UPHOLDING THE FOURTH | TRUMP CALLS JUDGE CROOKED

OPINION 6

WORLD 8

AFTER FACING WARNING OF JAIL TIME

REVENUES HIT RECORD IN APRIL

DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

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KKR LOOK TO IRON OUT FLAWS AGAINST MI 12 SPORTS

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Pak wants Rahul as PM to weaken Govt: Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being greeted by BJP leaders during a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Anand, Gujarat on Thursday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE AHMEDABAD/NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday dubbed the Congress party a "disciple" of Pakistan, and targeted Rahul Gandhi saying the neighbouring country was eager to make the 'shehzada' of the grand old party India's next Prime Minister as the country's enemies want a weak Government

neighbourhood. Modi's comments in an election rally in Gujarat,

linking Congress Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, a former Minister in Imran Khan's Cabinet Pakistan, reportedly video shared a featuring Rahul on his social media handle and praised

"Pakistan is crying because Congress is dying here. You all must have learnt that Pakistani leaders are now praying for Congress. Pakistan is eager to make terror attack. They want a 'shehzada' (referring to corrupt Government which

with Rahul) the next PM. This is Pakistan came a day after not surprising because we already know that Congress Pakistan's 'murid (follower).

> partnership between Pakistan and Congress has now exposed completely. It shows that the country's enemies want a weak Government in India, not strong one...A weak Government which was there at the time of 26/11 Mumbai terror attack. They want a

Modi's strong Government neither bows down nor does it stop," Modi said in a rally in Anand in Gujarat.

The PM came down more and said unlike in the past when Congress was in power, the "tyres of Pakistan's terror have got punctured" now. "A country which used to export terror in the past, is now struggling to import 'atta' (flour). The hands which used to hold bombs are now holding 'bheekh ka katora' (begging bowl)," he said. People across the world are now saying that India is a global bright spot. India is seen as a 'vishwa bandhu' (global friend) who can resolve conflicts between two countries, Modi said.

The PM also reiterated that Congress wants to change India's Constitution to provide reservation of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Classes (OBC) communities to Muslims. "Congress wants to give reservation to Muslims, the party's favourite vote bank. For that, they want to change the Constitution. I challenge Congress to give in writing that they will not change the Constitution to reservation to Muslims on religious basis," he said.



Not at home in Amethi, RaGa may try Rae Bareli

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

A mid the suspense over Congress nominees from Amethi and Rae Bareli party for Amethi which he in Uttar Pradesh, party sources indicated that Rahul Gandhi is likely to contest from the seat he lost last time and face sitting BJP MP and Union Minister Smriti Irani.

With Friday being the last date of filing of nominations, the party is expected to announce from candidates the two prestigious constituencies late at

Sources said the party has started making preparations for the nomination filing in both the seats in Uttar Pradesh, which have been traditionally held by members of the Gandhi-Nehru family and revealed that the entire Gandhi family, including sitting MP of Rae Bareli Sonia Gandhi and party chief Mallikarjun

Kharge, is scheduled to travel in Uttar Pradesh in a chartered plane.

They added that Rahul is lost to Irani in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Sources also said since Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has declined to contest from Rae Bareli, a grandson of former Congress leader and Indira Gandhi's aunt Sheila

> Kaul may be fielded from Řae Bareli, e a r l i e r represented by Sonia. Sonia has called it

a day for electoral politics and has been elected as a member of Sabha Rajya Rajasthan

People and loyals associated with the Gandhi family are already in Amethi and neighbouring Rae Bareli and are believed to have prepared the nomination documents for both Rahul as well as Priyanka.

BJP denies ticket to WFI ex-chief, names his son

Ending weeks of speculation, the BJP on Thursday denied ticket to sitting MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh who has been embroiled in a sexual harassment controversy and fielded his son Karan Bhushan Singh from Kaiserganj in Uttar Pradesh. For the first time since 2009, the BJP dropped its heavyweight leader and sitting MP Brij Bhushan Singh Sharan Kaiserganj. The former president of

Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) is currently facing allegations of sexual harassment levelled against him by six women wrestlers. Karan is likely to file his nomination on May 3. The move retains the seat's contest within the family highlighting the influence of the Thakur leader and six-time MP in the region and the party. The party also named Dinesh

Pratap Singh as its candidate

from Raebareli, a Gandhi family bastion which has been won by former Congress president Sonia Gandhi for five consecutive times. Sonia, who won from the Gandhi family bastion five consecutive times, was elected to the Rajya Sabha unopposed from Rajasthan earlier this year. The deadline to nominations for Amethi and

Rae Bareli is on Friday. These



Bhushan Singh, the son of former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Singh

seats are going to polls in the fifth phase, on May 20. Karan Bhushan is youngest son of Brij Bhushan. Born in 1990, Karan is presently the president of the Uttar Pradesh Wrestling Previously, Association. Karan was the senior

vice president of the wrestling association. Karan Bhushan is a national-level double-trap shooter. He holds a law degree besides doing a business management course in Australia. He will be making

his debut in electoral politics this time.

