL, HAMAS TO
MOVE AHEAD WITH CEASEFIRE DEAL

WORLD 9

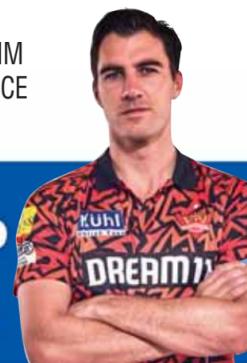
PAK TO BLOCK 500K+ MOBILE SIM
CARDS FOR TAX NON-COMPLIANCE

CHANDIGARH, THURSDAY MAY 2, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹2

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Mayday! Kids in 131 Delhi, Noida schools exposed to terror scare

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■
NEW DELHI/NOIDA

In a scare of unprecedented scale, panic gripped schools in the national Capital and adjoining Noida after 131 of them received identical bomb threats through emails on Wednesday morning, triggering mass evacuations and massive searches as panicked parents rushed to pick up their children. The anti-terror unit of the Delhi Police has started investigations into the bomb threat email sent to schools in the Delhi-NCR region, as the

initial probe hinted at a deeper conspiracy by a terror group during the Lok Sabha elections.

A case has been registered under relevant sections of law for offences like conspiracy and threat by the Special Cell and a dedicated team formed to conduct the investigation, an official said. "The matter is related to national security. It needs a deeper probe," the official said.

The schools received the threats on their official email IDs around 4 am. Bomb detection teams, bomb disposal squads and officials

of Delhi Fire Service were rushed to schools but nothing suspicious was found. Multiple private schools in Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad and Gurugram also received the bomb threat but local police dismissed them as a hoax.

As panicked parents crowded outside the schools, the Ministry of Home Affairs said the mails appeared to be a hoax. In a statement, the Union Home Ministry officials said, "There is no need to panic. Mails appear to be hoaxes. The Delhi Police and security agencies are



Children rushing out of a school in New Delhi area after the school received a bomb threat via email. Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

taking necessary steps as per protocol." The schools sent out messages and notices to the concerned

parents, informing them to pick up kids at the earliest with kids using buses and vans being sent to their home.

"Dear Parent, this is to inform you that due to a message received in the school we are evacuating the children early today in their respective school buses and vans. The parents who pick up their ward from the school should reach the school by 10.30 am. at the school gate," read one such message sent to worried parents.

The anti-terror cell of the Delhi Police will investigate the bomb threat. The case is being registered with the Special Cell and a dedicated team will be formed to conduct the investigation.

"The matter is related to national security. It needs a deeper probe," the official said. According to police, the threat was declared a hoax as "nothing objectionable" was found during searches. Bomb threats sent via email to schools in Delhi-NCR originated from Russia, as indicated by the IP address of the email, which was traced back to the domain "mail.ru". Investigating agencies said it is also possible that culprits may have masked their identity using the dark net. Such mails are often sent from a vpn that helps them mask

their real ip address as is the case in these "bomb threat" emails, said the sources. Although the email, said to be sent out by one accused, has been called a hoax, Delhi Police have stepped up security at all metro and railway stations, bus stands, and markets for precautionary measures. "We have stepped up security at every station. We have also alerted our staff to keep strict vigil on any suspicious activity," Deputy Commissioner of Police (railways) K P S Malhotra said.



EC upgrades VVPAT security after SC nudge

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Wednesday issued revised protocol for handling and storage of symbol loading unit (SLU) of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) slips against the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM). This comes in the backdrop of the latest order by the Supreme Court which said, "After the completion of symbol loading process, the symbol loading unit (SLU) should be sealed in containers. The SLU should be stored at least for a period of 45 days." The SLU uploads the name and symbol of the candidates contesting on a particular seat on VVPAT or paper trail machines.

In a statement on Wednesday, the

poll authority said all State Chief Electoral Officers have been directed to create necessary infrastructure and provisions to implement the new protocols for handling and storage of the symbol loading units (SLUs).

"As mandated by the Supreme Court, the revised protocols are applicable in all cases of completion of the symbol loading process in the VVPATs undertaken on or after May 1, 2024," the commission said.

Currently, only the three components of the EVM - the ballot unit, control unit, and VVPAT - are stored for 45 days after the results.

This is the first time that SLUs, used to load candidate symbols onto the

VVPATs, will also be available for examination along with the EVMs if a candidate challenges the results by filing an election petition in court. The EVM and VVPAT slips can be called by the court while hearing the plea.

The SLU is used to load the symbols of the candidates onto the VVPAT. It is a matchbox-sized device that is first connected to a laptop or personal computer, from which a symbol loading application is used to load a bitmap file containing the candidates' names, serial numbers, and symbols.

The SLU is then connected to the VVPAT to transfer that file on to the paper audit machine. This is done under the supervision of a

district election officer.

As per the SOP, during the commissioning period in Assembly Constituency/Segment, all Symbol Loading Unit(s) along with its accessories shall be in the custody of the Returning Officer/Assistant Returning Officer, as the case may be and shall be securely stored in locker/safe/cupboard etc. under lock and key in the Commissioning premises with proper security. RO/ARO shall be responsible for safe custody of Symbol Loading Unit(s) along with its accessories during the commissioning period.

Each set of SLU along with its accessories used in a particular AC/AS shall be kept in a separate container. Not more than one set of

SLU along with its accessories should be kept in a container.

"After sealing the SLU containers, the same shall be deposited with the District Election Officer concerned within 24 hours of the completion of commissioning. These containers shall be stored by the DEO in a separate strong room/secured room and shall be marked clearly on the door as 'SLU STORAGE ROOM'. It is clarified that both the used SLUs and Reserve SLUs shall be stored in the SLU Storage Room. District Election Officer shall be responsible for their storage and security. The SLU Storage Room shall be under double lock system with all keys of each lock with two separate specified officers," it said.

Cong takes another hit, two ex-MLAs quit party

RAJESH KUMAR ■
NEW DELHI

Just when the campaigning is peaking for the May 25 polls in national Capital, the Congress which is contesting on three of the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi as per arrangements with INDIA Bloc partner Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), faltered further as exodus continued on Wednesday.

Two former MLAs and observers for the Lok Sabha seat — Naseeb Singh and Neeraj Basoya — resigned from the party citing their dissatisfaction with the party's decision to form an alliance with AAP and its choice to allot Lok Sabha tickets to Kanhaiya Kumar and Udit Raj.

In separate letters to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Neeraj and Naseeb, who are AICC observers for West Delhi and North West Delhi Lok Sabha seats respectively, claimed that the Congress workers are "upset" and feel "humiliated" due to the alliance with the AAP.

The Congress had on Tuesday appointed former MLA Devender Yadav as interim president of its Delhi unit after Lovely resigned citing the tie-up with AAP and statements of Congress candidates in the national Capital, exposing the cracks in the party's Delhi unit.

Last week, former Minister and four-time MLA Raj Kumar Chauhan resigned from the party, alleging that he was humiliated by Deepak Babaria, AICC in charge of Delhi Congress. Lovely has resigned from the Delhi Congress president post, protesting against party in-charge Babaria and objecting to the choice and conduct of two candidates who are "total strangers" to party workers.

In the coming days, some more leaders may resign from the party. Several former MLAs here are reluctant to campaign for Udit Raj and Kanhaiya Kumar. Several prominent leaders including former Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan, ex-Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Nirupam, spokesperson Gourav Vallabh, former social media head Rohan Gupta, Acharya Pramod Krishnam, former defense minister AK Antony's son Anil Antony, and Gujarat Patidar leader Hardik Patel have also left the Congress.



Amethi, Rae Bareilly nominees may be named today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress asserted on Wednesday that within 24 hours, the candidates for the Amethi and Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha constituencies would be announced by the party's Central Election Committee (CEC), which empowered Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge to finalise the candidates for Amethi and Rae Bareilly.

"My expectation is that in the next 24-30 hours, the Congress president will finalise and a decision taken by him will be announced," Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said in response to a question at AICC press conference.

Speculation had been rife that Rahul Gandhi might contest the Lok Sabha polls from Amethi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra from Raebareilly, a seat that was previously held by her mother Sonia Gandhi. Both seats are considered bastions of the Gandhi family and the local units of the Congress have demanded that the two scions of the family contest from there. Congress has forged an alliance with the SP in Uttar Pradesh and is contesting 17 Lok Sabha seats in the State.

the alliance with AAP was bringing "great disrepute" and "embarrassment" to Delhi Congress workers on a daily basis.

Prajwal ready to join probe; his family invokes truth, gods

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
BENGALURU/NEW DELHI

On a day when Karnataka Chief Minister K Siddaramaiah wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to cancel the diplomatic passport and take swift action against the Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna who is facing allegations of sexually abusing several women, the latter took to social media to announce that he will join the probe soon and said the truth will prevail.

Revanna's family conducted a havan at their Holenarasipura residence which is also home to his father JD(S) MLA and former Karnataka Minister HD Revanna. The MP, who left the country as soon as the election to his constituency ended, has also sought seven days' time to appear before the Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed by the Karnataka Government to enquire into the huge cache of about 3,000 explicit videos and photos allegedly pertaining to him, which have gone viral on social media.

"As I am not in Bangalore to attend the enquiry, I have communicated to CID Bangalore through my advocate. Truth will prevail soon," Prajwal, grandson of former Prime Minister and JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda, said in a Facebook post.

A case has been registered against MLA and former minister H D Revanna and his son Prajwal at Holenarasipura on a complaint lodged by their former cook and relative for allegedly sexually harassing her. She also alleged that



Prajwal made video calls to her daughter and spoke in an objectionable manner, which forced her to block him.

The MP who is seeking re-election from Hassan on a JD(S) ticket, shared a letter by his lawyer Arun G to the Deputy Superintendent of Police of the SIT, in which he has sought seven days' time to appear before the official because he is abroad.

Further, in a letter to Modi, the Karnataka Government asked the PM to take other steps such as using diplomatic and police channels of the Government of India as well as international police agencies to ensure the swift return of the "absconding" Member of Parliament to face the full force of the law.

PIOUS PRESIDENT



President Droupadi Murmu offers prayers at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya

Pioneer Photo

Hindu marriage is a samskara, not a party: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A Hindu marriage is not an event for "song and dance", "winning and dining" or a commercial transaction, the Supreme Court has observed and said it cannot be recognised in the "absence of a valid ceremony" under the Hindu Marriage Act.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih said a Hindu marriage is a 'samskara' and a sacrament which has to be accorded its status as an institution of great value in Indian society.

In its recent order passed in the matter of two trained commercial pilots, who sought a divorce decree without performing a valid Hindu marriage ceremony, the bench urged young men and women to "think deeply about the institution of marriage even before they enter



upon it and as to how sacred the said institution is, in Indian society."

"A marriage is not an event for 'song and dance' and 'winning and dining' or an occasion to demand and exchange dowry and gifts by undue pressure leading to possible

initiation of criminal proceedings thereafter. A marriage is not a commercial transaction. It is a solemn foundational event celebrated so as to establish a relationship between a man and a woman who acquire the status of a husband and wife for an evolving

family in future which is a basic unit of Indian society," the bench said. "Termining the marriage as sacred as it provides a lifelong, dignity-affirming, equal, consensual and healthy union of two individuals, the bench said a Hindu marriage facilitates procreation, consolidates the unit of family and solidifies the spirit of fraternity within various communities. "We deprecate the practice of young men and women seeking to acquire the status of being a husband and a wife to each other and therefore purportedly being married, in the absence of a valid marriage ceremony under the provisions of the (Hindu Marriage) Act such as in the instant case where the marriage between the parties was to take place later," the bench said.

In its April 19 order, the bench said where a Hindu marriage is not

performed in accordance with the applicable rites or ceremonies such as 'saptapadi' (taking seven steps by the groom and the bride jointly before the sacred fire), the marriage will not be construed as a Hindu marriage.

"We further observe that a Hindu marriage is a sacrament and has a sacred character. In the context of saptapadi in a Hindu marriage, according to Rig Veda, after completing the seventh step (saptapadi) the bridegroom says to his bride, 'With seven steps we have become friends (sakha). May I attain to friendship with thee; may I not be separated from thy friendship'. A wife is considered to be half of oneself (ardhangini) but to be accepted with an identity of her own and to be a co-equal partner in the marriage," it said.

Classifieds

BEDKHALI NOTICE

I, Savitri W/o Sh. Jai Bhagwan R/o Village Dhatauri, Tehsil Ganaur, Dist. Sonipat has disowned my son Ram & his wife Neelam from my all movable-immovable property as they are out of my control. In future, if anybody deals with them, he/she will do at their own risk.

I, Sunita W/o Sh. Jai Bhagwan R/o 615, Village Rajpur, Tehsil Gannaur, District Sonipat, Haryana has disowned my son Rahul from my all movable-immovable property as he is out of my control. In future, if anybody deals with him, he/she will do at their own risk.

I, Shriom S/o Sh. Randhir Singh R/o Village Baiyanpur, Tehsil & District Sonipat, Haryana 131001 has disowned my son Shavin & his wife Pooja from my all movable-immovable property as they are out of my control. In future, if anybody deals with them, he/she will do at their own risk.

I, Amit Sarin S/o Prem Kumar R/o H.No- 562, Sector-12 Panchkula, Haryana, declare that my son Sugam Sarin is out of my control, so I disown him from my movable-immovable properties. I will not be responsible for any act.

I, Ami Lal S/o Jai Mal R/o H.No. 76, Hill View Enclave, Dhakoli, S.A.S Nagar Mohali Punjab-140603 declare that my Son Mukesh Alias Mukesh Kumar and his wife Sunita is completely out of my Control. Therefore I disown my Son and his wife from all my movable-immovable properties. Anybody dealing with both of them will be responsible and I will have nothing to do with them.

I Vikram S/I Jile Singh R/O Village Gogripur Distt Karnal Declare That My Son Rajat Singh Is Out Of My Control So I Disown Him From All My Movable And Immoveable Properties. Anybody Dealing With Him On Their Own Risk.

I, Pinki W/o Sh. Subhash Chander R/o H.No. 530, Ward No.10, Gopal Colony, Teh. & Distt. Rohtak declare that my son Jai Ahuja is out of my control. So I disown him from my all moveable/immoveable properties. Any body dealing with him at their own risk. I or my family are not responsible for any type of their any legal or illegal acts.

We, Karamveer S/o Tara Chand & Baldei w/o Karamveer R/o H.No. 902/1, Street No. 13, Near Bittu Aata Chakki, Vikash Nagar, Railway phatak Cross Bahadurgarh Distt. Jhajjar-124507 have declare that my son Ashish and his wife Akansha are out of my control. So I disown them from my all moveable/immovable properties. Any body dealing with them at their own risk. I or my family are not responsible for any type of their any acts.

I, Satish Kumar S/o RamMurti Vill.Karah Sahib Tehsil Pehowa Distt.Kurukshetra My son Raman Kumar and his wife Annu are out of my control. I, disown them from all My moveable and immovable properties. If Anybody deals with him at their Own risk.

I, Radhe Shyam S/o Parma R/o Vill. Dahola Teh. Alewa Distt. Jind (Hr.) Present Address H.No. V-48 Ground floor Budh Vihar Fase-1 Delhi declare that my son Rakesh Garg and his wife Priya are out of my control. So, I disown both of them from my movable and immovable properties. Anybody dealing with them will do so at their own risk. Me and My family members are not responsible.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, No.3205748X NK Vikram S/o Sh. Ramdiya R/O Village Makhand, Tehsil Uchana, Distt. Jind, inform that my mother name and date of birth has been wrongly written as Patasho and 01.01.1963 in my service record. But according to her Aadhar Card and Voter Card her correct name is Pataso and date of birth is 01.01.1962 which is to be amended accordingly.

I, No 2498979L Rank LHav Name Shamsar Singh of 26 Punjab residing at Village Sarota P/o Janial Tehsil Pathankot Distt Gurdaspur (PB)- 145028 have changed Name of my son from Kartikh Andotra to Kartik Andotra vide affidavit dated 30-04-2024 before District Court Pathankot (PB).

I, No 2498979L Rank LHav Name Shamsar Singh of 26 Punjab residing at Village Sarota P/o Janial Tehsil Pathankot Distt Gurdaspur (PB)- 145028 have changed Name of my wife from Lovely to Lovely Devi vide affidavit dated 30-04-2024 before District Court Pathankot (PB).

I Lalithamma legally mother of No. 15700256F Rank L/Hav Krishna Kumar Nair G L Unit 10 CSR(A) C/o 56 APO Bathinda Cantt. (Punjab) permanent resident of Kizhakkumkaraputhenveedu, Karukone PO, Vellarankulam, Channapeta, Distt. Kollam, State Kerala Pin Code 691311 Declare That I have changed my date of birth from 01.07.1962 to 03.05.1964.

I Gopalakrishnapillai legally father of No. 15700256F Rank L/Hav Name Krishna Kumaran Nair G L Unit 10 CSR(A) C/o 56 APO Bathinda Cantt. (Punjab) permanent resident of Kizhakkumkaraputhenveedu, Karukone PO, Vellarankulam, Channapeta, Distt. Kollam, State Kerala Pin Code 691311 declare That I have changed my name from Gopala Krishnan A to Gopalakrishnapillai and date of birth from 01.07.1957 to 01.01.1961.

I, Army No 7431753H Rank- Hav Name- Tai Puning Presently Posted - Western Command INT Batalian, Chandimandir Cantt, Pin 900490 Permanent Address: Vill-Soyorgang, Monigong, West Siang, Mechuka, Arunachal Pradesh-792051 And His Mother Name is Smt Yasang Puning Declare That I have changed My Son's Name from Tati Puning to Marshal Puning. Vide Affidavit No:RD 0021324636, Dated-01-05-2024

I, Rupashree Nayak is legally Wedded Spouse of Army No: 15789895P Rank: Hav Name- Subrat Kumar Samal Presently Posted Unit-142 AD Regt. (SP) C/o 56 APO, Chandimandir Cantt, Panchkula (Haryana) Permanent Address: B-173, Sector-1, Rourkela (M) PO: NIT Campus, Teh-Rourkela, Distt-Sundergarh, State-Odisha, Pin-769008 Declare that I have changed My Name from Rupashree Nayak to Rupashree Samal. Vide Affidavit No-RD 0021324635, Dated- 01-05-24

I, Preysi Sharma D/o Varinder Kumar R/O H. No. 426, Milk Colony Dhanas, Chandigarh declare that in my Matric Certificate & in my 10+2 Certificate name of my Father is wrongly written as Varinder Sharma Instead of Varinder Kumar.

I, JC492315P Sub. Ved Parkash S/o Sh. Om Parkash R/o V.P.O. Kharran Teh. Bahadurgarh Distt. Jhajjar, Haryana declare that I have change my wife name in my Army record Manju Devi to Manju Rani in future for all purpose.

I, JC-511578L Sub Lakhvir Singh S/o Kewal Singh R/o Vill: Rasulpur (Jandi) Teh-Jagraon Distt. Ludhiana, Punjab, have changed my daughter name from Inderpreet Bangr to Inderpreet Kaur Vide Affidavit Dated 1st May 2024 before notary Public Jagraon.

I hitherto to known as Rajesh Kumar Dua S/o Brij Bhushan Dua R/o New Raja Garden, Jalandhar, Punjab, India-144021 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Rajesh Dua. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

I, Mrs. Harpreet Kaur Mehra W/o Maninder Singh R/o Vill-Boothgarh Teh-Khanna Dist. Ludhiana Punjab, India that my mother's name is Urmila Rani. That in some papers my mother's name is written as Urmila Rani. That Urmila Rani and Urmila Rani are used for the same lady i.e. my mother.

I, Shantti Singh, son of Binder Singh, resident of street no.2, near Ramdev Mandir, Gandhi Basti, Kotkapura, Faridkot, Pin 151204, Punjab, India and presently residing at 14010 60 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3X2N3, Canada, do hereby change my name from Shantti Singh to Gurshaan Singh Aulakh with immediate effect.

I, Gursharanpreet Kaur, daughter of Gamdur Singh, resident of H.No.248, Duareana Road, Kotkapura, Faridkot, Pin 151204, Punjab, India and presently residing at 14010 60 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3X2N3, Canada, do hereby change my name from Gursharanpreet Kaur to Gursharanpreet Kaur Atwal with immediate effect.

I, Rajbir Kaur (existing name of deponent as per kindred roll) is legally daughter of JC 501741H subedar Beant singh R/O village Dulewala Tehsil phul District Bathinda State Punjab declare that I have changed my name Rajbir kaur to Rajveer kaur due to wrong name published in my father service record that my D.O.B 01 oct 2003 Now I am applying for the correction of the same in my father service record. Objection if any may be conveyed to Concerned Authority with in seven days.

I, Saroj Bala W/o Joginder R/o Village Nagal Patti Machrolli Tehsil Bilaspur, Distt Yamunanagar state that my Son Amnish Kumar Army no. 3013778A NK. Unit 24 Rajput C/o 56 APO record my name written as Saroj Devi & D.O.B 17.09.1968 which is incorrect. While my correct name is Saroj Bala & D.O.B 01.01.1953

I, Joginder S/o Sh. Maan Singh R/o Village Nagal Patti, PO Machrolli, Tehsil Bilaspur, Distt Yamunanagar state that my Son Amnish Kumar Army no. 3013778A NK. Unit 24 Rajput C/o 56 APO record my name written as Joginder Singh & D.O.B 17.09.1964 which is incorrect. While my correct name is Joginder & D.O.B 01.01.1960.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Jasvir Kaur W/o Parminder Singh R/o Near Railway Station H.No. 2685/9 Mohalla Jawahar Nagar Adampur Distt. Jalandhar Punjab have changed my name from Jasvir Kaur to Jasbir Kaur. Concerned note.

I, Jatinder Singh Kang S/o Harbans Singh Kang R/O H.No. 467/5, Ward No. 03, Panj Pipla Bahadurpur Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab declare that Jatinder Singh Kang alias Jatinder Singh is one and the same person. Concerned note.

I, Rajwinder Kaur W/o Sukhwinder Singh Panesar R/O Village Dhaliwal PO Kotla Naudh Singh, Distt. Hoshiarpur have changed my name from Rajwinder Kaur to Rajwinder Kaur Panesar. Concerned note.

I, Abhinav S/o Sandeep Dhankhar R/O 181/31 Malik Colony, Sonipat, Haryana 131001 has changed my name to Abhinav Dhankhar for all purposes.

I, Sudesh Kumari W/o Sh. Lajpat R/o VPO Khatkar, Teh.Uchana Distt Jind have changed my name from Sudesh Kumari to Sudesh for all future purposes.

I, Rajender Parshad Garg S/o Krishan Lal R/O B-6/1234-F, Aashirwad Hospital, Gobind Puri, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Rajender Prashad Garg to Rajender Parshad Garg.

I, Sarita Nanda D/o Rampal Nanda R/o 205, Vishvkarma Mohalla, Yamuna Nagar have changed my minor son's name from Adit Arora to Adit.

I, Army No. JC-482941L, NB Sub Pradeep Kumar Pundir S/o Mahender Singh R/o Defence Colony, Sector D, Ambala Cantt, Distt Ambala, Haryana declare that in my army record my daughter's name recorded as Akashi. The actual name of my daughter is Akashi Pundir. Affidavit no. IN-UP33341789186103W dated 25.04.2024 before Notary, Fatehgarh-Farrukhabad.

I, Parul Rani W/o Army No. JC-482941L, NB Sub Pradeep Kumar Pundir R/o Defence Colony, Sector D, Ambala Cantt, Distt Ambala, Haryana declare that in my husband's army record my name recorded as Parul and date of birth recorded as 10.06.1988. The actual name of mine is Parul Rani and correct date of birth is 10.04.1987. Affidavit no. IN-UP33346383899148W dated 25.04.2024 before Notary, Fatehgarh-Farrukhabad.