Maliwal cries foul as L-G sacks 223 DCW 'illegal' staff

SAUMYA SHUKLA NEW DELHI

With its topmost leader Minister Arvind Kejriwal still in Tihar, the AAP has received yet another blow as the Women and Child Development Department of the Delhi Government has terminated the services of 52 "illegally' contractual appointed employees Commission for Women

Earlier, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on April 29, issued an order to discontinue the services of 223 contractual employees from the DCW, calling their

(DCW)

appointment illegal. The termination has been carried out on the basis of a report submitted by a committee way back in June, 2017. Earlier, an order issued on April 29 said that the WCD Department had terminated the services of 223 contractual staff, but the department on Thursday issued a statement saying it had directed for the termination of 52 such employees.

Clandestine 'dole surveys' make poll panel see red



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

 $A^{\rm mid}_{\rm freebies} \ {\stackrel{\rm controversy}{\rm promised}} \ {\stackrel{\rm over}{\rm by}} \ {\stackrel{\rm the}{\rm the}}$ political parties in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission (EC) took "serious view of activities by political parties and candidates seeking details of voters under the guise of various surveys for proposed their beneficiary schemes' and termed such

suc. "corrupt activities as practice of bribery under the of Section 123(1) Representation of the People Act, 1951".

In an advisory issued to all national and State level parties, the commission has asked them to immediately cease any

"that activities involve registering individuals for postelection beneficiary-oriented schemes through advertisements/ survey/App."
The advisory came ahead of the

third phase of the Lok Sabha

Elections 2024, slated for May 7. The commission has directed all District Election Officers to appropriate take actions against any such advertisements within the statutory

provisions. The commission noted that during the ongoing elections has come across instances where some political parties and candidates have been engaging in activities that blur the lines between legitimate surveys and partisan efforts to register

individuals for beneficiary oriented schemes and individual benefits under the guise of conducting surveys or creating awareness about the existing schemes of the Government or creating awareness about the manifesto prospective individual benefit schemes etc. Highlighting the possible "quid-pro-quo arrangement", the commission said the act of inviting or calling upon voters to register for postelection benefits "may create an impression of the requirement of one-to-one transactional relationship between the elector and the proposed benefit"

This also has the potential to generate quid-pro-quo arrangements for voting in a particular way thereby leading to inducement, the poll body added. It added that the potential of quid pro quo for voting and inducements amounts to bribery/corrupt practice.

In this regard, the Election Commission directed all District Election Officers to take appropriate actions against any such advertisements within the statutory provisions namely Section 127A of the Representation of People's Act, 1951, 123 (1) of the Representation of People's Act, 1951, and Section 171 (B) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

Start training cops for new criminal laws' rollout: Centre



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

The Union Home Ministry has said the three new criminal laws, which will be rolled out across India from July 1, are a transition from the colonial legacies towards a system of justice based on the principle of access to justice by all, and has sought the help of all States to train the policemen for their effectively implementation. In a communication to all the

States and Union Territories (UTs), the Home Ministry also said many new provisions, synchronised with modern-day times contemporary technologies, were incorporated in the new criminal laws and their aim is to bring an era of ease of policing and ease of

The new laws are the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Act. The laws will replace the colonial-era Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence

The new laws aim at providing speedy justice to the citizens of the country and will strengthen the judicial and court management system. "The new laws are a transition

from the colonial legacies towards a system of justice, based on the principle of access to justice by all... is the endeavour of the government of India to reach out to all ranks of police and prison officers in the country and make them aware of the positive and advanced changes so as to equip them with the basic knowledge and understanding of various new provisions, which will help them in implementing the same in right earnest and with confidence," the Home Ministry said in its communication.