I, Phool Pati W/o Mahender Singh R/O Village & Post Manana, Distt Panipat, Haryana declare that in my son Ravinder Army No. 3009182H, Hav Clerk's army record my name recorded as Phool Pathi Devi and date of birth recorded as 03.07.1962. My actual name is Phool Pati and correct date of birth is 01.01.1958. Affidavit no. IN-UP-3335656015316W dated 25.04.2024 before Notary, Fatehgarh-Farrukhabad.

I, Rajbala W/o Mahender Singh R/O Defence Colony, Sector D, Ambala Cantt, Distt Ambala, Haryana declare that in my son Pradeep Kumar Pundir Army No. JC-482941L, NB Subedar's army record my name recorded as Rajbala Devi and date of birth recorded as 03.12.1955. My actual name is Rajbala and correct date of birth is 01.01.1954. Affidavit no. IN-UP-33352043597719W dated 25.04.2024 before Notary, Fatehgarh-Farrukhabad.

I, Army No. 3009182H, Hav Clerk Ravinder S/o Mahender Singh R/o Village & Post Manana, Distt Panipat, Haryana presently posting at R.R.C Fatehgarh declare that in my army record my daughter's name recorded as Devanshi. The actual name of my daughter is Divyanshi. Affidavit no. IN-UP33362535367584W dated 25.04.2024 before Notary, Fatehgarh-Farrukhabad.

I, Harsimran Kaur W/o Harmeet Singh R/O 127 New Darshani Bagh Manimajra Chandigarh have change my name from Harsimran Kaur to Neelam Saini.

I, Sultan Malik s/o Sh. Hari Singh, R/o # 202/8, Hansi Road, Near Railway Fatak, Sant Nagar, Patiala Chawk, Jind Haryana have changed my name to Sultan Singh.

I, Surjeet Ram S/O Jhanda Singh R/O Village Uralna, Tehsil Guhla District Kaithal Haryana have changed my name from Surjeet Singh to Surjeet Ram.

I, Shagir Mohamad Kurashi S/o Jangsher R/O 98/12, Village Sasauli, PO Jagadhri Workshop, Teshil Jagadhri, Distt Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Shagir Mohamad Kurashi to Sagir Mohammad. In future I shall be known as Sagir Mohammad.

I, Tarvinder Kapoor S/o Nanak Chand R/O 1110, Mahavir Colony, Hanuman Gate, Jagadhri, Distt Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Tarvinder Kapoor to Tarvinder Kapoor.

I, Vinod Kumar Sharma S/o Sh Durga Dass Sharma R/O House No- 104, First floor Tower -F, Orbit Apartment VIP Road Zirakpur District SAS Nagar Mohali Punjab have changed my name from Vinod Kumar Sharma to Vinod Sharma.

I, Neelam W/o Ravi Kumar R/O House no. 2152 Dadu Majra Colony Sector-38 West Chandigarh have changed my name from Neelam to Neha Sharma.

I, Kamaljeet Kaur W/o Sh. Manpreet Singh Baghi R/O House No. 1925, Sector 34/D. Chandigarh have changed my name from Kamaljeet kaur to Kamaljeet kaur Baghi.

I, Sukhjit Kaur W/o Baljinder Singh R/o V.P.O Wadala Granthian, Teh. Batala, Distt. Gurdaspur have changed my name from Sukhjeet Kaur to Sukhjit Kaur. Concerned note.

I, Kamaljit Singh, son of Balwinder Singh, resident of Bhattar Farm House, VPO. Kahuwan, Gurdaspur, Punjab, India PIN:143528 and presently residing at 277 Woodbine Avenue, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2R0P7, do hereby change my name from Kamaljit Singh to Kamaljit Singh Buttar, with immediate effect.

I, Suman Lata Wife of Shri Sanjay Kumar resident of H.No. 81, Hari Bagh Colony Panipat-132103, state that I have changed my name from Suman Lata to Suman.

I, Updesh Rani W/o Sh. Raj Pal R/O Village Dhanora Jattan P.O. Bakali, Ladwa, Distt. Kurukshetra, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I have changed my name Updesh Devi to Updesh Rani.

I, Suraj Tejpal S/o Suresh tejpal R/o c8/15, Sector 4, Eldeco Estate, Near Babarpur, Panipat (HR) Declare that I have changed my name Suraj sharma to Suraj Tejpal for all purposes.

I, Seeta Devi W/o Sohan Mahto # 214, Village Faidan Nizampur Chandigarh have changed my name to Geeta Devi.

I, Deepak Kumar S/o Sh.Devi Prasad # 838, Kishangarh, Chandigarh have changed my name to Deepak Pant.

I, Geeta W/o Ashok Narwal # 2205, Near Gurudwara Sector 15/c Chandigarh have changed my name from Geeta to Geeta Narwal.

I, Mukteswar Jena S/o Sarat Kumar Jena # 3586, FF, Sector 46-C, Chandigarh have changed the name of my minor daughter from M J Aradhya to Aradhya Jena.

I, Rakesh Kumar S/o Chandan R/o # 2241 Sector 37-C Chandigarh have changed my name to Rakesh Rawat.

I, Nirmal Singh Basra S/o Sh. Didar Singh R/O House No. 1522, Sector 22B, Chandigarh have changed my name from Nirmal Singh to Nirmal Singh Basra.

I, Gurdeep Singh Narula S/o Sh. Ajit Singh R/O House No. 1518, Sector 33D, Chandigarh have changed my name from Gurdeep Singh to Gurdeep Singh Narula.

I, Sharno W/O Harbans Singh, VPO. Talwandi Salem, Tehsil Nakodar, Distt Jalandhar Have Changed My Name From Sharno To Charno.

I, Harbans Lal S/o Bishan Singh R/O VPO. Talwandi Salem, Tehsil Nakodar Distt. Jalandhar Have Changed My Name From Harbans Lal To Harbans Singh.

I, Himanshi Bansal W/o Sh. Shivam Garg R/o Grewal Basti, Sirda (Haryana). That I have changed my name from Himanshi Bansal to Himanshi, in future my name is to be called as Himanshi.

I, Sanjeev Garg S/o Sh. Surinder Pal R/O #160/01, C-Block, Sirda (Haryana). That I have changed my daughter's name is to be called as Kairavi Garg.

I, Sanjeev Garg S/o Sh. Surinder Pal R/O #160/01, C-Block, Sirda (Haryana). That I have changed my Son's name from Sourish to Sourish Garg. in future my daughter's name is to be called as Sourish Garg.

I, Abid Hasan S/o Taki Mohammad R/o Village Todarpur, PO Naharpur, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Abid Hasan to Aabid Ali.

I, Amjad Abid S/o Aabid Ali R/o Village Todarpur, PO Naharpur, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Amjad Abid to Amjad Aabid.

I, Asma W/o Amjad Aabid R/o Village Todarpur, PO Naharpur, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Asma to Asima.

I, Kanwaljeet Singh S/o Gurdeep Singh R/O 1749, Near Vivekanand School, Sec 17, Huda, Jagadhri, Distt Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Kanwaljeet Singh to Kawal Jeet Singh. In future I shall be known as Kawal Jeet Singh.

I, Ranjeet Kaur w/o Sourabh Chouhan r/o # 373, Sector 40-A, Chandigarh have changed my name from Ranjeet Kaur to Ranjeet Chouhan.

I, Divya Khurana W/o Deepak Kumar R/o 544, Dashmesh Avenue, Majitha Road, Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name from Divya Khurana to Divya.

I, Hoshier Chand S/O Om Parkash R/O Vpo Jansui Tehsil & Distt Ambala Have Changed My Name From Hoshier Chand To Hoshiyar Chand.

I, Rakha Rani W/O Amrik Singh R/O Hno. 208/93, Village Sakhraon Distt. Ambala I Have Changed My Name From Rakha Rani To Rekha Rani.

I, Rohit S/O Sushil Kumar R/O H.No- 247, Phase-3, Jaggi Colony Ambala City Have Changed My Name From Rohit To Rohit Chhabra.

I, Seema W/O Krishan Kumar R/O Village Razapur Po Khelan, Distt S.A.S Nagar Mohali, Punjab, Pin 140501 Have Changed My Son Name From Mukesh Sharma To Aakash Singh.

I, Parveen Singh S/O Amrik Singh R/O Vpo Kakkar Majra Tehsil Naraingarh Distt Ambala Have Changed My Name From Parveen Kumar To Parveen Singh. In Future I Use My Name As Parveen Singh In My All Documents.

I, Jai Bhagwan Sharma S/O Sh. Jai Ram Sharma R/O Village Tasrouli Tehsil Naraingarh Distt. Ambala Have Changed My Name Jai Bhagwan To Jai Bhagwan Sharma. In Future I Use My Name From Jai Bhagwan To Jai Bhagwan Sharma.

It is for general information that I Sonu s/o Hiralal R/O Pana Modiya, Murthal, Teh. & Distt. Sonipat declare that My Name is wrongly written as Sonu kumar in my 8th class HBSE Educational documents. Where as my actual Name is Sonu respectively which may be amended accordingly. It is certify that I have complied with other Legal requirements in this connection.

I, Sandeep S/o Jagminder R/o Gorar teh. Kharkhoda, Sonipat have changed my name Sandeep to Sandeep Tomar for all future purposes.

I, Suresh Kumar S/o Sh. Hookam Singh R/o Dhabi Tek Singh, Tehsil Narwana, Distt. Jind, inform that the name of my daughter has been wrongly written as Mehak in her matric certificate. But according to Aadhar Card & birth certificate, her correct name is Mehak Singh.

I, Jitender Saharn S/o Sh.Sultan Singh R/O H.No.2463, Urban Estate, Jind, have changed my name from Jitender Saharn to Jitender Saharan.

I Annu w/o Balram Singh r/o village Gudha tehsil gharaunda distt karnal declare change my name from Annu Devi to Annu and in future my name is Annu.

I, Surender Kumar, S/o Purn Mal, R/O House No. 244, Sector-24, Sanoli Road, Behind Malik Petrol Pump, Panipat, declare that for all future purposes, I have changed my name from Surender Kumar Deswal to Surender Kumar.

I, Service No. 15783827L Hav M Ramesh, R/O Unit 105 Ad Regt C/O 56 Apo Have Changed My Son Name From Rs Pugaz To Rs Pugazh Vide Affidavit Dated 01-05-2024 Before Ambala Cantt.

I Pritpal Singh S/O Subeg Singh VPO Bhikhariwal Tehsil Kalanur District Gurdaspur have changed my Name from Pritpal Singh to Singh Pritpal. Concerned Note.

I, Balwinder Singh S/o Dilbag Singh R/o village sohal thathi (thathi), po sohal distt tarn taran have declare that Balwinder is my given name and singh is my surname

I, Simarjeet Kaur W/o Gurwinder Singh R/o Patti Road, Vpo Bhikhiwind Distt Tarn Taran Have Changed My Name To Simarjit Kaur

I Sangeeta Behl W/o Ajay Behl R/O H.no 70, Viveka Nand Colony, Tylor Road, Amritsar Declares That on my passport my husband name mentioned as Ajay Kumar Behl and on adhaar card my husband name is mentioned as Ajay behl That Ajay kumar Behl and Ajay Behl one and the same person. Concern note it please.

I Taniya Thakur W/O Shivam Sethi R/O H.No.3 R.B.Duni Chand Road Amritsar Have Changed My Name To Taniya Sethi.

I, Gagandeep Singh S/O Jaspal Singh R/O H.No.173, Shakti Nagar, District Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Gagandeep Singh To Gagandeep Singh Makkar

I, Jaspal Singh Makkar S/O Gurdial Singh R/O H.No.173, Inside Lahori Gate Shakti Nagar District Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Jaspal Singh Makkar To Jaspal Singh

The General Public Is Informed That I Have Changed My Name From Rinku To Rinku Sahota And In Future I Should Be Known As Rinku Sahota S/O Sardar Masih Address-Village Granthgarh Po Fatewal Teh Ajnala Distt Amritsar Punjab

I, Karamjit Kaur W/O Jobanjeet Singh R/O Vpo Rampur Bhutwind, District Tarn Taran Have Changed My Name From Karamjit Kaur To Karamjeet Kaur

I Naresh Kumar Kapoor S/O Prem Parkash Kapoor Resident Of 1636/15, Bazar Bharbhunjian Wala, Qilla Banghian, Amritsar. I Have Changed My Name From Naresh Kumar Kapoor To Naresh Kapoor.

I Reema Arora D/O Sh. Harish Chander Arora W/O Mr. Naresh Kapoor R/O H No. 1636/15, Bazar Barbhunjian, Qilla Banghian, Amritsar. I Have Changed My Name After Marriage Reema Arora To Neha Kapoor

I, Jaskiran Kaur Sandhu, W/O Jagroop Singh Sandhu, R/O 5-A Sant Avenue Mall Road Amritsar Punjab 143001, Have Changed My Minor Daughter's Name From Daya Kaur To Daya Kaur Sandhu.

I, Rekha And Rekha Arora And Rekha Kumari W/O Sanjeev Kumar R/O 424, Gali Nain Sukh, Katra Parja, Hathhi Gate, Amritsar Have Declare That Above All Name's Are Mine One And Same Person

I, Ritika Sharma W/O Rajan Sharma R/O H.No.24 C1, Garden Colony Near Jamunwali Road, Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Ritika Sharma To Reetika Sharma

I Bhawana Mahajan W/O Chander Mohan Resident Of 49, Holy Avenue, Holy City, Mahal Sub Urban, Amritsar. I Have Changed My Name From Bhawana Mahajan To Bhawna Mahajan.

I Chander Mohan Mahajan S/O Kasturi Lal Resident Of 49 Holy Avenue, Holy City Mahal, Amritsar. I Have Changed My Name From Chander Mohan Mahajan To Chander Mohan.

I, Jyoti Kallappa Spouse Of No.15484285a Dfr Gireppa Kademani R/O 46 Armd Regt C/O 56 Apo Have Changed My Name To Jyoti G Kademani Vide Affidavit No.In-Pb11206580711747w Dt.01.05.2024 Before Notary Public Amritsar

I, No. 15484285a Dfr Gireppa Kademani S/O Subrav Gireppa Kademani R/O 46 Armd Regt C/O 56 Apo Have Changed My Son's Name From Pratamesh Gireppa Kademani To Prathamesh Gireppa Kademani Vide Affidavit No.In-Pb11204964665161w Dt.01.05.2024 Before Notary Public Amritsar

I, No. 15484285a Dfr Gireppa Kademani S/O Subrav Gireppa Kademani R/O 46 Armd Regt C/O 56 Apo Have Changed My Daughter's Name From Vaishnavi Gireppa Kademani To Vaishnavi Gireppa Kademani Vide Affidavit No.In-Pb11204569852638w Dt.01.05.2024 Before Notary Public Amritsar

I, No. 15484285a Dfr Gireppa Kademani S/O Subrav Gireppa Kademani R/O 46 Armd Regt C/O 56 Apo Have Changed My Father's Name From Subrao Kademani To Subrav Gireppa Kademani Vide Affidavit No.In-Pb11205466803437w Dt.01.05.2024 Before Notary Public Amritsar

I, No. 15484285a Dfr Gireppa Kademani S/O Subrav Gireppa Kademani R/O 46 Armd Regt C/O 56 Apo Have Changed My Mother's Name From Renuka To Renuka Subbarav Kademani Vide Affidavit No.In-Pb11204248937111w Dt.01.05.2024 Before Notary Public Amritsar

I, No.15488232y Dfr Gourav Nagarkoti S/O Vasudev Nagarkoti R/O 46 Armed Regt C/O 56 Apo Have Changed My Mother's Name From Hansa Nagarkoti To Hansi Nagarkoti Vide Affidavit No.In-Pb11207427007360w Dt.01.05.2024 Before Notary Public Amritsar

I, Prabhjit Singh S/O Harbhajan Singh R/O Mararri Kalan, Marari Kalan, Majitha, Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Prabhjit Singh To Prabhjit Singh Uppal

I, Sapna Uppal W/O Prabhjit Singh Uppal R/O Marari Kalan, Majitha, Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Sapna Uppal To Sapna Tandon.

Days after Haryana list of candidates for Lok Sabha Elections, disquiet in Congress

MANOJ KUMAR ■ CHANDIGARH

Ahead of polls, the list of candidates released by the Congress party for Lok Sabha elections in Haryana has created a sense of discontent among the disgruntled aspirants in the State. Some of the aspirants for tickets, are lying low and are yet to join the campaign.

Senior Congress leader and former Chief Minister Bupinder Singh Hooda, however, downplayed the resentment and said that no party leaders are upset and the final decision to allot tickets was made by the party's high command.

In Haryana, Congress is fighting the polls in alliance with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), with the former contesting from nine of 10 seats. AAP has named former Rajya Sabha member and state party chief Sushil Gupta from Kurukshetra.

Of the nine candidates fielded by the Congress, Hooda's son and Rajya Sabha MP Deepender Singh Hooda is contesting from Rohtak Parliamentary Constituency, while former Union Minister and Congress General Secretary Kumari Selja from the Sirsa reserved seat; junior Congress leader and sitting MLA Rao Dan Singh from Bhiwani-Mahendragarh; youth leader Divyanshu Budhiraja from Karnal; Hooda loyalist and veteran leader Jai Prakash from Hisar; Sitting MLA Varun Choudhary from Ambala reserved seat; Hooda associate Satpal Brahmachari from Sonapat; while former State Minister Mahendra Pratap from Faridabad and Film Actor and senior party leader Raj

Babar from Gurugram. Eight of the nine Congress candidates who have got tickets in Haryana for the May 25 polls are loyalists of former Chief Minister Bupinder Singh Hooda.

After the Congress party announced the candidature of Raj Babbar from the Gurugram, Congress leader Ajay Singh Yadav, a contender for the seat, hit out at the Haryana unit of the party over a "deep-rooted" conspiracy "to crush senior leaders".

Yadav took to X to express his unhappiness. "I will abide by the decision of the National leadership. But there is a deep-rooted conspiracy of a few congress Haryana state leaders to crush the senior Congress leaders," Yadav, who is the party's chairman of the OBC department, said without taking any names. "I am and will always work for the Congress Party," Yadav added.

While Kiran Choudhary, a sitting MLA of the Congress, was eyeing a ticket for her daughter Shruti Choudhary from the Bhiwani-Mahendragarh seat, Birender Singh's son Brijendra Singh was a ticket hopeful from the Hisar seat but both of them were denied tickets.

Party sources said that allegations of cross-voting during Raj Sabha Election against Kiran Choudhary, coupled with Hooda's lobbying for his close associate Rao Dan Singh, likely influenced the party's decision. Before the ticket announcement, some farmers had voiced their opposition to Birender Singh's son Brijendra, citing his absence during the

16-month-long farmers' protest in Uchana.

Days after Congress announced Mahendragarh MLA Rao Dan Singh as its candidate from Bhiwani-Mahendragarh parliamentary seat, another ticket aspirant Shrutika Choudhry, along with her mother and Tosham MLA Kiran Choudhry, recently met party workers in Bhiwani and claimed that she (Shrutika) had emerged as the "most popular" during a party survey. Kiran Choudhry said, "Rao Dan Singh did tremendous work in the last poll. I will call my workers' meeting in a week and assign them their duties."

In response to his son's ticket denial, Chaudhary Birender Singh expressed disappointment, emphasizing Brijendra Singh's eagerness to contest the elections. Birender Singh, a former Union minister, and Brijendra Singh, the outgoing Lok Sabha MP from Hisar, had left the BJP recently and joined the Congress.

Senior Congress leader and five-time MLA Karan Singh Dalal, who was denied ticket from Faridabad, has also sounded the bugle of rebellion asking the party to field him in place of the candidate announced by the party. Dalal also gave the party time till May 5 to take the decision. May 6 is the last date for filing of nominations for the May 25 election.

Upset over the denial of ticket when the party announced eight candidates, including for Faridabad, Dalal, convened a Sarv-Jatiya Mahapanchayat at Palwal,

where he discussed his future course of strategy.

"The Mahapanchayat has decided that the party high command should change their decision by May 5 and field me as the party candidate in Faridabad or I should contest from some other political party. However, I have decided that if the party fields me as a candidate then I will contest. I will not contest as an Independent," Dalal said after the Mahapanchayat.

He said the nomination process has begun in Haryana. "The process shall go on till May 6. The party high command has enough time to change their decision," added Dalal, whose son is married to the daughter of Hooda's brother.

In the list of nine announced by the Congress, as many as eight are loyalists and supporters of Hooda. They include former minister Mahendra Pratap who has been fielded from Faridabad. Dalal claimed that Mahendra Pratap was never in the list of contenders from Faridabad, but "a few people in the BJP managed to get him in the Congress ticket to get their candidate a comfortable victory".

Sources in the Congress Party said that several party functionaries wielding considerable influence among respective communities were unhappy with the way tickets had been distributed in the State. Moreover, with the fear of disgruntled aspirants playing spoilsport against the official candidates looming large, the party's central leadership has intensified their efforts to suppress the rebellion within the party ranks.

Former Cong MLA Dalvir Goldy switches over to AAP

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Former Congress legislator Dalvir Singh Khangura 'Goldy' on Wednesday joined the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Just a day after bidding farewell to the Congress due to his discontent with the party leadership's decision to deny him a ticket for the Sangrur Lok Sabha seat, Goldy's surprising alignment with AAP has sent shockwaves through the political corridors of the State.

The move not only dealt a significant blow to the Congress party in Punjab, particularly in the Sangrur segment, but also set the stage for a potential realignment of political dynamics in the region. Congress' Bholath MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira has been pitted against AAP's Barnala MLA and Cabinet Minister Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer from Sangrur — a seat currently represented by Khalian supporter and former IPS Simranjeet Singh Mann of Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar).

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann presided over Goldy's induction into AAP, marking a significant moment in their political journey, having contested against each other in the 2022 state assembly elections in Dhuri. Mann had defeated Goldy by a margin of 58,206 votes to become the Chief Minister.

Hailing him as a hard-working individual, Mann welcomed Goldy as a younger brother into the party fold. Mann, in fact, went on to describe Goldy and Meen Hayer as his "two arms in Malwa region".

Goldy, after his induction, expressed gratitude towards the Chief Minister Mann for his generosity in embracing

someone who had previously contested against him. He pledged his unwavering commitment to AAP and vowed to work tirelessly for the betterment of Punjab.

At the same time, Goldy vowed to reveal the "dirty secrets of Congress", while exposing "how they ruined so many homes".

Mann emphasized that Goldy's decision to join AAP was driven by his own choice, highlighting that AAP provides a conducive platform for emerging young leaders like him.

"It is not Goldy who left Congress but rather Congress that overlooked him," he said. Criticizing Khaira, Mann recalled his previous electoral performance in Bathinda, where he fell short of garnering even 19,000 votes. Mann predicted a similar outcome for Khaira in Sangrur, suggesting that he would be compelled to apologize to the electorate on June 4 — the day of result.

Goldy's decision to switch parties came after the Congress nominated Khaira as its candidate for the Sangrur Lok Sabha seat, overlooking Goldy's aspirations. Feeling sidelined by the party's leadership, Goldy made the bold move to join AAP, citing the need for a more inclusive and transparent political environment.

Taking on the Congress for nepotism in ticket distribution, Mann contrasted AAP's ethos of meritocracy. Welcoming Goldy to AAP, Mann hailed him as a dynamic leader, emphasizing AAP's inclusive ethos devoid of a high command structure.