To fulfil this objective, the Home Ministry said it has been striving to educate the police and prison officers about the new laws. The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) has developed the training of trainers' module and various other training programmes for different levels of police and prison personnel on the new criminal laws.

Hoax aimed at mass panic: FIR

Biden brands India 'xenophobic' along with China, Japan

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden has called two of his QUAD partners — India and his adversaries — Russia and China — "xenophobic" nations, asserting that none of

fundraiser.

these countries, unlike the United States,

welcome immigrants. "This election is about freedom, America and democracy. That's why I badly need you. You know, one of the reasons why our economy is growing is because of you and many others. Why? Because we welcome immigrants," Biden told his supporters at a fundraiser here on Wednesday evening.
"We look to — the reason — look, think we look to — the reason — look, think about it. Why is China stalling so badly economically? Why is Japan having trouble? Why is Russia? Why is India? Because they're xenophobic. They don't want immigrants," Biden, the presumptive candidate of the Democratic Party, said. "Immigrants are what make us strong. Not a joke. That's not hyperbole, because we have an influx of workers who want to be here and want to contribute," the president said at the Democratic Party

India and Japan are members of QUAD a four-member strategic security dialogue that also includes the US and Australia. Biden hosted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a State Visit last year while Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited the White House last month for an official visit.

Tiny feet waltz back to school with innocent confidence

ABHI SINGHAL/ADITI SHARMA/ SAMAR PANDEY/RISHABH MALIK

t was just another start of the Iday for the school going toddlers and young children on Thursday who a day earlier had been evacuated from their classrooms following a bomb scare across over 100 schools of the Delhi NCR. In the schools children resumed, appeared to be more confident than their parents when they exchanged the routine 'tata; byebye' greetings.

Several schools, however, decided to remain closed as part of security measures and a few of them observed a low attendance. The Pioneer reporters visited more national Capital and observed that students were back to school in their school buses, private vans or parents' pick drop facility. Principal of Kendriya Vidyalaya in

Sadiq Nagar, Mamta Singh said, "Our attendance today has not dropped and students are also feeling safe and secure and it is our responsibility to ensure the security of the students". School management had assured parents on Wednesday itself that there is no need to worry. We didn't get anything on our official email ID, she added. The parents came to drop students

off at school just like on a normal day without any fears. On Wednesday, 131 schools received bomb threats via email, which led to mass evacuation and panic in than a dozen schools across the the schools of Delhi and Noida.



Ajit Singh, who came to drop his children at Sarvodaya Vidyalaya in Keshav Puram in north Delhi area said, "It is just like any other day, and he as a parent was not

scared at all." He further added

that this was only a way to create Sadina Khatoon, a mother of two

children, came to drop her

Photo: Samar Pandey/Pioneer

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

 Γ he Delhi Police Special Cell in its FIR registered revealed that the perpetrators of the hoax bomb threat letters received by nearly 200 Delhi schools wanted to "create mass panic and disturb public order. FIR states that the movement of these units to the schools "resulted in massive inconvenience," according to the

The FIR has been registered at Special Cell Police Station under IPC sections 505 (2) (statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes)

507 (criminal intimidation by an anonymous communication), and 120 (B) (punishment of criminal conspiracy).

According to police sources, the investigation will be done by the Counter Intelligence Team Special Cell. The IFSO unit is also trying to find out the origin from where the mail was sent, till now the connection to Russia (IP address) has been revealed as the domain of the email is "mail.ru". The investigating agency is also probing the angle of joint conspiracy between China and ISI to ascertain if there is a larger conspiracy at work in the matter.

Primary School in Sukhdev Kunj and expressed that she was not scared and even other students have also turned up in the school. Several schools also sent messages early in the morning to parents not to send their children to school whereas a majority of parents were concerned after the bomb threats. While talking to some parents outside the school, they looked concerned, "My daughter's school did not receive any threat email and school has also convinced the parents about the security of the kids but still as a mother our concern is obvious," said Divya Singh, mother of a class 4 student in The Indian School, Sadiq Nagar, New Delhi.

establish Swaraj

Giving tips for leading a quality and disease-free

quality and disease-free life at a public programme in Haridwar, spiritual orator from Prajapita Brahma Ku-mari Ishwari Vish-

to bring Ram Rajya: BK Shivani

Man arrested from Bhopal | Police arrest nine men for | Defeat vices and for duping Dehradun resident of Rs 68 lakh