Mann also highlighted Goldy's political journey, from student politics to MLA, underscoring AAP's commitment to nurturing diverse talent. "Goldy made a place for himself in the Congress. But whenever the party got an opportunity, he was sidelined. I am inducting him into AAP as a younger brother. We have no high command. We are younger and older brothers... We have found a young man in Malwa. Our party will be strengthened," said Mann.

"Dalvir Goldy was an MLA from Dhuri and I was the MP... and we crossed each other many times... we were also in touch that time. It is democracy. It is not necessary that all flowers are of the same kind in a bouquet. I had always said MP belongs to everyone... I am the Chief Minister of everyone... Candidates are till elections. Later, we all are elected representatives," he said.

"Why I was asked to pat Rs 50k and apply for ticket"

Visibly upset over allotting a ticket to Khaira, Goldy asked, "If they had to give the ticket to him, why did they ask me to apply for the ticket and pay Rs 50,000 as application fee when they had already finalized the candidate?"

"I and my wife applied for the ticket because we were told to do so, but now Khaira is saying that he knew for more than six months that he'll be contesting from Sangrur... This is discouraging for a young leader like me who worked every day and prepared to fight from Sangrur since the by polls," he added. He said that a number of people were joining AAP with him and that he would be reaching Sangrur on Thursday to campaign for AAP candidate Hayer.

Responding to Khaira's allegations that Goldy was "pressurized" to join the ruling party, Mann said: "Goldy is clean. We have checked him. We keep checking our own people also. It is not Goldy who has quit the party. Parties need people like Goldy who are good orators, and hardworking." "You know what they (Congress) have done. The Bathinda-based leader has been sent to Ludhiana. The Sangrur-based leader has been sent to Anandpur Sahib. This is what they do," Mann said.

MC run parking lots introduces digital payments through QR code for parking fee



PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To streamline parking and earn additional revenue, the Municipal Corporation Chandigarh has revamped the paid parking system after introducing digital payments through QR code aims to reduce opportunities for any kind of leakages and ensure accuracy of revenue recorded.

To avoid inconvenience to the visitors and to enhance revenue generation, several improvements have been introduced by MC Chandigarh. Proper uniforms and Identity Cards have been given to parking attendants for easy identification. Payable rate lists and instructions to customers have been displayed in all the paid parking lots. The Jana Small Finance Bank Ltd. has been associated with the collection of paid parking and facilities provided for the management of paid parking lots.

Visitors can now pay the parking fee through QR code scanner in 71 paid parking lots, which are being managed by the MC Chandigarh in sectors 5, 7, 8, 9, 17, 20, 22, 26, 34, 35, 43, Manimajra and Multiplexes of Chandigarh. As per the rate list, currently, Rs. 7 for two-wheelers and Rs. 14 for four-wheelers (non commercial), Rs. 28 for LCV/Mini Bus, Service Jeep/Cab/Taxi/Three Wheeler and Rs. 70 for Tourist Buses/HCV have been displayed in the rate list.

A statement said these steps have been introduced to minimise the long queues of vehicles due to cash payments and cumbersome PoS machines at most of the parking lots, further leading to traffic chaos.

Further, the parking staff deployed in all the paid parking lots have been provided new uniforms and Identity Cards so that visitors can identify the parking staff easily, an official said.

Battlelines drawn in Himachal: Cong Fields Sharma from Kangra and Raizada from Hamirpur

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Ending suspense over the candidate from the Kangra Lok Sabha constituency, the Congress has decided to field senior party leader Anand Sharma from the seat.

The Congress central election committee announced the names of Anand Sharma and Satpal Raizada as party candidates from Kangra and Hamirpur seats.

It would be Brahmin versus Brahmin in the Kangra parliamentary constituency as the BJP has already decided to field Rajiv Bharadwaj, presently vice president of the state BJP and nephew of former Chief Minister Shanta Kumar.

During his active political career spanning five decades, Sharma was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1984, 1994, 2010 and 2016. He served as Union Minister of Commerce

from 2009 to 2014. Sharma was also the Youth Congress president and chairperson and member of various Standing Committees of the Parliament.

This is the first Lok Sabha elections that Sharma will be contesting. He had also been a deputy leader of the Congress in the Rajya Sabha.

The Congress has fielded former MLA from Una Satpal Raizada from the Hamirpur Lok Sabha seat against four times MP and Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur, who is the son of former Chief Minister Prem Kumar Dhumal. Raizada remained the Congress MLA from Una from 2017 to 2022.

Its Raja (King) of erstwhile Rampur state Vikramaditya Singh versus "queen film" fame actor Kangana Ranaut in the Mandi Lok Sabha seat. The Congress

had earlier fielded Uttarakhand Public Works Minister Vikramaditya Singh, the son of six times Chief Minister late Virbhadra Singh and state Congress chief Pratibha Singh, against actor Kangana Ranaut, the BJP candidate from the Mandi Lok Sabha seat.

Singh, two times MLA from Shimla (Rural) assembly constituency, is pitched against Ranaut, who hails from a village in Mandi and is also a producer and director by profession. It is for the first time that a celebrity is contesting the elections in the state.

Congress leader Vinod Sultanpuri, the sitting legislator from Kasauli assembly seat and son of six times MP from Shimla (reserve) seat late Kishan Dutt Sultanpuri, is contesting against former state president and sitting BJP MP Suresh Kahyap from the Shimla Lok Sabha seat.

Focus on tackling fake news, ensure MCC compliance: Punjab CEO to DCs, SSPs, CPs

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To ensure smooth conduct of upcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2024 in Punjab, the state's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Sabin C on Wednesday convened a high-level meeting with Deputy Commissioners (DCs), Commissioners of Police (CPs), and Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs) across the State to assess the preparations and address

critical issues pertaining to the electoral process.

Sabin C, chairing the meeting conducted via video conference, emphasized the paramount importance of maintaining vigilance against the spread of fake news and any potential violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). The officials present were directed to prioritize these concerns and take proactive measures to uphold the integrity

of the electoral process.

During the comprehensive review, the CEO delved into various aspects of election preparedness, including arrangements at polling stations, deployment of polling staff, vulnerable mapping, Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) activities, webcasting, CRPF deployment, communication strategies, and interstate border security.

Kumari Selja, Ranjit Chautala, Abhay Chautala file nomination from Sirsa, Hisar, Kurukshetra

MANOJ KUMAR ■ CHANDIGARH

On the third day of the nomination for the Lok Sabha Elections, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s Ranjit Chautala, Congress' Kumari Selja and INLD's Abhay Chautala filed nominations in the State. Other candidates include BJP's Banto Kataria from Ambala, JJP candidates- Rahul Yadav Fazilpuria from Gurugram and Nalin Hooda from Faridabad and Congress' Satpal Brahmachari from Sonapat.

The nomination process for the 10 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state began on Monday. The deadline for filing nominations is May 6 while nomination scrutiny on May 7 and withdrawal on May 9.

Senior Congress leader and General Secretary of All India Congress Committee Kumari

Selja filed her nomination from Sirsa Lok Sabha seat. Amid party leaders and workers, she reached the Mini Secretariat she filed her nomination before the returning officer in the presence of former minister and Tosham MLA Kiran Chaudhary, Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala and former Union Minister Birender Singh. Congress MLAs and other senior party leaders were also present on the occasion.

Talking to reporters, Selja said that there was no factionalism in the party and all leaders and workers had been working for the party in the Sirsa segment. "We are fighting for people's rights and to save democracy," she added.

BJP leader Ranjit Singh Chautala filed his nomination paper from Hisar parliamentary constituency. Former Chief

Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Election-in-charge Satish Punia, Cabinet Minister Dr Kamal Gupta, former minister Savitri Jindal, former Education

Minister Ram Bilas Sharma were also present.

Addressing the party workers and supporters before filing his nomination, Chautala said that India's respect has increased in the world under Modi's leadership. The prime minister has understood the problems of the poor and resolved them. The Congress and its allies are fighting only to save their existence but they do not seem to be getting success in this either, Chautala said.

Chautala joined the BJP in March and soon after he was named the party's candidate

from Hisar Lok Sabha seat. The minister later resigned from the state assembly as an Independent legislator.

INLD Candidate Abhay Chautala reached Kurukshetra Mini Secretariat and filed his Lok Sabha nomination paper. On this occasion, Akali Dal supreme and former Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh was also present.

BJP candidate Banto Kataria filed her nomination from Ambala Lok Sabha seat. Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of State for Transport Aseem Goyal and Kanwar Pal Gujjar were present on the occasion.

Voters should choose BJP Candidate if they want a bright future for country, says Khattar. Stating that Bharatiya Janata Party -led Government will

return to power at the Centre because people have seen the work they did over the past 10 years versus six decades of Congress rule, former Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Wednesday said that voters should choose the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) if they want a bright future for the country.

"The work which Congress could not do in so many years was done by the (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi government in 10 years," he said. The senior BJP leader emphasized that the party is in a strong position not only in Haryana but the entire country. The BJP-led alliance will form the government with more than 400 seats. The people of the country want to see Narendra Modi as the PM for the third time," Khattar said.

Punjab Police's 500 teams conduct CASO at 246 identified drug hotspots

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In a move aimed at curbing the drug menace ahead of the impending Lok Sabha elections in Punjab, the state police on Wednesday launched a crackdown on drug hotspots. Punjab Police's 500 teams conducted cordon and search operations (CASO) at 246 identified locations, notorious for drug trafficking activities, in all the 28 Police districts of the state.

The operations from 8 am to 11 am simultaneously across Punjab — yielded substantial results as 22 individuals were apprehended by the police. Additionally, law enforcement officials seized a significant

quantity of illicit substances, including 2.95 kilograms of heroin, 21.5 kilograms of poppy husk, and drug money amounting to Rs 36,000.

Sharing information, the state Special DGP (Law and Order) Arpit Shukla said that Commissioners of Police (CPs) and the Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs) were told to plan the operation meticulously by identifying drug hotspots — the points of sale of drugs and psychotropic substances in their respective districts or certain areas which have become shelter or safe haven for drug peddlers, to carry out this operation amid massive deployment of the police force

under the supervision of an SP-rank officer.

"The CPs and SSPs were also directed to check all those booked under NDPS cases and are on bail or have been acquitted... These kinds of CASOs at a mass-scale level not only help infuse fear among anti-social elements but also boost public confidence and increase the presence of the cops in the field," he said.

The Special DGP said that over 500 Police teams, comprising over 3000 police personnel, have cordoned off as many as 246 drug hotspots and as many as 864 persons — booked under NDPS cases and are on bail or have been acquitted — were checked.

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BJP amended Constitution for social justice: UP Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP strengthened the Constitution and amended it for social justice during its terms at the Centre unlike the Congress, which made a "malicious attempt" to change the basic structure of the Constitution when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister, Uttar Pradesh Minister Asim Arun said on Wednesday.

Addressing a press conference, Arun, who is the Social Welfare Minister in the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh, said that nobody has the right to change the basic structure of the Constitution and asserted that the BJP is ready to keep it intact.

"The Congress has said that it will bring back Article 370, which means the reservation provided to SCs and STs in Kashmir will also be rolled back," he told reporters at the BJP headquarters.

The BJP leader said the Congress will not get any such



opportunity as people of the country have understood its "game".

Arun's remarks came at a time when the Congress and other constituents of the INDIA bloc have gone on an offensive against the ruling BJP alleging that the party is seeking 400 plus seats in the Lok Sabha polls because it wants to change the Constitution and end the provisions made to provide reservation to SCs, STs and OBCs in the country.

"Amendments were made during the BJP rule to strengthen the Constitution, carry for-

ward the fight for social justice and the ideas of BR Ambedkar," Arun said. "On the contrary, the most malicious attempt to change the Constitution, not amend, was made by late prime minister Indira Gandhi when she was facing the prospect of losing the prime minister's seat following a high court's verdict," he added.

Arun said that the amendment brought by the erstwhile Indira Gandhi government had provided that the judiciary including the Supreme Court will now have jurisdiction to hear petitions challenging the election of the president, vice president, prime minister and speaker

"it was the most malicious attempt, among others on various occasions, to change the basic structure of the Constitution. I salute the power of the judiciary which struck down this amendment. Later, Emergency was imposed and other things were done to save her (Indira Gandhi)," the BJP leader added.

EC push led to participation of vulnerable tribals in two LS phases

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission's innovative measures, like eco-friendly polling stations in Chhattisgarh, tribal-themed booths in Odisha, and initiatives such as transportation provisions and electoral literacy clubs in Kerala, effectively encouraged the enthusiastic participation of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in the two phases of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

Notably, the Shompen tribe of Great Nicobar voted for the first time, marking a historic milestone in their democratic engagement. In the last 11 state Assembly polls, there were around nine lakh eligible voters from 14 PVTGs communities namely Kamar, Bhunjia, Baiga, Pahadi Korwa, Abujhmadia, Birhor, Sahariya, Bhariya, Chenchu, Kolam, Thoti, Kondareddy, Jenu Kuruba and Koraga.

Elated at the encouraging response from these elusive communities which accounts India's 8.6 per cent tribal population, the Election Commission on Wednesday



said that inclusive efforts such as setting up polling booths in previously inaccessible areas have led to significant PVTG inclusion in the electoral process.

Under the guidance of Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, special campaigns and registration drives were conducted, ensuring 100% enrollment of PVTGs in the electoral rolls across several

states, said an official from the top poll authority. In fact, in the last two years since he has been at the helm of electoral affairs, Kumar has been emphasising on a greater participation of the PVTGs in the electoral process, the EC official said.

Kumar has personally directed the state chief electoral officers and district election officers concerned to make

sure that special campaigns and registration drives are launched to register the PVTGs in the electoral rolls as a first step for their inclusion, the official pointed out.

During a special summary revision to update the electoral rolls, special outreach camps were held across specific states with a PVTG population.

At least 40 polling stations were established in unique tribal themes in an effort to draw these voters to the polls on election day in Karnataka while tribal theme-based polling stations welcomed the voters at the polling stations, with villagers in Dindori, decorating the polling stations themselves in Madhya Pradesh.

Additionally, in the State, three Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) - Baiga, Bhariya, and Sahariya - actively participated in the electoral process. Out of a total population of 9,91,613 across 23 districts, 6,37,681 eligible citizens aged 18 and above are registered in the electoral rolls.

During the voting phases,

there was notable enthusiasm among voters from the Baiga and Bharia tribes. Many of them arrived at polling stations early in the morning, demonstrating their commitment to participating in the democratic process, shared the official.

Further exemplifying the dedication to democracy, Kurumba tribal voters in the Makkali region of Silent Valley, Kerala, embarked on hours-long journeys, traversing dense forests to reach accessible polling booths. Despite their advanced age, numerous tribal voters, including women, showcased unwavering commitment, with 417 out of 817 voters being female.

The innovative use of wall paintings in local dialects not only enhanced the aesthetic appeal of surroundings but also conveyed empowering messages such as "vote for sure" and "my vote can't be purchased." Through various means, including navigating dense forests and waterways, enthusiastic voters ensured their participation in the Lok Sabha elections.

SC reserves verdict on whether private properties can be termed material resources of community

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A nine-judge Supreme Court bench reserved its verdict on Wednesday on a vexed legal question that whether private properties can be considered "material resources of the community" under Article 39(b) of the Constitution and consequently, taken over by State authorities to subservise the "common good".

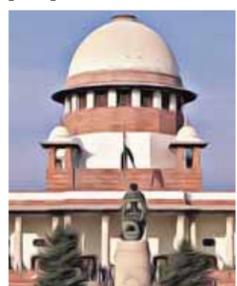
The question is being dealt with by the Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud. The bench is hearing 16 petitions, including the lead petition filed by the Mumbai-based Property Owners' Association (POA) in 1992.

The POA has vehemently opposed Chapter VIII-A of the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) Act. Inserted in

1986, the chapter empowers state authorities to acquire cessed buildings and the land on which those are built if 70 per cent of the occupants make such a request for restoration purposes.

The MHADA Act was enacted in pursuance of Article 39(b) of the Constitution, which is part of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), and makes it obligatory for the State to create a policy towards securing "that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subservise the common good".

The state government, represented in the court by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, said the MHADA provisions are protected by Article 31C of the Constitution, which was inserted by the 25th



Amendment Act of 1971 with an intention to protect laws giving effect to certain DPSPs. "No law giving effect to the policy of the State towards securing all or any of the principles laid down in Part IV (DPSP) shall be deemed to be void on the ground that it is inconsistent with, or takes away or abridges any of the rights conferred by Article 14 or Article 19 and no law con-

taining a declaration that it is for giving effect to such policy shall be called in question in any court on the ground that it does not give effect to such policy..." Article 31C reads.

The bench, also comprising Justices Hrishikesh Roy, B V Nagarathna, Sudhanshu Dhulia, J B Pardiwala, Manoj Misra, Rajesh Bindal, Satish Chandra Sharma and Augustine George Masih, reserved its verdict after hearing the arguments put forward by several lawyers, including Attorney General R Venkataramani and Mehta.

The POA and others have challenged Chapter VIII-A of the Act, claiming that the provisions of the chapter discriminate against the owners and attempt to dispossess them.

The lead plea was filed by the POA in 1992 and it was thrice

referred to larger benches of five and seven judges, before being referred to a nine-judge bench on February 20, 2002. Mumbai is a densely-populated city with old, dilapidated buildings that house tenants despite having become unsafe due to a lack of repairs. In order to repair and restore these buildings, the MHADA Act, 1976 imposes a cess on its occupants that is paid to the Mumbai Building Repair and Reconstruction Board (MBRRB), which oversees the repair and reconstruction of these "cessed buildings".

There are around 13,000 cessed buildings in Mumbai that need restoration or reconstruction.

However, their redevelopment is often delayed due to differences between the tenants or between the owners and the tenants on appointing a developer.

BJP invites political parties from ten countries to witness Lok Sabha polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Representatives of 18 political parties from 10 countries will interact with a host of BJP leaders, including party president J P Nadda and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, during their visit to India on the ruling party's invitation to get a first-hand experience of the Lok Sabha polls.

The BJP said the foreign leaders will also be given insights into the party's election campaign and will be briefed about its strategies and the overall electoral process. They will meet Nadda on Wednesday and also interact with Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

Australia's Liberal Party, Vietnam's Communist Party of Vietnam, Bangladesh's Awami



League, Israel's Likud Party, Uganda's National Resistance Movement, Tanzania's Chama Cha Mapinduzi, and Russia's United Russia Party are among the political parties whose representatives are visiting India. Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna and United National Party from Sri Lanka, Militant Socialist Movement, Mauritius Labour Party, Mauritius Militant Movement and Parti Mauricien Social Democrat from Mauritius, and Nepali Congress, Janamat Party, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and Rashtriya Swatantra Party from Nepal are among other parties visiting on the BJP's invitation.

CBI searches 30 locations in HPZ Token App fraudulent scheme case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has searched 30 locations across 10 States and Union Territories after registering a case in a fraudulent investment scheme linked to the HPZ Token App, officials said Wednesday.

The agency has alleged the scheme involved misleading the public to invest in non-existent crypto-currency mining machine rentals. The nationwide operation ended Tuesday night. Two private companies, Shigoo Technology Private Limited and Lillian Technocab Private Limited, along with their directors were booked in the case under Indian Penal Code Sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy) 419, 420 (cheating) and Section 66 D of Information Technology Act, 2000, officials said.

The CBI seized digital devices, including laptops, mobile phones, ATM and debit cards besides a trove of email



accounts, during the searches spread across Delhi-NCR, Jodhpur in Rajasthan, Mumbai in Maharashtra, Bengaluru in Karnataka as well as locations in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.

"The HPZ is an app-based token which promises users large gains by investing in mining machines for Bitcoin and other crypto currencies. The fraudsters allegedly used a modus operandi that enticed victims to invest in the HPZ

token app on the pretext of astronomical returns on their investments in Bitcoin mining," the CBI alleged.

The probe in the case so far has unearthed 150 bank accounts related to the accused used to collect funds from investors.

"These funds were initially used for payouts to build trust, before being illicitly transferred out of India, often converted into cryptocurrency or moved through Hawala transactions," the CBI said in a statement on Wednesday.

Maximum temperature in May likely above normal: IMD

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Signalling the troubling trend of escalating temperatures and heightened heatwaves across vast swathes of the country, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted above-normal maximum temperatures for the upcoming month of May in most regions.

Particular implications will be felt on the northern plains, central areas, and adjoining parts of peninsular India. This forecast deviates from the usual pattern, as normally, northern plains, central India, and adjoining areas of peninsular India experience around three days of heat wave in May, said Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director General of the IMD. He issued a warning about upcoming weather patterns, raising concerns for public welfare and environmental stability.

The IMD chief said, "around 8-11 heat wave days are likely over south Rajasthan, west Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Marathwada and Gujarat



region are expected to see around 8-11 heat wave days in May. The remaining parts of Rajasthan, east Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and some parts of Chhattisgarh, interior Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, north interior Karnataka and Telangana may record five-seven heat wave days in the month."

However, above normal maximum temperatures are likely over most parts of the country in May, except most parts of

northeast India, some parts of northwest and central India and adjoining areas of north-east peninsular India where normal to below normal maximum temperatures are likely, above normal maximum temperatures are likely, the IMD Head said at a press conference here.

Specifically, he highlighted that the northern plains, central region, and adjoining areas of peninsular India are likely to experience a significantly high number of heat wave days. The IMD also said that except for most parts of northeast India, some parts of northwest

and central India, and adjoining areas of northeast peninsular India, where normal to below normal maximum temperatures are likely, above normal maximum temperatures are expected over most parts of the country in May.

Mohapatra attributed the prolonged heat wave spell experienced over east and south peninsular India in April to the absence of thunderstorms and a persisting anticyclone at lower levels over the west central Bay of Bengal and the adjoining eastern coasts of

India. This weather pattern caused the sea breeze to be cut off over Odisha and West Bengal on most days.

Notably, south peninsular India recorded an average maximum temperature of 31 degrees Celsius in April, the second highest since 1901. Additionally, the average minimum temperature in April in east and northeast India was the highest since 1901, according to the IMD.

Mohapatra also highlighted a concerning trend of above-normal maximum temperatures becoming more frequent over south peninsular India since the 1980s. He pointed out that the number of heat wave days in April was the highest in 15 years in Gangetic West Bengal and nine years in Odisha. Odisha also experienced its longest heat wave spell (16 days) in April since 2016. These observations underscore the increasing severity and frequency of heat waves, which have significant implications for public health, agriculture, and the environment.

Congress asks Modi to clear stance on removal of reservation cap

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Wednesday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to clear his stance on whether he will remove the 50 per cent cap on reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.

Former Union minister Jairam Ramesh said the Congress manifesto guarantees that it will pass a constitutional amendment to raise the 50 per cent cap on reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs but Modi is trying to give it a "communal colour".

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here, the Congress chief spokesman alleged that the BJP is "talking about '400 paar' to get the right to change the Constitution as the BJP and the RSS are against secularism and social justice." "The Congress guarantees that it will pass a constitu-



tional amendment to raise the 50 per cent cap on reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs," he said.

"I want to ask the prime minister, who wants to give a communal colour to our Nyay Patra and wants to mislead, that will be remove the cap of 50 pc reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs," Ramesh said. He said Rahul Gandhi is holding a copy of the Constitution in his hand at public meetings because it is being attacked.

"First the prime minister's economic advisor talked about it (changing the Constitution), then many candidates and MPs also stated this. Today I want to say that this is not the first time BJP and RSS have given a 'samvidhan badlo' slogan, it has been the demand of the RSS since 1949 that there is a need to change the Constitution," Ramesh said, holding a copy of the Constitution.

He quoted a speech by B R Ambedkar on November 25, 1949, in which he had said, "The task of the Drafting Committee would have been a very difficult one if this Constituent Assembly had been merely a motley crowd, a tessellated pavement without cement, a black stone here and a white stone there is which each member or each group was a law unto itself. There would have been nothing but chaos."

"This possibility of chaos was reduced to nil by the existence of the Congress Party inside the Assembly which brought into its proceedings a sense of order and discipline. It is because of the discipline of the Congress Party that the Drafting Committee was able to pilot the Constitution in the Assembly with the sure knowledge as to the fate of each article and each amendment. The Congress Party is, therefore, entitled to all the

credit for the smooth sailing of the Draft Constitution in the Assembly." Ambedkar was quoted as saying by Ramesh. Ramesh then went on to quote an article that he claimed was published in the RSS-linked publication Organiser on November 30, 1949.

"The worst about the new Constitution of Bharat is that there is nothing Bharatiya about it. The drafters of the Constitution have incorporated in it elements of British, American, Canadian, Swiss and sundry other Constitutions... Manu's Laws were written long before Lycurgus of Sparta or Solon of Persia."

"To this day, his laws as enunciated in the Manusmriti, excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing," he quoted the article as saying.

Actress Rupali Ganguly joins BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

TV actor Rupali Ganguly, famous for her roles in TV serials such as Sarabhai vs Sarabhai and Anupamaa, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party here on Wednesday ahead of the third phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

Along with Ganguly, Ameya Joshi, a social worker and astrologer from Maharashtra, also joined the BJP at the party headquarters in the presence of senior leaders including national general secretary Vinod Tawde and national media department in-charge Anil Baluni.

Joshi welcomed Ganguly and Tawde into the party fold and used the opportunity to attack the opposition parties over Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Maria Alam's appeal for "vote jihad".

Alam, while seeking votes for the INDIA bloc's candidate



from Farrukhabad Lok Sabha seat, called for a "vote jihad," saying it was necessary in the current situation for the minority community to dislodge the BJP from power.

Responding to the SP leader's remarks, Tawde said, "The Opposition, which has been spreading lies, has now started a 'vote jihad' campaign. This shows they are rattled." He added, "On the one hand they are giving OBC reservation to Muslims, on the other

they are talking about 'vote jihad' during elections." Tawde asked Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party leader Rahul Gandhi if the "campaign" was started on the instruction of the party high command.

Addressing the press conference, both Ganguly and Joshi said they have joined the BJP to work for the progress of the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Scare visits schools

A bomb threat directed at nearly 100 schools in Delhi-NCR serves as a wake-up call for all of us

Amid an unanticipated cloud of fear, nearly 100 schools in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) sent students home early Wednesday upon receiving a bomb threat via email. The police conducted thorough searches, but found nothing suspicious. The scare has sent shockwaves through the community, leaving parents, educators and students grappling with a harrowing reality: The threat of terror is no longer a distant concern but a chilling presence in our midst. The sanctity of schools, once regarded as a safe haven for learning and growth, has been compromised. As we confront this sobering reality, it is imperative that we do not succumb to despair but unite in resilience and resolve. Foremost, we must commend the swift response of school authorities and law enforcement agencies in addressing these threats. Their coordinated efforts have undoubtedly helped reassure people. More importantly, our intelligence agencies need to put their act together; they are the ones who should have seen it coming. We do not have enough specific information to process at the moment and no clue about the intention or the identity of the perpetrator(s); we don't know if it was a real threat or just a mischievous element playing mind games, but such threats cannot be taken lightly, especially when human lives are at risk. The threat emails, reportedly emanating from a Russian IP address, were well-planned and coordinated. Shooting in the US schools is rather rampant; Indian schools are much safer and should stay that way. All we have to do is be vigilant.

Also, this small win should not lull us into complacency. We must remain vigilant and proactive in fortifying

the security infrastructure of our educational institutions. Beyond bolstering physical security, we must also invest in fostering a culture of vigilance and preparedness within our school communities. Educators play a pivotal role in equipping students with the knowledge and skills to recognise and respond to potential threats. Empowering students with safety protocols and encouraging open dialogue can go a long way in mitigating the impact of terror-induced anxiety. It is equally important that we address the root causes of such terror acts. Socio-economic disparities, marginalisation and ideological extremism often serve as fertile breeding grounds for radicalisation. By addressing these underlying issues through comprehensive social policies and inclusive education, we can strive towards building a more resilient and harmonious society. It is equally important to remain calm and not panic. In times of crisis, it is easy to succumb to fear and division. However, we must remember that our strength lies in our unity and resilience. Now more than ever, we must stand in solidarity with one another, refusing to be cowed by the forces of terror. Together, we can create a future where every child can pursue their education without fear and where schools are not battlegrounds but beacons of hope and enlightenment.

PICTALK



Participants during a State-level bullock cart race at Thegur, in Chikkamagaluru

PTI

Post-poll path for infra financing!

Modi 3.0 plans to bolster infrastructure creation post-election by expanding the infrastructure financing ecosystem

In the interim budget for FY25, infrastructure outlay was increased by 11.1 per cent to 11.11 lakh crore, including Rs 2.78 lakh crore for the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and Rs 2.55 lakh crore for the Railway Ministry. Post-poll, the plan for a full-fledged budget for FY25 will look to raise Rs 25000 crore of finance through green bonds - higher than Rs 20000 crore raised through green bonds in FY24.

That going ahead private investment will be a big driver of infrastructure development, is evident from the National Investment & Infrastructure Fund (NIIFF) plan to raise USD 1 billion for its second Private Markets Fund (PMF). The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is likely to invest nearly USD 125 million. NIIFF manages over USD4.9 billion of equity capital commitments across its four funds-Master Fund, PMF, Strategic Opportunities Fund and India-Japan Fund. The MoRTH is looking to



raise a whopping Rs 60,000 crore in FY 25 through monetisation of Toll Operate Transfer (TOT) highways and NHAI InvIT. In FY 24, Rs 38334 crore was raised from ToT, InvIT and project-based financing. It is significant to mention that under the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP), an ambitious target of raising Rs 1.08 lakh crore has been fixed for FY25. The share of privately funded highways in the overall award of projects in FY25 is expected to meet the Government's target of 10 per cent. NHAI has drawn up a plan to develop 53 listed highways worth Rs 1.2 trillion through BOT. The

MoRTH had a healthy award project pipeline of over Rs 45,000 crore as of March 2024. Following the Government's push for private participation in highways, IRB Infra Development has committed to invest 10000-12000 crore in FY25, to add road capacity through Build Operate Transfer (BOT) mode. The recent modification in concession agreements, according to IRB, has bolstered investors' confidence by enhancing the bankability of projects. Further, the central Government is putting into place its plan to pare a large portion of NHAI's Rs 3.4 trillion debt within 5

As India goes ahead with its 18th General Elections, the nation finds itself at a crossroads of democracy, economics and governance. The elections, spanning 44 days from April 19 to June 1, are poised to be the lengthiest in Indian history, reflecting both the enormity of the task at hand and the significance of the decisions to be made. Against the backdrop of a burgeoning economy, evolving political landscapes and pressing social challenges, the intersection of elections, electioneering and the economy warrants scrutiny. The magnitude of election expenditures provides a glimpse into the economic dynamics surrounding the electoral process. According to the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), the anticipated expenditure for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections is staggering, surpassing Rs 1.35 lakh crore. This figure, more than double the amount spent in 2019, indicates to the monumental scale of electoral spending in the world's largest democracy.

With a projected voter base of 96.6 crore, the per-voter spending is estimated at around Rs 1,400, signifying both the financial investment and the democratic imperative of ensuring widespread participation. However, it's worth noting that the Election Commission's expenditure is expected to constitute only a fraction of the total outlay, pointing towards the diverse economic activities spurred by the electoral process. The Election Commission tirelessly strives to facilitate universal suffrage across the nation. Recognising the pivotal role of public figures in shaping civic consciousness, the Commission enlisted the famed actor Rajkumar Rao as its 'national icon' to galvanise youth engagement and voter turnout as the country approaches the general elections. Rao's portrayal of a dedicated poll officer in the acclaimed film 'Newton,' a poignant exploration of electoral challenges in a Naxal-affected region, resonated deeply with young voters. However, despite the cinematic depiction of electoral fervour, the anticipated



'Newton effect' has yet to materialise in voting patterns in two phases so far. Nonetheless, the indomitable spirit of election officers persists, as they traverse treacherous terrain and surmount logistical obstacles to ensure the integrity of the electoral process. Electioneering acts as a catalyst for various sectors of the economy, fostering growth and employment opportunities across the spectrum. From hospitality and transportation to textiles and advertising, the ripple effects of political campaigns are palpable. As political parties vie for voter attention, rallies, events and promotional activities proliferate, injecting vitality into local economies and stimulating demand for goods and services. Moreover, the advent of digital campaigning has revolutionised the electoral landscape, with professional agencies employed to enhance brand visibility and engagement. The economic dividends of such strategies are evident, as digital platforms emerge as potent tools for political communication and mobilisation. Amidst the fervour of electoral competition, political manifestos serve as blueprints for



ELECTIONEERING ACTS AS A CATALYST FOR VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY, FOSTERING GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS THE SPECTRUM

governance, delineating policy priorities and economic agendas. The contrasting visions articulated by major political parties underscore the divergent approaches to addressing pressing socio-economic challenges. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), buoyed by its track record and incumbent status, advocates for policy continuity and fiscal consolidation. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on infrastructure development and economic reforms, a BJP-majority Government is poised to prioritise private investment and fiscal prudence, thereby fostering economic stability and growth. Conversely, the Indian National Congress or INDI Block champions a progressive agenda focused on job creation, social welfare and agrarian reforms. Proposals such as Government-led employment initiatives, minimum support price guarantees and education loan waivers underpin the Alliance's commitment to inclusive growth and equitable development. While political rhetoric often dominates electoral discourse, the economic imperatives transcending partisan lines merit attention. Issues such as

water scarcity, climate change and unemployment pose formidable challenges to India's socio-economic fabric, necessitating concerted action beyond the electoral cycle. The water crisis in cities like Bengaluru serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need for sustainable resource management and climate resilience. Yet, the conspicuous absence of these issues from political manifestos is very disheartening. There is an urgent need for non-partisan dialogue and policy discourse on environmental sustainability and socio-economic resilience. As India embarks on its electoral journey, the confluence of elections, electioneering and the economy offers both opportunities and challenges. While the democratic process catalyses economic activity and political discourse, the imperatives of inclusive and sustainable development transcend electoral cycles. By transcending electoral exigencies and embracing a shared vision of progress, India can realise its aspirations for a vibrant democracy and a prosperous future for all.

(The author is Delhi-based senior journalist. Views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DOMESTIC TRAGEDY

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Man gets life imprisonment for murdering teenage Indian wife in London," published on April 30, this is my response. The news of Sahil Sharma's sentencing for the murder of his wife, Mehak Sharma, is a heartbreaking reminder of the devastating consequences of domestic violence. The brutal act not only robbed Mehak's family of a beloved daughter but also shattered their sense of security and left them grappling with irreparable grief. The fact that the tragedy unfolded within the confines of their own home, supposedly a place of safety, adds another layer of horror to the ordeal. Mehak's mother's poignant statement encapsulates the profound anguish and emptiness left in the wake of such a senseless loss. While the legal proceedings may offer some semblance of justice, they can never fully assuage the pain inflicted upon the victim's loved ones. It serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for greater awareness, support and intervention in cases of domestic violence to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

Aadhya Chawla | Chandigarh

GLOBAL IMPACT OF BHARAT

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Covid handling changed world's perception of India: EAM," published on April 30, this is my response. India's growth trajectory under the spotlight! External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar reflects on India's changing perception abroad, citing COVID management and Chandrayaan-3 as game-changers. He highlights how decisions made domestically resonate globally, showcasing India's significance on the world stage. From bringing citizens home during crises to enhancing the value of the Indian passport, India's actions garner international attention. Jaishankar underlines India's technological prowess and socio-economic

Technological deception



Apropos the news article, "Telangana CM summoned in Shah fake video case," published on April 30, this is my response. In today's complex political landscape, technology's role in shaping narratives is undeniable. The recent controversy surrounding doctored videos

of key political figures underscores the urgency of addressing misinformation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's acknowledgement of this issue highlights the importance of responsible information sharing in the digital age. However, the entanglement of political parties in this web of deceit further exacerbates the situation. The involvement of law enforcement, as seen with the Delhi Police's actions, signals a crucial step towards accountability. Yet, the broader implications of such manipulation on societal harmony cannot be overstated. Platforms like 'X' and social media giants must cooperate fully in identifying and curbing the spread of fake content. Ultimately, restoring trust in our democratic processes necessitates collective vigilance and decisive action against those seeking to sow discord through technological deception.

Arya Sundaram | Chennai

advancements, attracting global interest in investment and exploration. The narrative shifts from India being a concern to being a source of support, showcasing its resilience and diplomatic agility. With a focus on domestic performance, Jaishankar emphasises infrastructure development and socio-political systems, which captivate foreign fascination. India's journey from a developing nation to a global player exemplifies its potential and allure on the international stage, echoing the sentiment that Bharat indeed matters.

Kabir Oberoi | Mumbai

DIVINE SYMBOLISM UNVEILED

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Astroturf | Mother calls for full alert against evil forces," published on April 28, this is my response. The intricate symbolism of the goddess's accessories reveals profound insights into the cosmic order and human existence. The conch shell, echoing the primal sound of creation, signifies the source energy that initiates and sustains all life.

Meanwhile, the lotus flower, emerging from murky waters unstained, embodies purity and detachment amid creation's diversity. The goddess's eight weapons, contrasted with her two creative symbols, underscore the perpetual struggle against malevolent forces. This juxtaposition reflects the omnipresence and potency of negativity, urging constant vigilance and defensive action.

Demons, depicted in surreal forms, serve as metaphors for internal and external threats, reminding us of the deceptive allure and insidious nature of evil. In essence, the divine imagery prompts contemplation on the balance between constructive creativity and vigilant defence in navigating life's complexities. It emphasises the importance of spiritual awareness and moral integrity in combating adversities while upholding the cosmic order.

Devansh Khatri | Jaipur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Democracy, economics and governance



BK JHA

The confluence of elections, electioneering and the economy demands meticulous examination and rethinking to make the system work flawlessly



FIRST COLUMN

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION CAN TRANSFORM SOCIETY

It's high time to introduce spiritual learning to save our future generations



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

All of us daily read, in newspapers, about one or the other major problem causing grave suffering to a large segment of society or mankind as a whole. These problems are classified as economic, social, political, racial, administrative, etc. and attempts are made to find solutions to them from the respective areas of human knowledge. The unjust treatment of industrial or farm labour, unfair treatment of under-privileges, bride-burning, ill-treatment of women, inhuman treatment because of racial prejudices or casteism, bonded labour and abject poverty are only some problems on the long list, the top of which is the problem of armament race that threatens the very existence of humankind.

Economic and social reforms, diplomatic negotiations, political declarations and legal enactments are only some of the measures that have been adopted to solve these and other problems over the years. Even such an august body as the U.N. also has addressed itself to some of these problems through its various organs. Though all these various efforts have borne some fruit, the problems at the core remain unsolved and there has been no satisfactory and lasting solution to resolve them. The question, therefore, remains: "What are these problems due to and how can these be solved or eliminated?"

A thorough analysis would lead us to the conclusion that all these problems are directly and indirectly caused by the absence or lack of goodwill or good motives. People generally lay emphasis on creative intelligence, scientific development, courage and life full of pleasures but, it is usually forgotten that, if there is no good motive, science and intelligence may be used to promote means of mutual destruction, courage may be employed for killing and pleasures may be gained in evil ways. Hardly is it realised that if there were goodwill towards all, there would be no armament race, no racial prejudice, no bride-burning, no exploitation, no poverty and no injustice to the labour class, for goodwill is the very antithesis of all these.



Without goodwill, conferences end in bickerings, assemblies achieve nothing, resolutions are considered mere scraps of paper, economic remedies cannot prove effective and legal acts or social reforms cannot bring the desired change. The second factor essential to solving the problems of mankind is to consider the inherent worth of human personality. We must realise that every human individual is to be revered and is not to be treated as a means for the gratification of the desires of another. No one has to be degraded, for another person's benefit, to the level of material goods and chattels or machines and tools or dolls and playthings but has to be regarded as a person. If this principle of giving respect to every being is applied in our daily lives, there would be no slavery, no bonded labour, no exploitation of the working class, no poverty, no bride-burning and no ill-treatment of one by the other based on the difference in race, religion or caste.

The ultimate and lasting solution of problems lies, without doubt, in education that develops these two qualities in men and women and such an education cannot be moral and spiritual. Trillions and Billions are spent every year by various Governments and non-Governmental agencies on solving social, economic, political, administrative and other problems without achieving the goal of ending exploitation of all sorts and thus ending class conflict, conflict, family conflict and other kinds of conflicts. This is mainly because we only talk of conflict resolution without real and practical moral and spiritual education. It's high time that the Governments and the people in power realise this and seriously do something about it & save our future generations from devastation.

(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist, views are personal)

Plug leakages in fertiliser subsidy

The real reason behind the leakage is control of the MRP at an artificially low level. Dubious players have a huge incentive to divert and rake in the moolah



UTTAM GUPTA



As part of the 100-day agenda of Modi 3.0, the Government intends to administer fertiliser subsidies more effectively and cut down on leakages and diversions to build on the success of neem-coated urea. It intends to conduct a pilot in a few districts on a modified version of the direct benefit transfer (DBT) that seeks to establish a linkage between the land holding of a farmer and nutrient consumption. A proposal in this regard mooted in 2020 is being resurrected. To make urea - a widely used fertiliser that supplies primary nutrient nitrogen or 'N' and constitutes nearly half of India's total fertiliser consumption - affordable to farmers, the Union Government controls its maximum retail price (MRP) at a low level unrelated to the cost of production/import and distribution, which is much higher. The excess cost over MRP is reimbursed to the manufacturer/importer as a subsidy which varies from unit to unit depending on its cost. The MRP of urea is kept unchanged (today's price is more or less the same as in 2002) even as all cost escalations are absorbed by raising the subsidy.

In the case of fertilisers supplying phosphate or 'P' and potash or 'K' which constitute the other half (call them non-urea fertilisers), there is a 'uniform' subsidy on a per nutrient basis for all manufacturers under the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme. They are free to fix MRP but need to reduce it to the extent of subsidy. Even as the subsidy remains unchanged, rising costs mean ever-increasing MRPs. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DoAC) - in consultation with states - assesses the requirement of fertilisers for each cropping season - kharif (April to September) and rabi (October to March). The Department of Fertilisers (DoF) prepares an agreed supply plan to cover all the urea requirements from domestic production and import. The states allocate all of the urea arrivals and track disbursement up to the district level.

The DoF has developed a mobile and a web application - a mobile Fertiliser Monitoring System (m-FMS) that provides information



AT A FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL, LEAKAGES ARE INHERENT IN THE WAY THE ADMINISTRATION OF FERTILISER SUBSIDIES IS DESIGNED. THE GOVERNMENT ASKS MANUFACTURERS TO SELL FERTILISER AT A LOW PRICE — A PRICE IT THINKS FARMERS CAN AFFORD

on stock, sale and receipt of fertilisers till the last retail point. The total expenditure on fertiliser subsidy - on both urea and non-urea fertilisers put together - is around Rs 200,000 crore annually. Now, when the Government talks of leakage and diversion, we are reminded of the Economic Survey 2015-16 which said as much as 24 per cent of the subsidy is spent on inefficient producers, 41 per cent is diverted to non-agricultural uses including smuggling to neighbouring countries and 24 per cent is consumed by larger, presumably richer farmers. That leaves a tiny 11 per cent going to small and marginal farmers who constitute the vast majority i.e. nearly 86 per cent of the total number of farmers.

At a fundamental level, leakages are inherent in the way the administration of fertiliser subsidies is designed. The Government asks manufacturers to sell fertiliser at a low price - a price it thinks farmers can afford. Having sold at this price, the latter claims from the former an amount equal to the excess of the cost of supply over it as a subsidy. The subsidy could have been given to the farmer directly say, by depositing the money in her bank account. But, for decades, successive Governments have preferred to route it through manufacturers. Having to deal with a handful of manufacturers instead of crores of farmers (that would have been the case if the subsidy were to be given to them directly), they have found this arrangement convenient. But, there is a big negative to it. Since the subsidy is embodied in the MRP (albeit low), the subsidised fertiliser product must reach the farmer and be used only for growing the crop. If it doesn't reach, then the benefit of subsidy is enjoyed by the person who grabs it.

After leaving the factory or the port (in case of imported stuff), fertiliser

travel a long distance moving by rails/roads to reach storage points in the district and further movement to retail outlets for sale to the farmers.

In the initial years of the fertiliser pricing and subsidy scheme (it was introduced in 1977 for urea and 1980 for other fertilisers), manufacturers were given the bulk of the subsidy on the 'dispatch' of the material from the factory. In due course, the Government shifted to disbursing 95 per cent of the subsidy to urea producers and 85 per cent to producers of non-urea on receipt of material at a district's railhead point/approved godown (balance 5 per cent/15 per cent was paid on confirmation of sales to farmers by states).

In March 2018, the Government made disbursement of subsidies to manufacturers conditional upon actual sales to farmers and these getting registered on point-of-sale (PoS) machines. But, this by itself offers no guarantee as a diversion can still happen at the retail level all the more because anybody - including non-farmers - can buy any quantity through PoS machines. All that he needs to do is to furnish his unique identity or Aadhaar number.

Meanwhile, in 2015, the Government issued an order mandating all manufacturers/importers to neem-coat all of the urea supplies. The logic was simple. Upon neem coating, it is rendered unfit for use in chemical industries; hence the manufacturers/dealers will have no incentive to divert. But, this would happen only when coating is done. This is where the rub lies. Policing of a mammoth quantity across the length and breadth of the country is well-nigh impossible.

Now, apart from barring non-farmers from purchasing subsidised fertilisers, the Government wants to

link the purchase of fertilisers with the size of the land the farmer owns. The motive behind this is to make sure that her purchase is capped at the quantum required for growing the crop only; and that she doesn't get away with excess and make money from selling at a much higher price (albeit for industrial use). The farmers' land/crop data will be loaded on her biometric card. When she goes to the retailer to purchase her requirement for the season, the PoS machine will register the number of fertiliser bags that correspond to the data embedded in the card.

The retailer will deliver this number, not what she demands orally. The idea has massive appeal. But, making it work poses a daunting challenge. The Government will need to have data - on land holding, crops grown, nutrient status of the soil etc on over 140 million farm households. Apart from ensuring 'full coverage', it will have to focus on the 'accuracy' of the data as well as the 'accuracy' of the calculation as any incorrect figure or miscalculation could result in either shortfall or excess delivery of bags. Further, this data has to be updated on real-time basis to account for the impact of changes in the weather/rainfall on fertiliser requirements. This apart, the Government is missing the woods for the tree.