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The cyber crime police of the Uttarakhand Special Task Force (STF) arrested a man from Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh on charges of duping a Dehradun resident of Rs 68 lakh. The deputy superintendent of police, STF, Ankush Mishra said that the victim had lodged a complaint at the cyber crime police station a few days ago. He claimed that he was duped of Rs 68 lakh under the pretext of receiving training for share market trading, and was promised large profits by people who claimed to work for a stock trading firm called BlackRock India. The DSP said that the cyber crime unit started the investigation and arrested two accused from Uttar Pradesh within a few days. The teams continued their investigation and arrested another accused named Sanman Singh (44) on Thursday from Bhopal. Mishra said that the accused revealed their process to dupe people during interrogation. He told the police that he along with his other associates used to create a fake company and present themselves as em-ployees of various stock mar-

Legha takes charge as

PNS DEHRADUN

The State administration has handed over

the charge of director of

Geology and Mining de-

partment to Rajpal Legha. He is additional director

in the department and will hold additional re-

sponsibility of director.

Legha assumed the new

charge on Thursday. He

has taken over from SL

Patrick who was suspended on Wednesday.

PNS DEHRADUN

thusiastic

Patrick was heading the de-

partment for the last 10 years.

However, ahead of his retire-

ment the administration sus-

UPES organised a clean-liness drive spanning

the distance between Bid-

holi and Kandoli, covering a

distance of four kilometres

between both campuses.

The initiative conducted by

the UPES CSR team saw en-

from a diverse array of

Gram Pradhans, commu-

Playback singer Sunidhi Chauhan performed at

Shri Guru Ram Rai Univer-

sity's annual fest Zenith-2024

on Thursday. In her perform-

ance which lasted about three

hours, Chauhan sang her pop-

ular numbers including 'Crazy

kiya re', 'Mere hath mein tera

hath ho', 'Bumro bumro' and

other songs which were re-

PNS DEHRADUN

including

at SGRR annual fest

Sunidhi Chauhan performs

stakeholders

participation

UPES holds cleanliness drive



ket and stock trading companies. They used to approach their victims through WhatsApp calls and messages to dupe them under the pretext of providing information about stock trading and investment in the stock market. They used to follow a process to get people into confidence and add them to various false. and add them to various fake WhatsApp groups. Subsequently, they send links to the groups and ask them to download certain apps after which

pended him on charges of cor-

ruption, delay in clearance of

files and using class IV work-

ers of the department for doing household works.

nity members, NGO part-

ners along with students

and staff members of UPES.

of collective responsibility

ceived enthusiastically by the

university students. President

of Shri Guru Ram Rai Univer-

sity Mahant Devendra Das

congratulated the organising

committee for this successful

organizing of Zenith-2024.

The university vice chancellor

Yashbir Dewan and registrar

Ajay Kumar Khanduri were

also present on the occasion.

towards the environment.

the money from victims' bank accounts gets transferred to their accounts. The DSP appealed to people to not click any links from unknown sources and download random apps since these methods are being blatantly used by cyber fraudsters to pull a scam. People should not fall for quick money-making for quick money-making schemes and refrain from making online transactions with unknown people, he added.

illegal betting on IPL

The Dehradun police arrested nine accused of illegal online betting on the Indian Premier League (IPL) from a flat in Brahmawala village of Rajpur on Thursday. The entire online betting network was being operated from Dubai, the Dehradun senior superintendent of police Aigi Singh enid. He lice Ajai Singh said. He informed that the police received confidential information about a gang carrying out illegal online betting in a flat in the Ra-jpur area after which the team raided the flat and arrested nine accused. The police have frozen the account with Rs 9.5 lakh. The police also recovered 50 mobile phones, eight laptops, ATM cards, debit cards and several other electronic devices from the accused's possession.

The accused have done transactions worth crores of rupees through the bank account which was being used for the betting. A case has been registered against the accused in Rajpur police station under section 3/4 of the Gambling Act.



The accused have told the police that the entire network of online betting is operated by a person named Shubham from

These nine accused were doing the betting work and other associated processes in Dehradun to make their clients bet on IPL cricket matches. The accused have claimed that they had made about Rs nine lakh in a day and were planning to make a profit of about Rs one crore by the end of this

IPL. The nine accused have been identified as Vikas Kumar (33), Lokesh Gupta (29), Siraj Memon (26), Monu (24), Saurabh (23), Sonu Kumar (23), Shivam (23), Vivek Adhikari (20) and Shatrughan Kumar (21).