The real reason behind leakage is control of the MRP at an artificially low level. When urea sells at one-tenth the cost of supplying it, dubious players have a huge incentive to divert and rake in a moolah. They will do every bit to circumvent the rules resulting in the misuse of subsidies. The way forward is to end control on fertiliser prices and let the subsidy be given 'directly' to the farmers using DBT mode.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

The idea of rotating PMs is as ridiculous as it is impractical

INDIA bloc leaders face sharp criticism for it and are cautioned against the perilous consequences of such a move

Leaders of INDI Alliance who are struggling to save secularism, pluralism and the Constitution from the shackles of Fascist, Communalist and BJP should bear in mind that Indians are not village idiots. The move to have a new Prime Minister every year for the five-year tenure of the next Lok Sabha is a sure recipe for disaster. One is at a loss for words to explain what would happen to this country in the eventuality of M K Stalin, Supriya Sule, Mamata Banerjee, Mallikarjun Kharge/Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav and Tejaswi Yadav become Prime Minister every year for the five-year tenure of the next Lok Sabha is a sure recipe for disaster. One is at a loss for words to explain what would happen to this country in the eventuality of M K Stalin, Supriya Sule, Mamata Banerjee, Mallikarjun Kharge/Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav and Tejaswi Yadav become Prime Minister every year for the five-year tenure of the next Lok Sabha is a sure recipe for disaster.



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Indians who do not have any links with the grassroots-level electorate of the country. Indira Gandhi, who ruled the country for almost 15 years was a creation of the media and she had an edge over others because she was a woman. There was a more competent woman at that time and her name was Tarkeshwari Sinha. The modern Indian history, altered and tampered with by Left historians may not have

much information about the lady, a postgraduate in economics from the London School of Economics who rose through the Congress cadre and became the deputy finance minister of the country during the tenure of Jawaharlal Nehru. Sinha had no political godfathers and it was almost certain that she would have reached the top position if she had not earned the wrath of the Royal Family of New Delhi. Even Indira Gandhi was not free from basic human natures like jealousy and inferiority complex. Sinha was the glamour girl of yesteryears and was at home in Hindi and Queen's English. With the passing away of Nehru, Sinha was left all alone and there was no one to prop up the lady who stood for free

enterprises while the Nehruvians were pontificating mixed economy and socialism and crony capitalism. Many leaders in the undivided Congress party were the right persons for the top job. Over the decades, the Congress disintegrated and degenerated and the likes of Devkant Barooah and Arjun Singh emerged as power brokers and wheeler-dealers. We had Pranab Mukherjee, a politician and gentleman, whose erudition and leadership qualities were heads and shoulders above others. But top leadership never trusted or liked Mukherjee, Madhava Rao Scindia, Rajesh Pilot or Jeetendra Prasad who were all right people for the right job. Congress became weaker by the day and the

Grand Old Party ended up as a doormat for the likes of the DMK, RJD, AAP and even a letterhead organisation by the name of MDMK and its leader Vayyapuri Gopala Samy (Vaiko). Before the 1990s, Congress used to dictate terms to the above-mentioned outfits regarding the seats it would allocate to them. Now it is the other way round. Lalu Prasad Yadav and his family would decide the number of seats to be contested by the GOP from Bihar while the Samajwadi Party leaders would have the last word in the seats to be contested by it. The roadshow held by Rahul Gandhi at Wayanad as a precursor to his filing nomination was a harbinger of the annihilation of the Congress Party. Rahul Gandhi, the

great-grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru who described the Muslim League as a dead horse in 1952, was forced not to display the party flag throughout the rally or even when he filed the nomination papers. That was the price dictated by the Sultans of Malappuram and the scion of Congress Party had no other option other than accepting their condition. One is reminded of the great Malayalam novel Oru Deshathinte Katha (The Story of a Locale) written in 1971 by S K Pottekkat. This autobiographical novel was honoured with the Jnanapeetha Award in 1982 and remains one of the ten best novels written in Malayalam. This novel tells the story of Sreedharan and the village Athirappadam where

he grew up. One of the characters in this great work is Kunhikkelu Melan, a scion of the Kelancherry Family, the locale's biggest and most powerful clan. This family-owned thousands of hectares of land, many hills, mountains and even forests. Kunhikkelu Melan, born with a silver spoon in his mouth squandered the entire property for wine and women. When he was left with nothing other than the castle of Kelancherry, he started selling the doors and windows of the ancestral home to meet the expenses for his sundowners. "Doors and windows are installed to save the house from robbers and dacoits. If there is nothing valuable in the house, what is the use of doors and windows," Melan told the villagers when he was asked

why he was selling off the chattels. India needs a good, sincere and honest leader and we are willing to accept dictatorship to a certain level. Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump, who enjoyed limitless power did not end up as despots. Richard Nixon, Margaret Thatcher, Charles De Gaulle, Francois Mitterrand and even Fidel Castro were loved by our Opposition leaders despite the aversion of these leaders to democracy and secularism. A politician should aspire for power. There is nothing abnormal in it. But he should have the ability and capability to occupy that position. (The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

Police clear pro-Palestinian protesters from Columbia University

AP ■ NEW YORK

Duelling groups of protesters clashed on Wednesday at the University of California, Los Angeles, grappling in fist-fights and shoving, kicking and using sticks to beat one another. Hours earlier, police carrying riot shields burst into a building at Columbia University that pro-Palestinian protesters took over and broke up a demonstration that had paralysed the school while inspiring others.

After a couple hours of one-and-off scuffles between pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli demonstrators at UCLA, police wearing helmets and face shields arrived, formed lines and began to slowly corral some of the protesters. That appeared to quell the violence. Police have swept through campuses across the US over the last two weeks in response to protests calling on universities to stop doing business with Israel or companies that

support the war in Gaza. There have been confrontations and more than 1,000 arrests. In rarer instances, university officials and protest leaders struck agreements to restrict the disruption to campus life and upcoming commencement ceremonies.

The clashes at UCLA took place around a tent encampment built by pro-Palestinian protesters, who erected barricades and plywood for protection — while counter-protesters tried to pull them down. People threw chairs and at one point a group piled on a person who lay on the ground, kicking and beating them with sticks until others pulled them out of the scum.

It was not clear how many people might be injured. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass called the violence “absolutely abhorrent and inexcusable” in a spot on social media platform X and said officers from the Los Angeles Police Department were on the scene.

Officers from the California Highway Patrol also appeared to be there. The university said it had requested help. Security was tightened Tuesday at the campus after officials said there were “physical altercations” between factions of protesters.

Late that same day, New York City officers entered Columbia’s campus after the university requested help, according to a statement released by a spokesperson. A tent encampment on the school’s grounds was cleared, along with Hamilton Hall where a stream of officers used a ladder to climb through a second-floor window. Protesters seized the hall at the Ivy League school about 20 hours earlier.

“After the University learned overnight that Hamilton Hall had been occupied, vandalized, and blockaded, we were left with no choice,” the school said. “The decision to reach out to

the NYPD was in response to the actions of the protesters, not the cause they are championing. We have made it clear that the life of campus cannot be endlessly interrupted by protesters who violate the rules and the law.”

Police spokesman Carlos Nieves said he had no immediate reports of any injuries. The arrests occurred after protesters shrugged off an earlier ultimatum to abandon the encampment Monday or be suspended and unfolded as other universities stepped up efforts to end demonstrations that were inspired by Columbia.

Fabien Lugo, a first-year accounting student who said he was not involved in the protests, said he opposed the university’s decision to call in police. “This is too intense,” he said. “It feels like more of an escalation than a de-escalation.”

Just blocks away from Columbia, at The City College

of New York, demonstrators were in a standoff with police outside the public college’s main gate.

Video posted on social media by news reporters on the scene late Tuesday showed officers putting some people to the ground and shoving others as they cleared people from the street and sidewalks.

After police arrived, officers lowered a Palestinian flag atop the City College flagpole, balled it up and tossed it to the ground before raising an American flag.

Brown University, another member of the Ivy League, reached an agreement Tuesday with protesters on its Rhode Island campus. Demonstrators said they would close their encampment in exchange for administrators taking a vote to consider divestment from Israel in October. The compromise appeared to mark the first time a US college has agreed to vote on divestment in the wake of the protests.



Israeli soldiers are seen at a staging ground near the border with the Gaza Strip, in southern Israel, Wednesday. AP/PTI

Blinken urges Israel and Hamas to move ahead with ceasefire deal

AP ■ TEL AVIV

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was meeting with Israeli leaders on Wednesday in his push for a cease-fire deal between Israel and Hamas, saying “the time is now” for an agreement that would free hostages and bring a pause in the nearly seven months of war in Gaza.

He said Hamas would bear the blame for any failure to get a deal off the ground. Blinken is on his seventh visit to the region since the war erupted in October in his bid to secure what’s been an elusive deal between Israel and Hamas that could avert an Israeli incursion into the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are sheltering.

The current round of talks appears to be serious, but the sides remain far apart on one key issue — whether the war should end as part of an emerging deal.



“We are determined to get a cease-fire that brings the hostages home and to get it now, and the only reason that that wouldn’t be achieved is because of Hamas,” Blinken told Israel’s ceremonial President Isaac Herzog at a meeting in Tel Aviv. “There is a proposal on the table, and as we’ve said, no delays, no excuses. The time is now,” he said.

Blinken said the deal would also allow much needed food, medicine and water to get into Gaza, where the war has sparked a humanitarian crisis and displaced much of the territory’s population.

After meeting with Herzog and also with families of Americans held by Hamas at his hotel, Blinken briefly greeted several dozen demonstrators calling for an immediate hostage release deal on the sidewalk outside.

Chanting “SOS, USA, only you can save the day” and “In Blinken we trust, bring them home to us,” the protestors urged him to make their case to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Blinken will meet Netanyahu and his War Cabinet later Wednesday.

Blinken told the families that there was a very strong proposal on the table and that Hamas needs to say yes to it. “That is our determination, and we will not rest, we will not stop until you’re reunited

with your loved ones,” he said.

His comments came on the last leg of his regional visit, with previous stops in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, where he urged Hamas to accept the latest proposal, calling it “extraordinarily generous” on Israel’s part. According to the State Department, he will also visit an Israeli port where aid for Gaza is entering.

The United States has staunchly supported Israel’s war since Hamas’ unprecedented attack on October 7 into southern Israel. But it has grown increasingly critical of the staggering toll borne by Palestinian civilians in Gaza and has been especially outspoken against Israel’s plan to invade Rafah, Gaza’s southernmost city where some 1.5 million Palestinians have fled from fighting elsewhere in the territory, saying that any major offensive there would bring potential harm to civilians and should be avoided.

Workers and activists across Asia and Europe hold May Day rallies

AP ■ SEOUL

Workers, activists and others in Asian capitals and European cities took to the streets on Wednesday to mark May Day with protests over rising prices and government labour policies and calls for greater labour rights.

May Day, which falls on May 1, is observed in many countries to celebrate workers’ rights. May Day events have also given many an opportunity to air general economic grievances or political demands.

Police in Istanbul detained dozens of people who tried to reach the central Taksim Square in defiance of a government ban on marking Labour Day at the landmark location.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s government has long declared Taksim off-limits for rallies and demonstrations on security grounds, but some political parties and trade unions have vowed to march to the square, which holds symbolic value for labour unions. In

1977, unidentified gunmen opened fire on a May Day celebration at Taksim, causing a stampede and killing 34 people. On Wednesday, police erected barricades and sealed off all routes leading to the central Istanbul square. Public transport in the area was also restricted. Only a small group of trade union representatives was permitted to enter the square to lay a wreath at a monument in memory of victims of the 1977 incident. Riot police apprehended some 30 members of the left-wing People’s Liberation Party who tried to break through the barriers. In Indonesia, workers vowed anger at a new law they said violates their rights and hurts their welfare, and demanded protections for migrant workers abroad and a minimum wage raise.

About 50,000 workers from Jakarta’s satellite cities of Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi were expected to join May Day marches in the capital, said Said Iqbal, the president of the Confederation of Indonesian

Trade Unions. They gathered amid a tight police presence near the National Monument park, waving the colourful flags of labour groups and chanting slogans against the Job Creation Law and loosened outsourcing rules during a march to Jakarta’s main sports stadium, Gelora Bung Karno.

“With the enactment of this law, our future is uncertain because many problems arise in wages, severance pay and the contract system,” said Isbandi Anggono, a protester.

Indonesia’s parliament last year ratified a government regulation that replaces a controversial law on job creation, but critics said it still benefits businesses. The law was intended to cut bureaucracy as part of President Joko Widodo’s efforts to attract more investment to the country, which is Southeast Asia’s largest economy. In Seoul, the South Korean capital, thousands of protesters sang, waved flags and shouted pro-labour slogans at the start of their rally on Wednesday. Organisers said

their rally was primarily meant to step up their criticism of what they call anti-labour policies pursued by the conservative government led by President Yoon Suk Yeol.

“In the past two years under the Yoon Suk Yeol government, the lives of our labourers have plunged into despair,” Yang Kyung-soo, leader of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, which organised the rally, said in a speech.

“We can’t overlook the Yoon Suk Yeol government. We’ll bring them down from power for ourselves.”

KCTU union members decried Yoon’s December veto of a bill aimed at limiting companies’ rights to seek compensation for damages caused by strikes by labour unions.

They also accuse Yoon’s government of handling the 2022 strikes by truckers too aggressively and insulting construction sector workers whom authorities believed were involved in alleged irregular activities.

24 killed in China highway collapse

Beijing (PTI): At least 24 people were killed when a section of a highway collapsed early Wednesday, the start of a five-day long Labour Day holiday, in China’s rain hit Guangdong province. The cave-in occurred at around 2am in Dabu County of Guangdong’s northern Meizhou City. Nearly 18 metres of the mountainous highway crumbled into the forested slope below, trapping 20 vehicles and 54 passengers in all, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported, quoting a local government statement. The official statement said 30 victims had been sent to hospital, while around 500 public security, emergency response, firefighting, health and sanitation and other workers were taking part in the rescue work. The condition of the hospitalised patients was “not life-threatening at the moment”, the statement said, but did not specify the level of their injuries. The reason for the collapse has yet to be declared and

the matter is under investigation, the Post reported.

The accident occurred as China began a five-day break for Labour Day, one of the four major holiday and travel periods for the country when highways are toll-free and see heavy traffic.

Footage and pictures shared by local news outlets showed flames and smoke rising from the collapsed section, while charred cars were visible on the gouged-out slope. The stricken highway links Guangdong to southeastern Fujian province.

State-run Xinhua news agency reported that 31 people have been sent to hospital for treatment after a road cave-in on an expressway in south China’s Guangdong Province in which 18 vehicles were trapped.

The cave-in happened around 2:10 a.m. on a section of the Meizhou-Dabu Expressway in the city of Meizhou, according to the government of Meizhou.

Portuguese ship hit in Arabian Sea raises Houthi rebel concerns

AP ■ JERUSALEM

A Portuguese-flagged container ship came under attack by a drone in the far reaches of the Arabian Sea, corresponding with a claim by Yemen’s Houthi rebels that they assaulted the ship there, authorities said Tuesday.

The attack on the MSC Orion, occurring some 600 kilometers (375 miles) off the coast of Yemen, appeared to be the first confirmed deep-sea assault claimed by the Houthis since they began targeting ships in November. It suggests the Houthis — or potentially their main benefactor Iran — may have the ability to strike into the distances of the Indian Ocean as the rebels previously threatened in their ongoing campaign over Israel’s war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The attack happened last Friday, according to the Joint Maritime Information Center, which operates as part of the US-led Combined Maritime Forces in the Mideast. After the attack, the crew dis-

covered debris apparently from a drone on board, the center said. The ship “sustained only minor damage and all crew on board are safe,” the center said. Ship-tracking satellite data analyzed by The Associated Press put the container ship, bound for Salalah, Oman, in the area of the attack on Saturday.

The MSC Orion has been associated with London-based Zodiac Maritime, which is part of Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer’s Zodiac Group. It was operating on behalf of the Mediterranean Shipping Co, a Naples, Italy-based firm. Zodiac referred questions to MSC, which did not respond to a request for comment Tuesday. The Joint Maritime Information Center assesses “that MSC Orion was likely targeted due to (its) perceived Israeli affiliation,” the center said in a report.

Brig Gen Yahya Saree, a military spokesman for Yemen’s Houthi rebels, claimed the attack on the Orion early Tuesday. He did not explain why it took the rebels days to acknowledge the attack.

The attack immediately raised questions about how the Houthis could have carried out an assault hundreds of kilometers (miles) from the shores of Yemen on a moving target. Their primary area of attack so far has been in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the narrow Bab el-Mandeb Strait that connect the two waterways key for international trade. Those are close to Yemen’s shoreline — unlike the site of the MSC Orion attack. The Houthis are not known to operate an expeditionary naval fleet, nor do they have access to satellites or other sophisticated means of controlling long-distance drones. Iran, which has been supplying the Shiite rebels in their years-long war in Yemen, has been assessed by the West and experts to have been behind at least one complex attack claimed by the Houthis — the 2019 attack on Saudi Arabia’s oil fields that temporarily halved the kingdom’s energy production. Iran also routinely operates military vessels in the Arabian Sea.

UK claims drastic drop in student dependents after visa crackdown

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK government has welcomed a “significant fall” in the number of dependents, or close family members such as a spouse and children, accompanying overseas students after its crackdown on student visas effective from early this year. In an update issued on Tuesday for the period of January to March this year compared to the same period in 2023, the Home Office said that dependents had drastically fallen by almost 80 per cent amid over 26,000 fewer student visa applications made. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said in a statement on social media that the figures mean that his changes to the country’s visa system were working. “The number of students bringing family members and dependents to the UK was too high. This wasn’t fair,” he said. “Our changes are working - stu-

dent dependant numbers are now down by 80 per cent,” he said.

Under rules effective from January, most international students except those on research courses cannot bring along family members. They can no longer switch their visa either before completing their course, which the government claimed misused the student visa as a “backdoor” to work in the UK amid a wider Home Office clampdown on institutions “selling immigration not education”. Indians have led the international student visa tally in recent years and these figures indicate that a downward trend noted earlier this year is likely to mean fewer Indian students choosing UK universities. “Ever-spilling numbers were eroding the British people’s confidence in our immigration system, burdening public services and suppressing wages,” said UK Home Secretary James Cleverly.

Teenager arrested in school attack in England

London (PTI): A 17-year-old boy has been arrested following reports of three people being injured at a school in Sheffield, northern England, on Wednesday. South Yorkshire Police said it was called to the Birley Community College and officers remain at the site. Minor injuries have been reported from the school premises. “Officers are at the scene after responding to reports of an incident involving a sharp object at the school on Birley Lane at around 8.50 am. Two adults were checked over at the scene after suffering minor injuries,” South Yorkshire Police said in a statement. “A child was also checked over after being assaulted,” the police said. The 17-year-old boy has been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder and remains in police custody. Police said its officers will remain at the scene throughout the day to provide assurances to those in the school and the local community.

COVID-19 sequencing scientist allowed lab access after protest

AP ■ BEIJING

The first scientist to publish a sequence of the COVID-19 virus in China said he was allowed back into his lab after he spent days locked outside, sitting in protest.

Zhang Yongzhen wrote in an online post on Wednesday, just past midnight, that the medical center that hosts his lab had “tentatively agreed” to allow him and his team to return and continue their research for the time being.

“Now, team members can enter and leave the laboratory freely,” Zhang wrote in a post on Weibo, a Chinese social media platform. He added that he is negotiating a plan to relocate the lab in a way that doesn’t disrupt his team’s work with the Shanghai Public Health

Clinical Center, which hosts Zhang’s lab. Zhang and his team were suddenly told they had to leave their lab for renovations on Thursday, setting off the dispute, he said in an earlier post that was later deleted. On Sunday, Zhang began a sit-in protest outside his lab after he found he was locked out, a sign of continuing pressure on Chinese scientists conducting research on the coronavirus. Zhang sat outside on flattened cardboard in drizzling rain, and members of his team unfurled a banner that read “Resume normal scientific research work,” pictures posted online show. News of the protest spread widely on Chinese social media, putting pressure on local authorities. In an online statement

Monday, the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center said that Zhang’s lab was closed for “safety reasons” while being renovated. It added that it had provided Zhang’s team an alternative laboratory space. But Zhang responded the same day his team wasn’t offered an alternative until after they were notified of their eviction, and the lab offered didn’t meet safety standards for conducting their research, leaving his team in limbo.

Zhang’s dispute with his host institution was the latest in a series of setbacks, demotions and ousters since the virologist published the sequence in January 2020 without state approval.

Beijing has sought to control information related to the virus since it first emerged.

Fitness influencer in Saudi gets 11-year sentence for terrorism

Jerusalem (AP): Saudi Arabia confirmed in a letter to the United Nations that a female fitness instructor who was popular online received an 11-year prison sentence but did not specify any of her alleged “terrorism offenses.”

Though the kingdom insisted the case had nothing to do with the instructor’s online presence, human rights activists say the conviction levied against Manahel al-Otaibi shows the limits of expression in Saudi Arabia.

It also highlights another side of the kingdom, now run day-to-day by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who under his 88-year-old father King Salman has dramatically liberalized some aspects of women’s lives

in the country.

“Her charges related solely to her choice of clothing and expression of her views online, including calling on social media for an end to Saudi Arabia’s male guardianship system, publishing videos of herself wearing indecent clothes and going to the shops without wearing an abaya,” said Amnesty International and ALQST, a London-based group advocating for human rights in Saudi Arabia that’s followed al-Otaibi’s case.

The human rights organization issued joint statements on Tuesday about al-Otaibi’s prison sentence, first revealed in Saudi letter dated January 25 and sent to the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

London mayoral hopeful Tarun Ghulati determined to fight crime

PTI ■ LONDON

Tarun Ghulati, London’s Indian-origin candidate for Mayor in the local elections on Thursday, has said the brutal sword attack on the streets of the city in which a 14-year-old boy lost his life, has strengthened his resolve that the British capital needs a crime fighter to lead it.

On the eve of the election, the Delhi-born businessman challenging Sadiq Khan from winning a record third term in office said that Londoners have been failed by the main political parties and need a new dedicated professional to fight their corner in all areas. The election comes two days after a 36-year-old man — now in police custody — went on a stabbing rampage in the



Hainault area of east London on Tuesday morning, killing one and injuring four others including two police officers. “The brutal attack on the streets of my beloved city, in which an innocent little boy lost his life, has only strengthened my resolve that what London needs is a dedicated crime-fighting Mayor. I am in

the race to offer my fellow Londoners that choice tomorrow,” said Ghulati.

Safety on the streets of the city is among his major electoral priorities, with visible community policing and more officers patrolling on the beat on the agenda.

“It is about having enough bobbies on the beat, having the resources for police officers to do their jobs, which means making the streets safe for women to walk at night, with muggers and burglars being caught and punished,” he said. The 63-year-old is standing as an Independent candidate among 13 contestants in the fray for the local elections on Thursday, when Londoners will vote for their Mayor and also for members of the London Assembly.

China's 3rd aircraft carrier begins sea trials amid SCS tensions

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's third aircraft carrier, the Fujian, the most advanced homemade warship, began its maiden sea trials on Wednesday as Beijing ramped up its naval power amid increasing tensions with the US in the disputed South China Sea and Taiwan Strait. The ship left Shanghai Jiangnan Shipyard on Wednesday morning for the sea trials, primarily to test the reliability and stability of the aircraft carrier's propulsion and electrical systems, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Since its launch in June 2022, the Fujian has completed its mooring trials, outfitting work and equipment adjustments. It has met the technical requirements for sea trials. Ahead of the trials, China has imposed maritime traffic controls around the mouth of the

Yangtze River where the Jiangnan shipyard ship is located for "military activities". The traffic controls would last till May 9, the report said. According to the previous official media reports, China plans to have five to six aircraft carriers by 2035 for strategic deployment in the disputed South China Sea, where Beijing seeks to assert its claims over most of the vast area, the Taiwan Strait which separates the Chinese mainland and Taiwan and the Indian Ocean where Beijing is increasing its power projection. Elaborating on China's strategy in acquiring aircraft carriers, Senior Col. (ret) Zhou Bo, who spent four decades with the People's Liberation Army (PLA), said China sees their importance for possible war far from home. "I cannot speculate on how many carriers China will need. But I can tell you that aircraft

carriers are primarily not for coastal fights. They are for a possible war far from home," Bo, who is a senior fellow with the Centre for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University, told the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post in a recent interview. "People may say that one day, when China has to retreat from peaceful means to resolve the Taiwan issue, we could use aircraft carriers," he said. "Of course they are useful, but they are more useful in our power projection in the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, or Atlantic Ocean - anywhere far from our waters - because they are platforms for the ships and aircraft that make us powerful," he said. Currently, the Chinese navy is involved in a standoff with the US-backed Philippines naval ships in the South China Sea. The Philippines is trying to

assert its claim over the Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea which is strongly resisted by China. China claims most of the South China Sea. The Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims. China names its aircraft carriers after its provinces. Fujian borders the Taiwan Strait. The other two carriers were named after Liaoning and the Shandong provinces. China's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, was a refit of the Soviet-era ship commissioned in 2012 followed by the indigenously built 2nd aircraft carrier Shandong in 2019. Chinese official media said Fujian is the "first fully domestically developed and constructed" aircraft carrier with an electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS) similar to that of the American aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford.

Drone footage reveals devastation in Ukrainian city under Russian assault

AP ■ KYIV

Months of relentless Russian artillery pounding have devastated a strategic city in eastern Ukraine, new drone footage obtained by The Associated Press has shown, with barely a building left intact, homes and municipal offices charred, and a town that once had a population of 12,000 now left all but deserted. The footage shows the community of Chasiv Yar — which is set amid green fields and woodland — pounded into an apocalyptic vista. The massive destruction is reminiscent of the cities of Bakhmut and Avdiivka, which Ukraine yielded after months of bombardment and huge losses for both sides. The strategically important city has been under relentless attack by Russian forces for months. Capturing it would give Russia control of a hilltop from which it can attack other cities that



form the backbone of Ukraine's eastern defenses. Russia launched waves of assaults on foot and in armoured vehicles at Chasiv Yar's outnumbered Ukrainian troops, who have run desperately short of ammunition

while waiting for the US and other allies to send in fresh supplies. Rows of mid-rise apartment blocks in Chasiv Yar have been blackened by blasts, punched through with holes or reduced to piles of timber and mason-

ry. Houses and civic buildings are also heavily damaged. The golden dome of a church remains intact but the building appears badly damaged. No soldiers or civilians were anywhere to be seen in the footage shot Monday and exclusively obtained by the AP, apart from a lone man walking down the middle of a road between wrecked structures. The destruction underscores Russia's scorched-earth tactics throughout more than two years of war, as its troops have sought to advance, killing and displacing thousands of civilians. Chasiv Yar is located on high ground, offering Russia the possibility of a platform it can use to push towards larger cities that form Ukraine's defensive belt in the eastern Donetsk region. Capturing Chasiv Yar would set the stage for a potentially broader Russian offensive that Ukrainian officials say could come as early as May.

Indonesia's Ruang Volcano erupts again, closing schools, airports

AP ■ MANADO

Indonesia's Mount Ruang volcano spewed more hot clouds on Wednesday after an eruption the previous day forced the closure of schools and airports, pelted villages with volcanic debris and prompted hundreds of people to flee. Seven airports, including Sam Ratulangi international airport in Manado, the capital of North Sulawesi province, remained closed after Tuesday's eruption, the second in two weeks. Schools were shut to protect children from volcanic ash. The volcano is on tiny Ruang Island, part of the Sitaro islands chain. The Indonesian geological agency urged people to stay at least 7 kilometers (4 miles) from the volcano's crater. It warned people on nearby Tagulandang Island, the closest to the volcano, of possible super-heated volcanic clouds from a further eruption and a tsunami if the mountain's vol-



canic dome collapses into the sea. Video released by the National Search and Rescue Agency showed about a hundred villagers from Tagulandang Island being evacuated on a navy ship. Hundreds of others were waiting at a local port to be evacuated. Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said 11,000 to 12,000 people living within a 7-kilometre danger zone would be taken to government shelters. Tuesday's eruption darkened the sky and peppered several

villages with ash, grit and rocks. No casualties were reported. After Mount Ruang's April 17 eruption, authorities warned that a subsequent eruption might collapse part of the volcano into the sea. Ruang is among about 130 active volcanoes in Indonesia. The archipelagic nation is prone to volcanic eruptions and earthquakes because of its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", a series of fault lines stretching from the western coast of the Americas through Japan and Southeast Asia.

Pak to block 500K+ mobile sim cards for tax non-compliance

Islamabad (PTI) : Authorities in Pakistan have decided to block the mobile phone SIM cards of over half a million tax defaulters as part of the drive to take action against tax evaders. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in an Income Tax General Order (ITGO) said the mobile SIMs of 506,671 individuals, who failed to file their tax returns for 2023, will stay blocked until restored by the FBR or the Commissioner Inland Revenue having authority over the person. It ordered the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and all telecom providers to immediately implement the Income Tax General Order (ITGO) no 01 of 2024 to block their SIMs and file a compliance report by May 15, Dawn News reported. An official source said the FBR has identified 2.4 million potential taxpayers who did not exist on the tax rolls. Notices were subsequently issued to these individuals. The FBR has

selected over 0.5 million individuals out of the 2.4 million for SIM blockade based on one criterion: they must have declared taxable income in one of the past three years and these individuals did not file their returns for tax year 2023. According to the Active Taxpayers List (ATL), the FBR received 4.2 million taxpayers until March 1, 2024, as against 3.8 million returns received during the same period of last year. This shows a marginal increase during the period under review. In tax year 2022, FBR received a total of 5.9 million income tax returns. According to the FBR official, SIMs will be automatically restored for persons who file tax returns for 2023. Every Monday, FBR updates its ATL listings. Every Tuesday, the names of persons who appear on the ATL list will be identified and submitted to the PTA and telecom companies for restoration.

Wickremesinghe to face his own colleague in presidential polls

PTI ■ COLOMBO

President Ranil Wickremesinghe, if stood for re-election in the presidential poll due later in the year, may have a face-up with his cabinet colleague Wijeyadasa Rajapakse, who is currently serving as the Minister of Justice. Former president Maithripala Sirisena, the chairman of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), told reporters on Wednesday that Rajapakse, 65, would be his party's candidate in the presidential election scheduled to be held before November 15 this year. "He will be the most suitable candidate from SLFP", Sirisena said. Rajapakse is a member of the now fragmented Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party, the home for members of the United People's Freedom Alliance loyal to its former leader Mahinda Rajapakse. A part of the SLPP is current-



ly in alignment with 75-year-old Wickremesinghe while another section supports the main opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) — a political alliance led by Leader of the Opposition Sajith Premadasa. The SLPP Rajapakse loyalists are unlikely to field a candidate as the party has been struggling since the 2022 mass protests. The demonstrators blamed the erstwhile powerful

Rajapaksa family for the island nation's unprecedented economic crisis. Wickremesinghe, who is yet to announce his candidacy, is banking on cross-party support for his re-election to implement an economic reform programme to pull the country out of bankruptcy. The main opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake have already announced their candidature. The SLFP of Sirisena has been in disarray since early April. He was clamped by court order as the leader when he nominated Rajapakse to be the acting chair of the party. Even Rajapakse has a court restraining order to function. The two factions led by Sirisena and the former president Chandrika Kumaratunga are embroiled in a serious legal tangle for the control of the party.

Google, Apple face antitrust threats in US over tech dominance

AP ■ SAN FRANCISCO

The US Justice Department's double-barrelled antitrust attack on Google's dominant search and Apple's trendsetting iPhone is reviving memories of the epic battle that hobbled Microsoft before it roared back to yet again become the world's most valuable company. The parallels to the Justice Department's landmark antitrust case in 1998 could provide a window into the potential breakthroughs that could be unleashed if regulators succeed in their attempts to crack down on Google and Apple. Federal lawyers have even gone as far as to assert Google and Apple may never have created so many popular products or become as powerful as they are now if Microsoft hadn't been reined in a quarter century ago. In closing arguments of a Washington, DC, trial that began last September, regulators on Thursday will apply the finishing touches to a case

alleging Google has turned its search engine into an illegal monopoly that stifles competition and innovation. The Apple case, which was only filed a month ago, is still years away from its resolution. Although regulators have lodged separate complaints against Google and Apple, the two cases are shadowed by Microsoft's legal saga that began when both those were mere specks on the technology landscape. When they went after Google in October 2020, regulators compared the lucrative deals that the company cut with Apple to lock its search engine into the iPhone and Safari web browser to the same tactics Microsoft deployed in its personal computer software to block competition. And in the antitrust lawsuits that they filed against Apple last month, the Justice Department pointed back to complaints that company co-founder Steve Jobs had raised in 1998 against Microsoft's "dirty tactics" while

urging regulators to take steps to force the PC software maker "to play fair". And that is what the Justice Department did in an antitrust case against Microsoft that caused massive distractions that opened the door for Google's search engine to become the internet's main gateway. It also culminated in a series of concessions that paved the way for Apple to extend the reach of its iTunes music store that increased the popularity of the iPod that spawned the iPhone. The Microsoft case "created new opportunities for innovation in areas that would become critical to the success of Apple's consumer devices and the company itself", the Justice Department crowed in the lawsuit that casts the iPhone as an illegal monopoly. After years of mostly fruitless attempts to compete against Google's search engine and the iPhone under the leadership of Steve Ballmer, Microsoft began to regain its stride when Satya

Nadella became CEO in 2014. Earlier this year, Microsoft's market value hit USD 3 trillion for the first time, surpassing Apple as the world's most valuable company while taking the early lead in artificial intelligence technology that's expected to reshape the world. It's an odd juxtaposition that has thrust regulators into battling two companies they helped create when they caged a colossus now angling to seize the mantle in technology's next frontier. But it's also a tableau that antitrust experts cite as evidence that the system is working to unlock more robust competition that hatches innovations. And then those breakthroughs sometimes serve as the building blocks for new monopolies that must eventually be challenged by regulators, even as fallen empires like Microsoft can still find ways to reinvent themselves. "It's not about an agenda about trying to pursue and destroy companies, it's about trying to

Imran Khan's party faces more objections to intra-party polls

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's election commission has taken up another case against jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party, questioning its status as it has not conducted proper elections for five years and has no organisational structure. A five-member bench of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja on Tuesday noted that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had conducted intra-party elections afresh after Supreme Court and ECP directives but the objections to the polls needed to be clarified, ECP Director General (Political Finance) Masood Akhtar has informed the party without sharing further details. The objections regarding the appointment of the party chairman and its general body meeting were later shared with the respondents, Dawn News reported.



The document shared with Khan's PTI questioned the status of the party, which has not conducted proper elections for five years, and has no organisational structure as well as a poll symbol. The ECP has also asked the party why action should not be taken against the party under Section 208(5) of the Elections Act, 1997. Section 208(5) says: "Where a political party fails to conduct intra-party elections as per given time frame in their con-

stitution, a show-cause notice shall be issued to such political party and if the party fails to comply, then the Commission shall impose a fine which may extend to Rs 200,000 but shall not be less than Rs 100,000." PTI chairman Gohar Khan told reporters outside the ECP office the intra-party election was conducted on March 3 and a notification to this effect was also issued the next day, yet they had not been issued a certificate. Gohar maintained they would respond to any objections raised by the political finance wing of the commission but informed the bench that details of the objections had not been shared with the party. Gohar said the party had already put this information on social media but the ECP simply sent a notice stating that there were objections to the intra-party elections. He added that if the observations or objections were shared with the party, only then they will be able to reply to them

duly. He said there were as many as 175 political parties in Pakistan and none of them held intra-party elections as per the Constitution, "whereas we conducted intra-party elections in the light of the orders of the Election Commission and the Supreme Court". About Sunni Ittehad Council chairman Hamid Raza's warning that party members would quit parliament if PTI founder Imran Khan was not released from jail, the PTI chairman explained that Raza had talked about "considering the option" of resignation. Separately, Gohar on Tuesday announced that his party had finalised Sher Afzal Marwat's name for the slot of all-powerful Public Accounts Committee (PAC) chairman, ending the infighting in the ranks of the former ruling party. The PTI chairman said: "All disputes are over [now] as the party has picked the name of Marwat for the slot"

Taliban rule sparks profits in phones, books, currency exchange

AP ■ KABUL

Yunis Safi, a businessman in Kabul, knows very well the importance of showing off your phone if you want something done. "In Afghanistan, your phone is your personality," he said, smiling, a jewel-encrusted ring on each hand. One boasts an emerald, the other a fat Russian diamond. "When you go to a meeting with the government, the better your phone, the more they respect you." Safi runs a phone shop in the posh Shar-e-Naw neighborhood. An armed guard stands outside. The iPhone 15 Pro Max adorns the shop shelves, retailing for USD 1,400. He has customers ready to part with this sum of money, which may come as a surprise to some given the country's eco-

nomical woes and more than half the population relying on humanitarian aid to survive. Afghanistan's finances were on shaky ground even before the Taliban seized power in 2021. The budget relied heavily on foreign aid and corruption was rife. The takeover sent Afghanistan's economy into a tailspin, billions in international funds were frozen, and tens of thousands of highly skilled Afghans fled the country and took their money with them. But, even amid difficult conditions, some businesses are making money out of Taliban rule. Women are reduced to customers, however, as authorities have barred them from most jobs, including retail. None of Safi's 78 staff are women. He has tapped into a diverse

consumer base — the ones hungry for the latest iPhone release and those happier with simple handsets, which make up the bulk of his sales and sell for between USD 20 and USD 200. The Taliban used to attack phone towers and threaten telecom companies, accusing them of colluding with United States and other international forces in helping track insurgents' movements through mobile phone signals. Now, they're investing in the 4G mobile networks. The Communications Ministry says 2 million new SIM cards have been issued in the past two years and that subscriber numbers are increasing. Ministry spokesperson Enayatullah Alokozai said the government was plowing USD 100 million

into the telecom sector and had fully restored hundreds of towers. There are 22.7 million active SIM cards in a country of 41 million people. Of these, 10 million are for voice calls and the rest are for mobile internet. According to Trade Ministry figures, phone imports have risen. More than 1,584 tons of phones came into Afghanistan in 2022. Last year, it was 1,895 tons. Safi said he has many Taliban customers and it's the younger ones who prefer iPhones. "Of course they need smartphones. They use social media, they like making videos. The iPhone has better security than Samsung. The camera resolution, processor, memory are all better. Afghans use their smartphones like anyone else."

Safi has the iPhone 15 Pro Max, wears an Apple Watch Ultra and owns three cars. Business was bad immediately after the Taliban takeover but it's improving, Safi said. "The people buying the new release iPhones are the ones with relatives abroad sending money to Afghanistan." Remittances are a lifeline, although they're less than half of what they were before the Taliban took power and the banking sector collapsed. At the raucous Shahzada Market in Kabul, hundreds of money exchangers clutch stacks of the local currency, the Afghani, and noisily hawk their wares. They occupy every floor, stairwell, nook and cranny. Abdul Rahman Zarak, a senior official at the money exchange market, estimates that USD 10

million changes hands daily. The diaspora sends mostly US dollars to families, who exchange it for the Afghani. There used to be more ways to send money to Afghanistan before the Taliban seized control. But there are no more links to SWIFT or international banking and that's a major reason why business is brisk at the market, he said. "The work of money exchangers has increased and strengthened," Zarak said. "Money transfers come from Canada, the US, Europe, Australia, Arab nations and other neighboring countries." Trade becomes hectic during the holidays. During the holy month of Ramadan, 20,000 people visited the market daily and it took more than 90 minutes to enter, he said. "If the sanctions are removed

and the assets are unfrozen, then maybe our business will decrease. But I don't see that happening. Many don't have bank accounts. Unemployment is high, so people send money to Afghanistan. Our business will be needed for years to come." Irfanullah Arif, who runs Haqqani Books, a specialist retailer of Islamic texts, is also upbeat about his fortunes. The majority of his customers are teachers and students at religious schools, or madrasas. There are at least 20,000 madrasas in Afghanistan. The Taliban want to build more. Last year, the supreme leader reportedly ordered the recruitment of 1,00,000 madrasa teachers. While Arif's business suffered like everyone else's in the chaotic aftermath of the

takeover, there was another reason. "All the students left the madrasas and went to work for the (Taliban) government," said Arif. The Taliban's push for religious education has given him some relief. Last year, he sold 25,000 textbooks. But there's a price to pay for success. Arif imports everything and the Taliban are laser-focused on collecting revenue, even on Islamic literature. Arif pays a tax of 170 Afghani (USD 2.36) on a carton of 100 books, the shipping cost for which is 500 Afghani (USD 6.95). Taxes on his bookstore have tripled under Taliban rule. "That's why books are expensive in Afghanistan," he sighed. "With the increase of madrasas, our trade has gone up, but so have the taxes."

Classifieds

CHANGE OF NAME

I Sandeep Chauhan S/O Sheesh Pal Chauhan R/O 301 Sector- 25 Panchkula, Haryana, Have Changed My Minor Daughter Name From Saanvi To Saanvi Chauhan.

I Rakesh Kumar Pothal S/O Ravinder Kumar R/O H No 119, St No 1, New Partap Nagar, Haibowal Kalan, Ludhiana Have Changed My Name From Rakesh Kumar Pothal To Rakesh Kumar.

I Kaushalya Devi W/O No.Jc479938a Hony Capt./Sub Maj. Gurdavir Singh R/O Village Chanchak Tehsil Guhla District Have Changed My Name From Kaushalya Devi To Kaushalya Devi

I, Sarabjeet Kaur D/O Shri Harpal Singh R/O Village Nangal, Tehsil Kharar, SAS Nagar Mohali, Punjab 140301, Have Changed My Name From Sarabjeet Kaur To Sarabjit Kaur.

I, Neha Goyal W/O Nishant Mittal R/O H.No.353, Hari Nagar, Chhattha Complex, Thanesar Kurukshetra, have changed my name from Neha Goyal to Neha Mittal, after marriage.

I, Sudesh Kumari W/O Ajaib Singh R/O Village Kheri Brahmanan, Postoffice Salarpur District Kurukshetra, have changed my name from Sudesh to Sudesh Kumari.

I, Sumit Saini S/O Gian Chand R/o Devidaspura, Kurukshetra- 136131, have changed the name of my minor daughter from Aaradhya to Aaradhya Saini. In future my daughter should be known as Aaradhya Saini.

I, Parmod Goyal S/O Sh. Sadhu Ram Goyal R/O H.No. 1464, Vivek Vihar, New Aggarsain Colony, Hisar (Haryana) declare that I have changed my name from Parmod Goyal to Pramod Goyal for all future purpose.

I, Rajbir Singh S/O Rustam r/o Nissing Ara Wali Gali, Sub Tehsil Nising, Distt, Karnal, Haryana have changed my name from Rajbir to Rajbir Singh. In future I should be known as Rajbir Singh.

I, Sandeep S/O Kartar Singh R/O Village Barot, Distt. Kaithal (Haryana) declares that I have changed my name from Sandeep to Sandeep Singh. In future, I will be known by the name of Sandeep Singh. All concerned please note.

I, Sushma Kumari W/O (Late) Sh. Ranbir Vats R/O # 721, GBS And DC Office Society, Sector 48-A, Chandigarh-160047 (India), Presently resident at 241 Paxtonway Glastonbury, CT, USA declares that I have changed my name to Sushma (First Name) Kumari (Last Name) for all future purposes.

I, Ishan S/O Sudesh Kumar and Rabia R/o 3561/1, Sector 37D Chandigarh have changed our minor son name from Ruhaan to Ruhaan budhiraja . Ruhaan and Ruhaan Budhiraja one and same person

I, Anjum Shaikh W/O Dilshad Ahmed R/O# 1371, Sector 38 (west), Dadu Majra Colony Chandigarh, have changed my name to Shaikh Anjum.

I, Surinder Kaur Samra W/O Harnam Singh R/O H. No. 48 Model Jail Complex Sector 51 Chandigarh, have changed name given Surinder Given and Kaur Surname.

I, Vinod Kumar S/O Hari Ram R/O Near Sati Mata Mandir Shakti Nagar Ward No 05 Cheeka Tehsil Guhla (Kaithal), have changed name to Vinod Bansal.

I, Charanjit Kaur W/O Ashok Kumar R/O Village & Post Office-Ban, Tehsil-Ladwa, District Kurukshetra, Pin-136132, Haryana, have changed my name as Charanjeet Kaur

I, Aniket Dhiod S/O Late Kishan Lal R/O # 2511, Sector 25-D, Chandigarh. I have changed my name from Aniket Dhiod to Pinkuaman.

I, Balvir Kaur W/O Pawan Kumar R/O Village Dansiwal PO Paddi Sura Singh Tehsil Garhshankar Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed the name of my daughter from Dilpreet to Dilpreet Kaur. Concerned note.

I, Devinder Singh S/O Darshan Singh R/O H.No. 639, Ward No. 3, Bhamboor, Distt. Sirsa (Haryana)-125055, Have Changed My Name To Davinder Singh.

I, Nangah Ratnabhai is legally Father of No. 15801948X, NK (CC), Nangah Malsurbhai Ratnabhai, Unit 408 GUN MSL Regt C/o 56 APO Residing at Village. Gundala (Jas) Tehsil. Vinchhya Distt. Rajkot PIN 360055 Gujarat have change my name in all documents from Ratnabhai Hamirbhai to Nangah Ratnabhai Vide Affidavit Dated 22 April 2024 before at Notray Ferozeper.

I, Asha Patel Spouse Of Kapil Kumar Residence At Village Gram Bafapur, Dhakni, Ashta, Sehore, Madhya Pradesh, Pin 466116 Have Changed My Name From Asha Aleriya To Asha Patel Vide Affidavit Dated 01 May 2024 Before At Notray Ferozeper.

I, Suvarna Nilesh Mali, Spouse Of Mali Nilesh Ashok Rao Residence At Village Betawad, Dhule, State Maharashtra, Pin 425403 Have Changed My Name From Suvarna To Suvarna Nilesh Mali Vide Affidavit Dated 01 May 2024 Before At Notray Ferozeper.

I, Mali Nilesh Ashok Rao At Village Betawad, Dhule, State Maharashtra, Pin 425403 Have Changed My Minor Daughter Name From Devyani To Devyani Nilesh Mali Vide Affidavit Dated 01 May 2024 Before At Notray Ferozeper.

I, Mali Nilesh Ashok Rao Residence At Village Betawad, Dhule, State Maharashtra, Pin 425403 Have Changed My Minor Son Name From Suyog To Suyog Nilesh Mali Vide Affidavit Dated 01 May 2024 Before At Notray Ferozeper.

I, Arti Pandey, Spouse Of No. 15158963Y, Hav Mahesh Kumar Pandey Resident of Mouhari, Gonda, Uttar Pradesh Pin 271303 Declare That my Husband Army Service Records my name & date of birth is wrongly mentioned as Arti Devi & 07/03/1985 But Actual and Correct my name Arti Pandey & date of birth 14/10/1987.

I Anju Kumari, is legally wife of 14673427A, NK, Ranjit Kumar Singh Unit of 161 (i) Fd Wksp Coy (Recco & Sp) (WH), C/O 56 APO, Ferozeper Cantt, Resident at Village Sahadi, Post Purana, District Saran, (Bihar) 841401 have changed my name in my husband service record is from Anju Kumari to Anju Devi Vide Affidavit Dated 01 May 2024 before at Notray Ferozeper.