These men belong to dif-ferent areas of Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. The SSP also announced a cash reward of Rs 10,000 to the team that nabbed the gang.

Siddhi," she said. A large number of people were present on the occasion.

become their masters only

then can we move towards

spiritual happiness. And this

is the miracle of Raja Yoga. All this can happen only by

moving from Sankalp to

wavidyalay, BK Shivani, said that people have become slaves of their habits and surrounding circumstances.

We can bring Ram Rajya

through Swaraj, winning over die hard wrong habits. Self-reliant India

will be formed only by

getting freedom from the

slavery of ten common

vices of human beings.

We do not have to wait

for when Ram Rajya will come but instead make efforts to bring Ram Rajya."

She was speaking as

the chief guest at an event organised in Premnagar

Ashram in Haridwar on

She said, "Both lord Ram and Ravan were

present in the Treta Yuga.

Ram Rajya means to live

a life of truth, peace, hap-

piness and spirituality,

whereas Ravana Rajya

means to live a life full of

vices. Ravana had 10 heads, symbolising ten vices including lust, anger, greed, ego, attach-

ment, slander and lazi-

ness. We have to establish

Ram Rajya by defeating

these vices in our lives.

On January 22 this year,

in Ayodhya, we resolved to establish Ram Rajya by

consecrating the idol of

Lord Ram. To achieve

this resolution, we do not

have to wait for anyone

but we have to make ef-

forts to establish happi-

She said that in the

race of modernity, people

have become slaves to their senses. "We have to

ness, peace affection," she said.

Thursday.

· CHANGE OF NAME · I, MOHD KAIF S/O MOHD YUNUS R/O House No-33/2 Lakkhi Bagh Bandar Wali Gali Dehradun Uttarakhand-248001 have changed my name to KAIF YUNUS.

I Rishiv S/o JC 415229 Rank late Ranveer Singh Bhandari Rajeshwaripuram Lower Nathanpur P.O. IIP, teh. Dehradun, district Dehradun (UK). I have changed my name from Rishiv to Rishabh Bhandari in my father's service records. In future I should be known as Rishabh Bhandari. Both

I Rakhi wife of JC 415229K Rank NB/SUB late Ranveer Singh Bhandari Raieshwaripuram Lower Nathanpur P.O. IIP, Tehsil Dehradun, District Dehradun (UK). I have changed my name from Rakhi to Rakhi Bhandari in my husband's service record. In future I should be known as Rakhi Bhandari. Both

In my birth certificate, my name is mentioned as CARON MARTIN RAI by mistake, whereas in my 10th and 12th mark sheets and certificates and all other documents, my name is mentioned as PRAGATI MARTIN RAO, which is correct and is real. In future I shall be known as Pragati Martin Rao, daughter of Shri Martin Das Rao. Pragati Martin Rao (DOB:30/12/2005), Daughter of Shri Martin Das Rao R/o Mahima Enclave, Lane No.-3, Kehrigaon, Premnagar, Dehradun Uttarakhand-

In my Army Record my son's name is mistakenly recorded as GIAN SINGH whereas his correct name is GYAN SINGH as mentioned in all other documents. ARMY No. 8020746P EX HAV HARI SINGH R/O VILL. DHAULAS HARIYAWALA DEHRADUN UTTARAKHAND vide IN- UK18859488415456W Affidavit 02.05.2024 before Dehradun.

PUBLIC NOTICE

We would like to inform General Public that Original Correction deed dated 26.05.2011 of IP situated at 184/142, old no 57 having land area 247.80 sq mt and build up area 120.77 sq mt, Block- 2, E.C. Road, Dehardun, which is bounded and butted as under: East- Property of Sh Kukreti Ji, S.M. 38 ft 6 inch West-Partly 12 ft road and partly Property of Buyer, S.M. 47 ft 8 inch North-Property of Sh Diwan Chand, S.M. 61 ft 6 inch South- Property of Sh Saklani Ji, S.M. 62 ft

Dehradun II at Bahi No 1 Zild 3670 Pages 189 to 200 Document No 3778 on 26.05.2011 in favour of Smt Vandana Singh w/o Dr G. Singh have been lost and untraccable. Dehradun intends to mortgage the above property. If any person finds it, or claims any interest or title in the property is requested to contact Punjab National Bank, Branch Office Paltan Bazar, within 7 days from the

The Pioneer does not take

For advertisement booking 9045057787 8909212518 Email: pioneerdoon@gmail.com

GDMC to make team **Geology & Mining director** for registering patients on ABHA app

PNS DEHRADUN

The Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) Hospital has started the process of establishing a dedicated team to enhance the effectiveness of the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) application in the hospital. Stating this, the medical superintendent of the hospital Dr Dhananjay Dobhal informed that the ABHA app initiative has been operational in the hospital for two years now. He explained that patients visiting the hospital are required to register on the app initially and provide information regarding their medical concerns, ailments and personal details.