I, Dhavamani. M. is legally Mother of 15249979X, L/NK, Vijay M, Unit of 627 Sata Bty C/O 56 APO, Ferozeper Cantt, Resident at H.No. 1/117, Melur Taluk, T. Vellalapati, Madurai, State Tamil Nadu, Pin 625122 have changed my name Dhavamani. M to Thava Mani. M Vide Affidavit Dated 01 May 2024 before at Notray Ferozeper.

I, Pawandeep Kaur Nandha Daughter of Satnam Singh and Ex wife of Kamalpreet Singh Nandha, resident of Village Tibbi Khurd, Tehsil and Distt. Ferozeper-152023, Punjab, India declare that I got divorce from my Ex husband Kamalpreet Singh Nandha vide file No. FD19-01-22027, on 5th June 2020 in the Province of Manitoba, vide Certificate of Divorce, issued by Deputy Registrar court of Queen's Bench. Further I have changed my name from Pawandeep Kaur Nandha to Pawandeep Kaur Mehroke. I shall be known as Pawandeep Kaur Mehroke.

I, Hitherto Known As Nirmal Singh Sandhu Son Of Pritam Singh Residing At Vpo Lubanianwali Tehsil And Distt Sri Muktsar Sahib -152026, Punjab (India) Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Nirmal Singh.

I, Raju Verma S/O Madan Lal Verma R/o Kanthala, Pehowa, Kurukshetra have Changed My Given name Raju Surname Verma.

I, Karmjeet W/O Palwinder Singh Vill Satora, Tehsil Pehowa, Kurukshetra, Have Changed My Given Name Karmjeet Surname Kaur.

I, Karamjeet W/O Palwinder Singh Vill Satora, Tehsil Pehowa, Kurukshetra Have Changed My Name Karmjeet Kaur.

I, Anita W/O Sukha Singh V.P.O Thaska Miranji SubTehsil Ismailabad Kurukshetra Have Changed my name Anita Devi.

I, Harjeet Kaur W/O No TJ-6871W Sub Late Arjun Singh R/O Village- Heer, Po-Langah Jattan, Tehsil/Distt-Gurdaspur (Punjab)-143519. Have Changed My Name Harjeet Kaur Is Wrong. But My Name Harjit Kaur Is Correct. Vide Affidavit No. In-PB10782613193818W Dated 30-04-2024 Before Notary Public Gurdaspur Punjab India.

I, NO.15494239Y, DFR, Rannik Singh S/O Jasbir Singh. R/O 62 Cavalry, Tibri Cantt, Tehsil/District-Gurdaspur, Punjab. Declare That In My Army Service Record My Wife's Name Gurdeep Kaur Is Wrong. But My Wife's Name Gurdeep Kaur Is Correct. Vide Affidavit No. In-PB1130057828846W Dated 01-05-2024 Before Notary Public Gurdaspur, Punjab,India.

I, Meenakshi Kumari Is Legally Daughter Of Bharat Singh R/O At Defence Colony, VIII/Po- Phulwariya (Phoolwaria), Teh- Sadar Distt- Varanasi, State- Uttar Pradesh Pin-221106. Have Changed My Name From Meenakshi Kumari To Minakshi Kumari Vide Affidavit No. PB-IN10505779930012W Dated 29-04-2024 Before District Court Gurdaspur Punjab.

I, Saraswati Devi spouse of No. 17034316X Rank NK Name Yograj presently residing at Village Panolu, P.O. Barswan, Tehsil Balh, Distt Mandi, State Himachal Pradesh, PIN-175036, have changed my name from Saraswati Devi to Sarswati vide Affidavit No. IN-PB10507982857993W Dated 29 April 2024 before Notary Public Pathankot (Punjab).

I, Gurjeet Singh S/O Sarwan Singh R/O Vill. Padde, Po. Pheruman, Teh. Baba Bakala, Amritsar, Punjab-143112, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Gurjeet Singh Virk.

I, Jaswant Singh Gill S/O Gurdev Singh R/O Purana Patti, Dhurkot Ransih, Moga, Punjab-142055, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Jaswant Singh.

I, Shashi Kanta alias Shashi D/o Om Parkash W/O Sudesh Kumar R/o 31-A, Gurdarshan Nagar, Patiala, Punjab-147001, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Kusam.

I, Shachie Kant Gautam S/O Ramakant Gautam R/O 49A, Second Floor, Opposite Ryan International School, Sector 40, Gurgaon, Haryana-122001, I have changed the name of my minor Son Anirved Singh Gautam aged about 2 Years and He shall hereafter be known as Anirved Gautam.

I, hitherto Known as Jasten S/O Tara Chand R/O VPO. Raipur Raiyah, Dhilwan, Distt. Kapurthala-144804, Punjab have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Ranjit Singh.

I, hitherto Known as Ranjeet Singh S/O Joginder Singh R/O H.No.74, Vill.Mahirajwal, PO.Kang Khurd, Tehsil Shahkot, Distt.Jalandhar-144629, Punjab Has changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Ranjit Singh.

I, hitherto Known as Karanjotsingh Son of Lajwant Singh resident of H.No. 1265, Sarak Mohalla Garha, Jalandhar-144022, Punjab have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Amarbir Singh Gill.

I, hitherto Known as Gurpreet Singh S/O Malkit Singh R/O Vill. Ghullan, Po. Tanda, Teh. Dasuya, Distt. Sri Muktsar Sahib -152026, Punjab have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Singh Gurpreet.

I, Rosleen Saini D/O Shangara Singh R/O Village Adamwal Garhi, P.O. Hariana, Tehsil & Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab Have Changed My Name From Roseleen Saini To Rosleen Saini.

I Hardip Kaur D/O Harvail Singh W/O Swarn Singh R/O Vill. Bajaj, P.O. Butter, District Kapurthala, Punjab Have Changed My Name To Hardeep Kaur.

I, Jaswant Singh S/O Santa Singh R/O Village Chak Mallan Tehsil Garhshankar District Hoshiarpur Punjab Have Changed My Name To Singh Jaswant.

I Hitherto Known As Amarjit Kaur W/O Jagtar Singh R/O Mohalla Patti Jagirpur, Daroli Kalan, Jalandhar, Punjab 144104 Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Amarjeet Kaur.

I Harpreet Kaur Josan W/O Harminder Singh R/O H.No.38, Sahibzada Juhar Singh Avenue Ajnala Road Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Harpreet Kaur Josan To Harpreet Kaur.

I, Kulwinder Singh S/O Sucha Singh R/O Village Boothgarh P.O. Ram Colony Camp Distt. Hoshiarpur Have Changed My Name To Kulwinder Singh.

I Balvir Kumar S/O Sohan Lal R/O Vpo. Mandhali District Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar Have Changed My Minor Daughter's Name From Jannat To Jannat Bains.

I Gurmeet Kaur W/O Ranjit Singh R/O Vpo. Gureh Distt. Ludhiana Punjab Have Changed My Name To Gurmit Kaur Mann.

I Tina W/O Deepak Arora R/O H.No.-126-A Shastri Nagar Ludhiana Have Changed My Name To Teena Arora.

I Teena W/O Deepak Arora R/O H.No.-126-A Shastri Nagar Ludhiana Have Changed My Name To Teena Arora.

I Shivani W/O Rajan Sharma R/O Mohallan Lahorian Jagraon Distt. Ludhiana Have Changed My Name To Shivani Sharma.

I, Gurmeet Kaur W/O Sukhdev Singh Sra R/O Opp. Amar Ashram Distt. Faridkot Have Changed My Name To Gurmeet Kaur Sra.

I, Sukhdev Singh S/O Bakhshish Singh R/O Opp. Amar Ashram Distt. Faridkot Have Changed My Name To Sukhdev Singh Sra.

I, Sarabjit Kaur W/O Nirmal Singh R/o Vill: Asmanpur Teh-Samana (Patiala) have changed my name to Sarabjeet Kaur.

I, Manpreet Kaur Grewal W/O Mandeep Singh R/O Dal Singh Wala (Faridkot) have changed my name to Manpreet Kaur after marriage.

I, Jaspreet Singh S/O Rachhpal Singh R/O Su-Raj-Deep House Near Police Station Bassi Pathana (Fatehgarh Sahib) have changed my name to Jaspreet Singh Benipal.

I, Reema W/O Rajinder Kumar R/O Mohalla Preet Nagar, Pathankot, Punjab, 145001 declare that I have changed my name from Reema to Reema Choudhary vide Affidavit dated 01-05-2024

I, Kulwinder Singh Sembhi alias Kulwinder Singh Sammy S/O Kashmir Singh R/O Gali 4, Hargobind Nagar, Malout, Sri Muktsar Sahib changed my name to Kulwinder Singh Sembhi.

I, Surinder Singh Handa S/O Aasha Singh R/O Sodhi Wala (Ferozeper) have changed my name to Surinder Singh.

I Amarjit Kaur W/O Jagsir Singh Vpo Bhadaur Tehsil Tapa, Distt. Barnala have changed my name Kamaljit Kaur.

I, Balwinder Singh S/O Avtar Singh R/O Vpo. Littar Teh-Raikot (Ludhiana) have changed my name from Balwinder Singh to Balwinder Singh Hehar.

I Tarsem Raj S/O Gian Chand Garg R/O Gidderbaha Distt Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name To Tarsem Raj Garg.

I Gian Chand S/O Atma Singh R/O Gidderbaha Distt Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name To Gian Chand Garg.

I, Inderjeet Kaur W/O Jasvir Singh R/O Pherurain, Tehsil Raikot, Distt. Ludhiana, Have Change Name To Inderjit Kaur.

I, Baljeet Kaur W/O Baljinder Singh R/O Village Nalina Khurd, Po. Mullepur (Fatehgarh Sahib) have changed my name to Baljit Kaur.

I Balkarn Singh S/O Sukhmander Singh R/O Village Panjgrain Khurd (Moga) have Changed my name to Balkaran Singh.

I Sukhmandar Singh S/O Sadhu Singh R/O Village Panjgrain Khurd (Moga) have Changed my name to Sukhmander Singh.

I Alka Rani W/O Sudesh Kumar R/o # 845-A, Luxmi Garden, near ITI, Yamunanagar have changed my name from Alka Kumari to Alka Rani.

I Trilochan Singh S/O Amrik Singh Wadhawan R/O 572, Sector 17, HUDA, Jagadhri, Yamunanagar have changed my name from Trilochan Singh Wadhawan to Trilochan Singh.

I Charanjeet Chopra D/o Gurdavai Chand and W/o Kashmir Singh R/o Bulla Rai Road, Plahi Gate, Phagwara, Kapurthala, Punjab- 144401, have changed my name to Charanjeet Kaur.

I Kashmiri Chopra S/O Chanan Singh R/o Plahi Gate, Bhulla Rai Road, Phagwara, Kapurthala, Punjab - 144401, have changed my name to Kashmir Singh.

I Gurdev Saran S/O Chaman Lal R/O Gali Bhagtan Wali, Dheri Bazar Ferozeper City, Ferozeper Punjab 152002 Have Changed My Name To Gurdev Sharan.

I Paramjeet Kaur W/O Manmeet Singh R/O House No 54 Ward Number 11 Rishi Chowk Guruhsahai Distt Ferozeper Have Changed My Name To Parmjeet Kaur.

I, Sukhraj Kaur Sidhu W/O Baljinder Singh R/O Vpo Jand Wala Tehsil Guruhsahai District Ferozeper Have Changed My Name To Sukhraj Kaur.

I Manjinder Kaur W/O Rahul Hans R/o H.No.08, St.No.1, Opposite Baba Balak Nath Mandir, Shanti Nagar Ferozeper City have changed my name to Manjinder Kaur Hans. After Marriage.

I, Sushil Kumar S/O Tarlok Raj R/O New Abadi, Outside Amritsari Gate, Ferozeper City, Have Changed My Name To Sushil Kakkar.

I, Mit Singh alias Mitt Singh S/O Veer Singh R/O Village Kohar Singh Wala, Distt. Ferozeper Declared That Above Both Names Are Mine And One & Same Person.

I, Sunita spouse of Ugale Sharad Chhabu resident of Village- Khambale, Post-Khambale, Tehsil- Sinner, District -Nashik, State-Maharashtra, Pin-422606, have changed my name from Sunita to Sunita Sharad Ugale Vide affidavit No.IN-PB07678769165649W dated 19 April 2024 notary public Pathankot

I, Priti Singh spouse of No.14671323A Hav Shiv Kumar Singh resident of Village- Prathvi Nagar, Post-Morar, Tehsil- Gwalior, District- Gwalior, State- MP, Pin-474006, have changed my name from Priti Singh to Preeti Bhadoriya Vide affidavit No.IN-PB10833297711228W dated 30 April 2024 before notary public Pathankot

I, No.15710623W NK Solanki Hardikkumar Shantilal resident of Village- Bhavnagar, Post- Ghoga Circle, Tehsil- Bhavnagar, District- Bhavnagar, State- Gujarat, Pin-364001, have changed my Son name from Hetansh to Solanki Hetansh Hardikkumar and Daughter name from Janaki to Solanki Janaki Hardikkumar Please Nore

I, Shital spouse of No.2811333A L/NK Khedkar Santosh Maruti resident of Village- Lohasar, Post-Khandgaon, Tehsil- Pathardi, District -Ahmednagar, State-Maharashtra, Pin-414106, have changed my name from Shital to Khedkar Shital Santosh Vide affidavit No.INPBW dated 28 April 2024 before notary public Pathankot

I, Jatan Kunwar Mother of Mahendra Singh resident of Village- Jamniya Khurd, Post-Jharkheda, Tehsil- Shyampur, District- Sehore, State-Madhya Pradesh, Pin-466661, have changed my name from Jatan Kunwar to Jatan Bai Vide affidavit No.IN-PB10827941853260W dated 30 April 2024 before notary public Pathankot

I, Kinnu Kanwar spouse of Ashok Singh resident of Village- Basdi Ganeshpura, Post- Chhapura Kalan, Tehsil-Shahpura, District+ State-Rajasthan, Pin-303103, have changed my name from Kinnu Kanwar to Kinnu Kumari Vide affidavit No. IN+PB10830853390761W dated 30 April 2024 before notary public Pathankot

I, Seema spouse of No.2801513P Hav Jadhav Bajrang Dundapa resident of Village- Basarge (BK) Post-Basarge (BK) Tehsil-Gadhinglaj District- Kolhapur, State- Maharashtra, Pin-416506, have changed my name from Seema to Seema Bajrang Jadhav Vide affidavit No.IN-PB10825283776155W dated 30 April 2024 before notary public Pathankot

I, Kunti Roychowdhury Mother of No.14663134F NK Amit Roy Chowdhury resident of Village- Banesarwarup, Post-Banesarwarup, P.S. Balagarh, District- Hooghly, Pin-712515, have changed my name from Kvnti Roy Chowdhary to Kunti Roychowdhury Vide affidavit No.87AB. 974615 dated 29 April 2024 before Executive Magistrate Sadar, Hooghly (West Bengal)

I, Ashoke Roy Chowdhury Father of No.14663134F NK Amit Roy Chowdhury resident of Village- Banesarwarup, Post-Banesarwarup, P.S. Balagarh, District- Hooghly, Pin-712515, have changed my name from Ashok Kr Roy Chowdha to Ashoke Roy Chowdhury Vide affidavit No.87AB. 974616 dated 29 April 2024 before Executive Magistrate Sadar, Hooghly (West Bengal)

I, Ashoke Roy Chowdhury Father of No.14663134F NK Amit Roy Chowdhury resident of Village- Banesarwarup, Post-Banesarwarup, P.S. Balagarh, District- Hooghly, Pin-712515, have changed my DOB from 01 July 1952 to 01 Jan 1959 Vide affidavit No.87AB. 974622 dated 29 April 2024 before Executive Magistrate Sadar, Hooghly (West Bengal)

I, Kunti Roychowdhury Mother of No.14663134F NK Amit Roy Chowdhury resident of Village- Banesarwarup, Post-Banesarwarup, P.S. Balagarh, District- Hooghly, Pin-712515, have changed my DOB from 01 July 1955 to 22 Jan 1960 Vide affidavit No.87AB. 974614dated 29 April 2024 before Executive Magistrate Sadar Hooghly (West Bengal)

I Parveen Lata w/o Gulshan Chotani R/O H.No. 779 Near Krishan Mandir Saha distt. Ambala that I have changed my name from Parveen Lata to Kanchan Chotani . In future I will be called as Kachan Chotani. Concerned note

I, Ramesh Chander S/O Sh. Banarsi Dass R/o H.No. 2504 Ward No. 20 Urban Estate, Near Moti Lal Nehru Public School, Jind Tehsil and Distt. Jind Have Changed My Name From Ramesh Chander To Ramesh Kumar Jindal.

I No. JC471530M Subedar Vijay Kumar son of Baktawar Singh resident of Village Ballab PO Garhi Tehsil Kalanaur, District Rohtak (Haryana) posted at 4 RAJRIF UNIT C/o 56 APO have changed my wife name from Babita Devi (existing name) to Babita (Proposed new name) my wife correct/actual DOB is 25.07.1981 as per my wife Aadhaar Card/Pan Card. In future my wife shall may be known/written and called as Babita (DOB: 25.07.1981) for all work purposes, Vide Affidavit dated 01 MAY 2024 before Notary Public (Rohtak)

I Dayamanti (existing name) wife of No. 3172930 Ex Hav Om Parkash resident of VPO Baproda, Tehsil Uchana, District Jind (Haryana) have changed my name from Dayamanti (existing name) to Dayawanti (Proposed new name) as per my Aadhaar Card/Pan Card. In future I shall may be known/written and called as Dayawanti for all work purposes, Vide Affidavit dated MAY 2024 before Ist Class Magistrate (Jind)

I Roshni (existing name) wife of No. 15468596K Ex DFR Rishpal resident of VPO Madina, Tehsil Meham, District Rohtak (Haryana) have changed my name from ROSHNI (existing name) to Roshni Devi (Proposed new name) as per my Aadhaar Card/Pan Card. In future I shall may be known/written and called as Roshni Devi for all work purposes, Vide Affidavit dated MAY 2024 before Ist Class Magistrate (Meham)

I, Gurmel Kaur Mother of No.4487495X NK Gursangat Singh resident of VPO-Mehlam, Tehsil- Sunam, District- Sangrur, State-Punjab, Pin-148001, have changed my name from Gurmel Kaur to Gurmali Kaur Vide affidavit No.IN-PB10185427946915W dated 27 April 2024 before notary public Pathankot

USP



SJVN Bids Farewell to Trailblazing Chairman & Managing Director, Smt. Geeta Kapoor

Shimla: SJVN, bid a warm farewell to Smt. Geeta Kapur, Chairman & Managing Director and Director (Personnel), SJVN at a function held at Corporate Headquarters in Shimla. Sh. Akhileshwar Singh, Director (Finance), Sh. Sushil Sharma, Director (Projects), Sh. Prem Prakash, Chief Vigilance Officer, Sh. V Shankararayanan, ED (Corporate Planning), Sh. SL Sharma, ED (Finance), Sh. S. Marasamy, ED(CCD), Sh. Chandra Shekhar Yadav, ED(HR), senior officials and the entire SJVN family extended their best wishes for her future endeavours. Smt. Geeta Kapur, a woman of immense substance, carved her path as first female leader to helm a Hydro CPSU, taking on additional charge as Chairman & Managing Director at SJVN on February 1, 2024. Notably, she previously made history by becoming First Women Director of the company on October 18, 2018.



The Labour Day

On May 1st, 2024, Ashiana Public School, Sector 46-A, Chandigarh celebrated Labour Day. The school took the opportunity to honour and appreciate the hardworking support staff who work tirelessly in the smooth functioning of the school. The students of the senior wing prepared special cards for the supporting staff to show their gratitude towards them. The students also prepared some performances to make the day special for them.



Shoolini soars in THE Asia University Rankings-2024

SOLAN: In yet another spectacular achievement, 14-year old Shoolini University has ranked number one private university and fifth overall in the country with the venerable India Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, taking the lead in the Times Higher Education (THE) Asia University rankings 2024. The rankings, which were announced last night, placed Shoolini University at the 150th rank in Asia while the IISc Bangalore was placed at the 32nd rank in the continent. Additionally, Shoolini University has topped among all universities, including the public sector universities in the country, in the parameters for International Outlook and has been ranked second in Research Quality.



Carmel Convent School, Chandigarh hosts 'Technoscape' in collaboration with Atal Tinkering Labs

ATL Carmel Convent School, Chandigarh in association with iTinker Foundation organized a futuristic technology exhibition titled 'Technoscape' fit to be called a present-day tech extravaganza. The enthusiasm of the students was witnessed coming to life as they displayed a variety of advanced projects developed magnificently. An extensive range of ahead of time creations included a gesture controlled Biped Robot, Augmented Reality in addition to Virtual Reality games, smart arcade-style sensor games including basketball and dance revolution, lie detectors, blimps and many more.

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VINÍCIUS JÚNIOR LEADS REAL MADRID TO 2-2 DRAW AT BAYERN MUNICH

AP ■ MUNICH
Vinícius Júnior scored twice for Real Madrid to draw 2-2 at Bayern Munich in the first leg of their Champions League semifinal. Bayern dominated but Madrid survived, and the contest is still wide open ahead of the return leg in Madrid on May 8.

With the focus on England stars Harry Kane and Jude Bellingham, as well as Toni Kroos' return to his former team, Vinícius emerged as the decisive figure on a night when his bright green boots were often a blur.

The Brazil forward opened the scoring against the run of play in the 24th minute and equalized with a coolly taken penalty in the 83rd after Leroy Sané and Kane had scored for Bayern.

"I think it's a good result," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, who led Bayern to the Bundesliga title in 2017. "It gives us faith and confidence for the second leg. It's completely open."

Kane's goal, another penalty, was the England forward's 43rd goal in 43 games for Bayern this season.

"It felt like the goals were scored when the other team was better," Kroos said. "We're pretty sure that we'll advance at home."

Bayern had appealed to fans to wear red to the game and the visitors must have felt they were playing in a red cauldron as they were greeted by deafening whistles from the majority of the 75,000 in the stadium.

Fans in the "Südkurve" paid respect to deceased club great Franz Beckenbauer with a huge red-and-white choreography before kickoff. A giant banner sent a message to the players as they were warming up: "To honor the Kaiser Franz, give everything to reach the final!"

The winners of the two-leg semifinal will play either Borussia Dortmund or Paris



Saint-Germain in the final in London on June 1.

"Real Madrid does this to teams, so we should not be too disappointed," Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel said. "I think we will be able to create chances in the Bernabéu. This is one of the most difficult places to win, yes, but it's a challenge. That's the beauty of it."

Bayern totally dominated the opening stages on Tuesday. Sané had an effort saved by Andriy Lunin in the first minute and the hosts went on to miss a slew of chances.

"We didn't have enough intensity, especially in the first half," Ancelotti said.

Nearly 20 minutes elapsed before Madrid enjoyed a period with the ball.

Then Kroos spotted Vinícius' run and played a perfect through ball for the Brazilian to sweep the visitors' first real chance past Manuel Neuer in the Bayern goal.

Bayern lost its early zest as the visitors saw more of the ball.

Tuchel gesticulated wildly at his players to push forward, then threw his arms up in exasperation.

Kane went closest with a free kick before the break, awarded for a foul by Nacho on Jamal Musiala, who gingerly rubbed his bandaged left leg. The Germany forward had only just recovered from a knee problem.

Sané equalized in the 53rd when he ran at the Madrid defense and cut inside Ferland Mendy before firing a fierce strike just inside the near post. Kane made it 2-1 four minutes later with a penalty awarded after Lucas Vázquez bundled over Musiala.

But it wasn't the last penalty as Kim Min-jae - who was beaten on Vinícius' first goal - brought down Rodrygo. Vinícius duly equalized from the spot.