The university claimed He further informed that that this collaborative effort currently, the doctors in underscores its proactive the hospital are registering engagement in societal bettheir patients for a specific terment and fosters a sense ailment through an app. The primary objective behind the app's launch is to alleviate congestion in hospital queues and to streamline the patient registration and billing processes to save time. He said that a

unique doctor ID is required to access the app, enabling doctors to review past patient details to aid in current treatment. However, he underscored that patient registrations on the app have not reached the desired level, with only 23,057 patients currently enrolled, which is a low number. "The low number of registrations signifies a higher workload for the doctors, as they are now required to not only attend to patients but also register them on the app. This situ-ation has resulted in the ABHA app's performance not meeting expectations at the hospital," Dobhal

He further mentioned that the State Health Authority has instructed them to establish a dedicated team responsible for registering visiting patients through the app at the hospital. Consequently, the hospital administration is in the process of forming

Education department to form four teams for inspecting private schools

The Education department has decided to form five teams to oversee the operations of private schools that raise their fees and pressurise students into purchasing costly books instead of following the NCERT guidelines. Regarding this, the Chief Education Officer (CEO) Pradeep Rawat informed that this decision was made in response to multiple complaints received from parents and concerned individuals in regard to the annual fee increments. He also pointed out that many private schools have been compelling parents to buy expensive books instead of utilising NCERT material, all in the pursuit of higher profits. Each team comprising four members will be tasked with inspecting private schools within the district based on a set of 10 criteria outlined by the department, he said.

He further added that the inspections will involve a thorough examination of school documents and minority certificates by the Education department officials assigned to each team. Apart from this, during the inspection students will also un-dergo verification to ensure they are not being coerced into purchasing school uniforms from specified shops and the use of NCERT books will be monitored by authorised teams. Additionally, the team will scrutinise the number of school children covered under the Right to Education (RTE) Act as well as the school management committee. If any school is found to be non-compliant with these regulations, the Education department will take strict action against it including the possibility of revoking the affiliation of private schools in severe cases, Rawat said.

It will be recalled that regarding the increased prices of books, member of State Commission for Protection of Child Rights Vinod Kaparwan had earlier emphasised that the Education department should establish a monitoring committee to inspect private schools and prevent parents from being misled into purchasing costly books from specific booksellers that are mandated by the schools.

before the Hon'ble Presiding Officer on 09.04.2024.

30 days from the date of the publication of this notice

his Tribunal on this the 15th day of April, 2024.

कुडा वाहन / पर्यावरण मित्रों को दें।

बनाने में अपना सहयोग प्रदान करें।

करें न करने दें।

Dy. No. 294/2024

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, DEHRADUN Government of India, Ministry of Finance, (Department of Financial Services) 2nd Floor, Paras Tower, Mazra, Saharanpur Road, Dehradun, UK. 248171

PUBLICATION NOTICE
IN O.A. No. 404 OF 2023

1993, Read. With Sub - Rule (2a) Of Rule 5 Of The Debt Recovery Tribunal(procedure) Rules, 1993AsAmended From Time To Time)

HDFC Bank Ltd. V/s Bramha Nand Pandey & Anr.

1. Bramha Nand Pandey S/o Rakesh Pandey Address- . Ward No.01, Chintimajhra, Sitarganj, District-Udham Singh Nagar, State - Uttarakhand -262405.