"It was a back-and-forth game," Bayern midfielder Konrad Laimer said. "But yeah, it's Real Madrid, you can't let anything happen against this team."

Nadal plans to play in Rome after a positive week in likely his last Madrid Open



AP ■ MADRID
Rafael Nadal left Madrid feeling better about his fitness than he did when he arrived, and is now planning to play in Rome while continuing his preparations for the French Open.

Nadal lost in straight sets to the 31st-ranked Jiri Lehecka in the fourth round at Madrid on Tuesday. But the Spaniard was feeling good about his progress following his latest injury layoff. Nadal called it a

an emotional tournament for him.

The 37-year-old Nadal is playing in his final year on tour. He had already bid farewell to Barcelona, where he lost in the second round. The 22-time Grand Slam champion hadn't played a tournament since Brisbane in January.

"Today is unforgettable day in terms of saying goodbye, Madrid," he said.

"But my career keeps going, and I have my personal goals that I have got in the next couple of weeks, and I want to explore if I have any chance to achieve that," Nadal said Rome, where he won 10 titles and where the tournament starts May 8, was also emotional for him.

"That's another very special tournament in my career," he said. "I dreamed to play all these tournaments that I had success one more time. I missed Monte Carlo unfortunately, that is one of the most special for me, but Rome is one of these ones that I enjoyed a lot playing there."

In Madrid, Nadal defeated American teenager Darwin Blanch in the first round and 11th-ranked Alex de Minaur in the second, both in straight sets. He needed three sets to edge Pedro Cachin in the third round. "I want to play well there (in Rome). I want to be competitive," he said.

"I want to give myself a chance to play good tennis, and I'm gonna keep working hard to try to make that happen."

Playing at the French Open, which begins May 26, is one of Nadal's main goals during his farewell season.

"positive week" in every way, and said his body held up well.

"I was able to play four matches, a couple of tough matches," Nadal said. "So very positive, winning three matches, playing four matches at the high level of tennis. I enjoyed a lot playing at home. I leave here with very positive energy."

Nadal arrived in Madrid pessimistic about his physical condition, and he wasn't even sure if he would be able to play. He said he only did it because it was

Top seeded Bopanna, Ebden pair knocked out of Madrid Masters

PTI ■ MADRID
Top-seeded Indo-Australian pair of Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden bowed out of the ATP Mutua Madrid Open after a shocking first-round loss to the unheralded duo of Sebastian Korda and Jordan Thompson here.

Bopanna and Ebden, who are the reigning Australian Open men's doubles champions, went down 7-6 (4) 7-5 in a contest that lasted one hour and 17 minutes.

Squaring off for the first time, the American-Australian duo matched Bopanna and Ebden shot for shot.

Korda and Thompson displayed a strong service game and saved the lone break point they conceded in the opening set.

To their credit, Bopanna and Ebden also did not allow Korda and Thompson to convert the three breaks points they ended up conceding. However, Korda and Thompson managed to gain the upper-hand by clinching the set in a tie-breaker.

Korda and Thompson gained



in confidence and managed to break Bopanna and Ebden once from the four chances that came their way.

The top seeds, in contrast, could not exert any such pressure, resulting in an early exit from the tournament being played on clay.

The rare setback notwithstanding, Bopanna and Ebden have enjoyed a good run on the circuit, winning the Indian Wells

Masters last year which made the 43-year-old Indian the oldest ever ATP Masters 1000 champion.

The duo made the men's doubles semi-finals at Wimbledon and the final of the US Open in the same season.

Earlier this year, the Bopanna also became the oldest world number one in doubles thanks to the Australian Open triumph.

Four Indian boxers march into semi finals

PTI ■ ASTANA (KAZAKHSTAN)
Indian pugilists Aryan, Yashwardhan Singh, Priyanshu and Sahil marched into the semi-finals with confident wins at the ASBC Asian U-22 & Youth Boxing Championships here on Wednesday.

Aryan gave India a perfect start with a 5-0 unanimous decision win against Uzbekistan's Juraev Shakarboy in the 51kg category. His win was followed by a good show by Yashwardhan (63.5kg), who made a remarkable comeback after going down in the first round to grab a 4-1 victory over Iran's Mirahmadi Babaheidari.

Priyanshu (71kg) and Sahil (80kg), on the other hand, didn't break sweat as they wrapped the bout with referee stop the contest (RSC) decision against Chinese Taipei's Wu Yu En and Turkmenistan's Yklymov Abdyrahma respectively.

Meanwhile, Jatin ended his campaign in the 57kg category with a 1-4 loss against Uzbekistan's A Nodirbek.

The youth semi-finals will be played on Friday.

Aryan (92kg), Nisha (52kg), Akansha Phalasal (70kg) and Rudrika (75kg) will be in action later tonight in their respective youth quarter-finals bouts.

Late on Tuesday, Jugnoo (86kg), Tammana (50kg) and Preeti (54kg) claimed victories to enter the U-22 semi-finals.

On Thursday, eight U-22 pugilists will take the ring for their quarter-finals bouts -- M Jadumani Singh (51kg), Ashish (54kg), Nikhil (57kg), Ajay Kumar (63.5kg), Ankush (71kg) and Dhruv Singh (80kg) in the men's category and Guddi (48kg) and Poonam (57kg) in the women's section.

The tournament has seen participation from over 390 boxers from more than 24 countries, fighting for medals across 25 weight categories. The finals for the youth and U-22 category will be played on May 6 and 7 respectively.

Red Bull chief technical officer Adrian Newey to step down from F1 team

AP ■ MILTON KEYNES, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE (ENGLAND)
Adrian Newey, the designer pivotal in Red Bull's dominance of Formula One, will step down early next year, the team said Wednesday.

The 65-year-old Newey will end his near two-decade career with Red Bull in the "first quarter of 2025."

"For almost two decades it has been my great honour to have played a key role in Red Bull Racing's progress from upstart newcomer to multiple title-winning team," he said.

"However, I feel now is an opportune moment to hand that baton over to others and to seek new challenges for myself."

Newey joined Red Bull in 2006 and helped the team win seven drivers' titles - including the last three seasons for defending champion Max Verstappen - and six constructors' titles.

Red Bull said its chief technical officer would be stepping back from F1 design and focus on its first hypercar, the RB17. "All of our greatest moments from the past 20 years have come with Adrian's hand on the technical tiller," Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said.

"For me, when Adrian joined Red Bull, he was already a superstar designer. Two decades and 13 championships later he leaves as a true



legend. He is also my friend and someone I will be eternally grateful for everything he brought to our partnership."

News of Newey's departure could spark a bidding war for his services. As Newey is free to join another team when he leaves Red Bull, it paves the way for him to have an impact on the 2026 car for whichever team he joins. The next major change in regulations is due in 2026 and having Newey on board would give his next employers a significant advantage.

Newey's departure comes in the wake of Horner being accused of "inappropriate behaviour" by a female employee. Horner was exonerated by Red Bull's parent company GmbH and has always denied the claims.

Archer Dhiraj aims for team qualification at Paris Olympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Dhiraj Bommadevara, the only Indian archer to qualify for the individual event of the Paris Olympics, says locking a quota in the team events at the quadrennial extravaganza is next on their radar.

The 22-year-old recurve archer qualified for the Summer Games in the men's individual event owing to his silver medal at the Asian Qualifying Tournament in Bangkok last year.

"We are trying hard to convert the individual quota into a team quota, so we are working consistently towards it, planning for it and taking part in as many tournaments as possible," Dhiraj was quoted as saying in a SAI release.

"Our first priority is to get the team quota. We will go to Paris 2024 with a simple mindset



just to give our best. The rest is not in our hands. No expectation on results. We have to be prepared for everything and perform accordingly."

The Indian men's recurve team has been in good form. Last week, the trio of Dhiraj, Tarundeep Rai and Pravin Jadhav had stunned reigning Olympic champions South Korea to land a historic World Cup gold medal after 14 years.

The World Cup in Antalya, Turkey in June is the final qualifying event for the Paris Olympics.

However, if the Indian men's team is unable to make the cut there, it is still in prime position to qualify for the Olympics owing to the rankings. The top-two ranked team in the world get direct entry for the Games. India are ranked second so far behind Korea.

Dhiraj was also a part of the silver-winning men's team at

the Asian Games last year. Despite doing well at in World Cups, World Championship and other marquee events, Indian archers have yet to get their hands on an elusive medal at the Olympics.

"We are trying to achieve better versions of our past. We're not comparing with any other nation. Our priority is only to get better and improve from lessons learnt.

Talking about the impact of the compound team's performances he said, "Our compound team is the best in the world. Its performance helps us push ourselves. Both the compound bow and the recurve bow competitions are equally tough."

"How Jyothi (Surekha) didi handles her pressure in various categories - individual, mixed or team event - is really commendable and inspiring," he added.

Man United makes more executive changes as Jim Ratcliffe new era takes shape

AP ■ MANCHESTER
Manchester United announced more changes to its executive structure as the new era under co-owner Jim Ratcliffe continues to take shape.

Interim CEO Patrick Stewart and chief financial officer Cliff Baty will step down at the end of the season by mutual consent, the club said.

Jean-Claude Blanc, CEO of Ratcliffe's INEOS Sport, will take over as chief executive until former Manchester City executive Omar Berrada takes on the role on July 13.

Baty will be replaced by former INEOS Sport chief financial



officer Roger Bell.

"I would like to personally thank both Patrick and Cliff for their support in helping us get to know the club and making us feel welcome and I respect their decisions to now

move on as we establish a new management team for the club," said Ratcliffe, who is one of Britain's richest people.

The billionaire owner of petrochemicals giant INEOS bought a 25% stake in United

in February, and his investment has already seen a host of major changes at the storied club.

Former CEO Richard Arnold stepped down in November and football director John Murtough left earlier this month. Ratcliffe's investment, which will eventually rise to a 27.7% stake, has seen him assume control of United's soccer operations.

INEOS director of sport Dave Brailsford and Blanc have joined the board of the soccer club. As well as the appointment of Berrada, former City academy director Jason Wilcox has been hired as technical director.

Chennaiyin FC extends contract of goalkeeper Samik Mitra until 2027

PTI ■ CHENNAI
Indian super League side Chennaiyin FC has extended goalkeeper Samik Mitra's contract till end of 2027 season, the club announced on Wednesday.

Mitra joined the Marina Machans from Indian Arrows in 2020 and has played a total of 22 matches for the team in all competitions, keeping clean sheets in three games.

The 23-year-old goalkeeper from Siliguri has become a force to be reckoned with between the posts and has played a crucial role in the team's success on many occasions. With immense potential, head coach Owen Coyle expressed confidence in Mitra's abilities to continue playing for the team in the forthcoming season. "We believe in giving chances to youngsters at



the club, and Samik Mitra is someone who has great potential. He is young, and we have already seen his capabilities in the matches that he has played for the team," said Coyle.

"It's important that such talented players stay at the club, and I believe that he can continue to grow with the team," he said.

Mitra made four appearances for the club

in the ISL 2023-24 season and looks to deliver quality performances for the team in the upcoming season as well.

He also spent his early days at Chennaiyin FC, joining the club's U-18 team in 2017 and playing there during his formative years, where he acquired the necessary skills before departing for the Indian Arrows in 2019.

"I am really excited for another season with Chennaiyin FC. We qualified for the playoffs this season and want to do even better in the coming year. This club is the right place for me to grow and learn from some of the best coaches and players in the country."

"I have grown a lot in the last few years and want to continue the upward trajectory in my career," commented Mitra after committing to the club for another year.



SRH seek perfect chase against RR

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

An erratic Sunrisers Hyderabad would look to fix their chasing troubles and get their campaign back on track when they host the high-flying Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League here on Thursday.

A lot more is at stake for the Sunrisers than the Royals, who have virtually qualified for the playoffs.

In ominous form till few days back, SRH dropped out of the top four on the points table after suffering back-to-back losses against wooden spooners Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Chennai Super Kings where they failed to chase down totals.

With five wins and four losses, the 2016 champions sit on the fifth spot with 10 points. The Pat Cummins-led side's top and middle-order batters have failed collectively while chasing, forcing head coach Daniel Vettori to admit that the

idea of going all out with the bat in the second innings might not be the right thing to do. SRH have breached the 250-run mark thrice this season but all while batting first. In contrast, they haven't managed to chase a total in excess of 200 even once.

"We have been successful setting totals and now we have to look at how well we are in chasing," head coach Vettori had conceded after the loss to RCB. "We're pretty well-suited to chasing, but it hasn't really come off yet. So yeah, it is something (we need) to work on," skipper Cummins had said after he lost to CSK.

SRH are too dependent on the explosive starts provided by Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma. And, while the duo gets going it's great but when they flop, SRH will want to do a better job at re-building their innings.

It's also about time Aiden Markram steps up and justifies his spot in the playing XI, having had an underwhelming



season thus far. Runaway leaders Rajasthan Royals, on the other hand, will look to continue their near flawless run.

The inaugural edition's champions have shown they are perfectly equipped to compete anywhere.

They are perched atop the table with 16 points -- four points ahead of second placed Kolkata Knight Riders.

They are all but through to the knockout stage. The Royals boast of a formidable top order, comprising Jos Buttler, Yashasvi Jaiswal, and skipper Sanju Samson, with all three of them in good nick.

The West Indian duo of Shimron Hetmyer and Rovman Powell and youngsters Riyan Parag and Dhruv Jurel have also shown they can hit top gear.

They have an equally potent bowling attack comprising Yuzvendra Chahal, the experienced Trent Boult, Avesh Khan and Sandeep Sharma.

THE TEAMS (FROM):
Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c), Jos Buttler, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Riyan Parag, Donovan Ferreira, Kunal Rathore, Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Sen, Navdeep Saini, Sandeep Sharma, Trent Boult, Yuzvendra Chahal, Avesh Khan, Rovman Powell, Shubham Dubey, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Abid Mushtaq, Nandre Burger, Tanush Kotian, Keshav Maharaj.
Sunrisers Hyderabad: Pat Cummins (c), Abdul Samad, Abhishek Sharma, Aiden Markram, Marco Jansen, Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Sanvir Singh, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, T. Natarajan, Anmolpreet Singh, Mayank Markande, Upendra Singh Yadav (wk), Umran Malik, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Shahbaz Ahmed, Travis Head, Jaydev Unadkat, Akash Singh, Jhathavedh Subramanyan.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Australia fast bowler Brett Lee feels Lucknow Super Giants did not manage Mayank Yadav's injury well, suggesting that the young tearaway pacer was brought back to IPL action prematurely after being sidelined due to abdominal soreness.

The 21-year-old Mayank developed abdominal soreness during LSG's match against Gujarat Titans on April 7. That was his third IPL game, and he impressed one and all with his express pace and two Man-of-the-Match awards.

He made a comeback in LSG's win against Mumbai Indians in Lucknow on Tuesday but walked off the field without completing his fourth over after an injury scare.

LSG coach Justin Langer said the young pace sensation is feeling "sore in the same spot" that kept him out of action for almost three weeks, while captain KL Rahul that added Mayank had complained of slight pain in his sides.

Lee, one of the game's most feared fast bowlers, laid the blame on the LSG top management and medical staff.

Mayank getting injured in first game on comeback has to directly be on LSG leadership: Lee



He said Mayank's initial injury would have required four to six weeks to heal, much more than the time period the youngster spent at

the sidelines before being brought back. "A side strain or whatever they're calling it, normally takes at least four to six weeks

to even come right. We don't know the depths of how big a strain it was but for somebody who is pushing the limits of his body by bowling 150

kmph, that's not good management at all," Lee said in a conversation with India and MI pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah.

"His first game coming back and getting injured, has to directly be on the leadership and the medical staff of the Lucknow Super Giants."

The 47-year-old Lee, who took 310 wickets from 76 Tests between 1999 and 2008, sympathised with Mayank, saying he should have got the right advice.

"The only person who has to pay this price is this poor young guy Mayank, who is just electric. Everyone in the IPL has loved seeing what he's brought... You wish he got the right advice, so he doesn't have to go through and absorb this."

"Now, it's most probably going to mean that he's going to miss out on the World Cup if there's an injury that might come up."

At the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow on Tuesday, Mayank walked off the field after bowling the first ball of

his fourth over having taken one wicket for 31 runs. He was returning to action after missing five games.

Mayank made a sensational start to the IPL by taking six wickets in his first two games before getting injured.

He was later seen engaging in a conversation with India and MI pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah.

Former India batter Suresh Raina said Mayank must have got some valuable insight on how to manage injury.

"It was a fantastic gesture from Jasprit Bumrah to talk to the youngster. He has so much experience. When (Mayank) meets him, he will learn so much from Bumrah's words about looking after an injury. It's not easy to return from an injury and take wickets," Raina said.

"Team doctor Vaibhav Daga has worked with the BCCI before and helped Bumrah return to fitness as well. When Mayank bowls more with the red ball and white ball, I want to see him in Test matches when we play in Australia, England, or New Zealand."

"We haven't seen pace like this in India for a while. The tips Bumrah gives him now will one day be invaluable."



Pandya and all other MI players fined for slow over rate offence against LSG

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya has been fined Rs 24 lakh after his team's second slow over-rate offence in the Indian Premier League during their match against Lucknow Super Giants here.

All the other players, including the Impact Player, were each individually fined either Rs 6 lakh or 25 per cent of their respective match fees, whichever is lesser.

MI lost the match by four wickets at the Ekana Stadium on Tuesday.

"Mr Hardik Pandya, Captain, Mumbai Indians has been fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate during Match 48 of the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 against Lucknow Super Giants on April 30, 2024," the IPL said in a statement.

"As it was his team's second offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over-rate offences, Pandya was fined INR 24 Lac.

"The rest of the members of the Playing XI, including the Impact Player, were each individually fined either INR 6 Lac or 25 per cent of their respective match fees, whichever is lesser," it added.

OTHER SPORTS

I want to be on that flight to Paris, says Krishan Pathak

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Krishan Pathak finds himself in a bizarre situation. He will have to battle it out with his friend and mentor PR Sreejesh for the lone goalkeeper's slot in India's hockey squad for the Paris Olympics.

In Olympics, a country can carry only a 16-member squad as against 18 players in other tournaments, and that restriction often forces the coach to sacrifice one goalkeeper to include another player in a different position. It happened in the Tokyo Olympics as Sreejesh did the custodian's duty during India's bronze-winning run, while Pathak watched the action from the gallery.

But this time, Pathak is not ready to give up the slot without a fight.

"The coach hasn't told us the team composition for the Olympics. My aim is to be ready 100 percent when

the call comes. There is a healthy competition going on within the squad to earn a place in the Olympics-bound team.

"Every player feels that he can be part of that squad. I am no different, and I want to be on that flight to Paris," Pathak told PTI during the team's training camp at the SAI centre here.

Pathak shares a deep connection with Sreejesh. In fact, the veteran was India's goalkeeping coach during the 2016 junior World Cup, where Pathak showcased his talent to a broader world for the first time.

The 27-year-old insisted that the competition for an Olympic berth has not affected their personal equation.

"It's dream for me to work with and play alongside Sree bhai. We are very comfortable with each other. We share a lot of information, especially when one of us commits mistakes. We point that out to each other.



"Whenever I commit a mistake, he will come and tell me what went wrong and how to rectify it. Similarly, I will do that when Sree bhai makes a mistake. We have a great bonding between us - on and off the field," detailed Pathak.

The immediate assignment in front of

him is the FIH Pro-League matches, starting at Antwerp, Belgium from May 22. India will face some top-flight teams like Germany and Belgium in that tournament. Pathak wanted to assert his claim for an Olympic berth through some strong outings in the Pro-League.

"We've played eight Pro-League matches in Ranchi and Rourkela. Now, we have some more Pro-League matches coming up ahead of the Olympics. We will meet some of those teams in the Olympics too. That familiarity will help us.

"As a goalkeeper, I will look to source as much knowledge from the Pro-League matches about our possible opponents in the Olympics," he added.

The Kapurthala man was all praise for Indian national team coach Craig Fulton, saying that the South African is helping the players to achieve their optimum potential ahead of the quadrennial showpiece.

"When he spots a weakness, he starts working on it immediately. He hates wasting time. When we went to Australia recently, our attack and defence were not working as we lost the series 0-5.



Tom Lockyer is at peace with prospect of retirement

AP ■ LUTON (ENGLAND)

Tom Lockyer, the Premier League player who suffered an onfield cardiac arrest earlier this season, says he is "at peace" with the prospect of having to retire from the sport.

The Luton captain had a defibrillator fitted after collapsing during a game against Bournemouth in December. He had previously collapsed seven months earlier during a game at Wembley Stadium because he suffered atrial fibrillation.

The 29-year-old Lockyer, who recently became a father for the first time, has not given up

hope of resuming his playing career. But he accepts that may not be possible.

"I've made no secret saying I would love to return to football, but ultimately it would have to come down to someone who's a cardiologist or a specialist who has done full research into what has gone on and if it could happen again, because we've got a little girl now and she takes priority," Lockyer told BBC Radio Wales.

"I would love to play football again, of course I would, it's my life but if it's the case that I can't, then I'm at peace with that as well.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

A Grandmaster much before the title was officially bestowed on her by FIDE recently, Indian chess player R Vaishali has revealed that there was a time she was unsure of being able to achieve the feat but managed to pull through owing to a good support structure.

Vaishali completed the requisite 2500 ELO points Llobregat Open tournament in Spain to become only the third Indian woman after Koneru Humpy and Harika Dronavalli to become a GM.

However, the title was officially given to her only recently following the FIDE Council meeting during the Candidates Tournament in Toronto last month. "After completing the (Women's GM) title, I knew it would be changed to GM someday. I did not think about the title so much," she told PTI

Happy that the title is finally out: R Vaishali on officially becoming GM

in an interview.

"Yeah, it took some time to get it official, but I'm happy that the title is finally out. I was okay with it (the delay)," she added.

The 22-year-old is basking in the glory of her solid performance in the Candidates tournament, where she won five consecutive games to finish joint second.

She became a Woman Grandmaster in 2018 after completing her final norm during the Riga Technical University Open in Riga, Latvia.

Having had to wait six years to finally earn the GM tag, Vaishali said she became a bit unsure of the GM tag after her ratings stagnated due to lack of com-



petition during the COVID 19 pandemic.

"In between, I could not play any tournament for two years due to the (COVID-19) pandemic. But, I was working throughout, trying to improve my game. I completed my

International Master (IM) cycle post-pandemic (in 2021)," she recalled.

"Although I was improving my game slowly, my rating became stagnant. There were some low moments when I felt I might not get the title, but people

believed in me and helped me to attain it," she said.

Vaishali is the elder sister of R Pragganandhaa, the 18-year-old who has been making waves for quite a while. Together, they became the first brother-sister duo to qualify for Candidates' event this year.

Talking about her relationship with Pragganandhaa, Vaishali stated, "We talk a lot about our games, which is natural since we have been playing together since our childhood.

"He helps me a lot with my game. It's great to have such a strong player at home with whom I can discuss more about the game at any time."

When asked about the support

she and her brother get from their parents, Vaishali described them as their "biggest strength".

"Our parents are the biggest strength for both of us. My mother accompanies us to our tournaments on most of the occasions. She takes care of almost everything, and we just keep focusing on our game," she revealed.

"Our father takes care of things like logistics, planning and finances. In fact, both of them take care of most of our needs, which indeed helps us focus more on our game. Really grateful to them."

Away from chess, Vaishali is currently pursuing the PG Diploma course in Human Resource Management. However, she has no qualms admitting that she has no academic aspirations and is focused on professional chess with this month's Women's Masters in Norway being her next assignment.