Sadhna Pandey WO Sh Bramha Nand Pandey Address- . Ward No.01, Chintimajhra, Sitarganj, District-Udham Singh Nagar, State-Uttarakhand-262405.
Whereas the above named Applicant Bank has instituted OA No. 404 of 2023 against you for

viviletes the above frames Applicant pain has institute OA No. 401 2223 against you for recovery of debts of Rs. 22,87,475,94- in which Hon'ble Tribunal was pleased to issue Summons/Notice U/s 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993 and was listed

Whereas, it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by way of this publication directing you to appear in person or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner before the Tribunal on 29.05.2024. Further, you are required to show cause as to why the relief(s) prayed for in OA

should not be granted and to file reply, if any, in your defence in a paper book form in sets and produce all the documents and affidavits under which your defence or claim for set off, counter claim, in this Tribunal personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner within

Take notice that in case of default of your appearance on the specified day and time before the

Tribunal, the case shall be heard and decided in your absence. Given under my hand and seal of

कार्यालय-नगर पालिका परिषद चिन्यालीसौड, उत्तरकाशी

सार्वजनिक सूचना

2. घरों पर उत्पन्न होने वाले जैविक—अजैविक कुडे को अलग—अलग कर के

3. यात्रा मार्गों / सार्वजनिक स्थलों को साफ एवं स्वच्छ रखने में अपना योगदान दें।

5. नगर क्षेत्र में सिंगल यूज प्लास्टिक पूर्ण रूप से प्रतिबन्धित है इसका प्रयोग न

7. स्वच्छ सर्वेक्षण 2024 में नगर पालिका परिषद चिन्यालीसौड को नम्बर 01

(बिरेन्द्र सिंह पंवार)

नगर पालिका परिषद चिन्यालीसौड

अधिशासी अधिकारी

4. नगर क्षेत्र के नालों एवं नालियों में कूडा कचरा या अन्य अपशिष्ट न डाले।

6. पालिका के करों एवं शुल्कों का समय पर भुगतान करें।

है कि नगर क्षेत्र को साफ व स्वच्छ बनाये रखने में पालिका का सहयोग करें।

नगर पालिका परिषद चिन्यालीसौड की सम्मानित जनता से अपील की जाती

nmons Under Sub-section (4) Of Section 19 Of The Recovery Of Debts And Bankruptcy Act,

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this team for the app, he

Major Pranay Negi's last rites performed with full honours PNS DEHRADUN

The last rites of major Pranay Negi who was martyred while on duty on April 30 were conducted with full honours in Haridwar on Thursday. The soldier's mortal remains were earlier received with full honours upon arrival at Dehradun cantonment and a

military funeral was organised in Haridwar.

The station commander of Dehradun cantonment, brigadier Sanjog Negi along with other senior officers and veterans laid wreaths to honour the martyr in Dehradun. The martyr was

cremated with full military honours later in Haridwar. The Soldier Welfare minister Ganesh Joshi also paid tribute to Negi. It will be recalled that Negi belonged to the Artillery regiment and was deployed in the high altitude area of Kargil sector.



Personnel in action in Dehradun during a mock exercise held in the State on Thursday ahead of the start of the Char Dham Yatra

Pioneer photo

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All buses operating on Char | CS visits Kedarnath & Badrinath, | MCD sends bills to **Dham routes will have VLTD** installed this year

PNS DEHRADUN

A bout 2,000 buses operating on Char Dham routes will have Vehicle Location Tracking Devices (VLTDs) installed in them for the first time in Uttarakhand. The installation of these devices in buses will help in tracking the movement of the vehicles, ensure passengers' safety and can help in providing swift help in case of accidents, the nodal officer of Char Dham Yatra and regional transport officer (Administration) of Dehradun division Sunil Sharma said. He said that all new vehicles bought after the year 2019 came with installed VLTD so operators of all vehicles before 2019 were directed to mandatorily install the device. "The department has made a joint rotation arrangement with nine private companies for the pilgrims who will operate over 1,800 buses on Char Dham routes this year. Besides this, 100 buses of the Uttarakhand Transport Corporation (UTC)



will also operate on these routes. The department has also set up two passenger facilitation centres at Yatra Bus Stand and ISBT in Rishikesh, and near Rahi hotel in Haridwar to ensure pilgrims can easily get these buses from the centres. These centres will operate from 8 AM to 6 PM every day," Sharma said. He also informed that the depart-

ment will also set up some rest ing points on Char Dham routes in Chamoli and Rudraprayag districts with the help of respective district magistrates to ensure drivers can take some rest there during the long and hectic journey. This will minimise the risk of accidents that occur when the drivers are either too tired or sleep deprived, Sharma added.

FDA alert on food safety standards on Char Dham Yatra routes

PNS DEHRADUN

Yatra will remain under the scanner of the Food Safety and Drugs Administration (FDA) department during the Char Dham Yatra. Severe punitive action will be taken against the shopkeepers and hotel owners for violation of food safety norms. The FDA commissioner R Rajesh Kumar said that all the hotel owners, restaurants and shopkeepers on Yatra route have been asked to strictly adhere to food safety standards. He said that the food

The hotels, restaurants and shops on the Char Dham safety standards in their establishments and keep proper hygiene and sanitation. Sale of stale food and uncovered food items is prohibited. The officers of the department have been directed to ensure that hotel and restaurant owners conduct regular health check-ups of their employees. Kumar informed that the food safety laboratory, Rudrapur has been asked to check the food samples collected on Yatra route on priority. The reports will be provided by the lab on a week-

ly basis and based on the report action on culprits will be taken.

The FDA has made deputy commissioner of Garhwal, RS Rawat the nodal officer of the Char Dham Yatra. He will inspect the Yatra route and check establishments on Food Safety and Standards Act 2006. Rawat will send reports to FDA headquarters. Kymar said that action on the employees of the FDA will be taken for showing laxity in works during

checks preparations for Yatra hief secretary Radha and development works cur-Raturi visited Kedarnath rently underway at

and Badrinath shrines on Thursday to review the preparations for the Char

Kedarnath. She reviewed the progress of the construction works including Dham Yatra. The Yatra will Mandakini-Saraswati Ghat, commence with the opening guest house, hospital, Astha of the portals of Kedarnath, Path and Kedarnath temple

After Kedarnath, the CS landed in Badrinath to take stock of the preparations for the Yatra. The portals of Badrinath temple will open on May 12 this year.

She instructed the officers



Gangotri and Yamunotri on

In Kedarnath, the CS directed the officers to complete all mandatory works before the opening of the portals. She directed that additional workers should be deployed to complete preparations on time. On a stern note she said that special care should be taken to ensure that the devotees do not face any kind of incon-

The district magistrate of Rudraprayag and Public Works Department (PWD) officers informed the CS about the reconstruction

officers to complete all the works before the set dead-

She instructed the DM to expedite the construction works by using more resources and complete the corridor work from Gol Chabutra to the temple complex speedily. The CS warned that quality should not be compromised in the construction works.

The officiating director general of police Abhinav Kumar, secretary Sachin Kurve and other officers accompanied the CS.

complex and directed the to make the Yatra of the pilgrims simple, smooth and convenient and added that all the preparations and reconstruction works should be completed on time. Raturi said that alternative routes should also be kept open and well maintained to manage traffic during Yatra.

> She directed that special attention should be paid on time lines in the reconstruction works. The CS sought information about the status of construction works at Shesh Netra and Badrish lake, arrival plaza, bus station and river front development works.

600 defaulters with pending tax of over Rs one lakh

PNS DEHRADUN

Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) has sent bills to over 600 defaulters with a pending property tax of over Rs one lakh. All these defaulters are nonresidential property owners and the tax section has asked them to submit the tax as soon as possible, the municipal tax superintendent Poonam Rawat said. The list of defaulters includes names of some property owners who have not paid taxes for the past two to three years and the tax section has informed them that the rate of penalty will continue to increase with time.

Municipal the first month of the new financial year 2024-25. The corporation collected Rs 1.75 crore on Monday itself. She said that the corporation provided an additional rebate of five per cent on the property tax submission in April which also motivated many to deposit tax on time.

> The tax section is currently focussing on recovering taxes from those who owe over Rs one lakh as property tax to the corporation. The MCD had set the target of collecting prop-erty tax of Rs 60 crore in the financial year 2023-24 but it could collect only Rs 58 crore. On the question of the MCD's this year's target for



These defaulters also include big government and aided educational institutions, government bodies and apartment buildings. Rawat said that the corporation has collected property tax of over Rs 10 crore in lection.

property tax collection, Rawat said that no target has been set for this year so far but the tax section is diligently working to maximise the tax collection to exceed the last financial year's col-

PM Modi has brought tribal society into mainstream: Dhami

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

hief minister Pushkar ✓Singh Dhami said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the tribal society is being brought into the national mainstream. He was addressing a public meeting in support of BJP can-didate Sanjay Seth in Ranchi, Jharkhand on Thursday.

Dhami said that for the first time the welfare schemes are being made by keeping the interests of the tribal population and deprived sections at

He said that Jharkhand is famous for its forest and mineral wealth and valour of the tribal society. The CM said that the tribal brethrens were the first to raise their voice against British rule. He said that the States of Uttarakhand and Iharkhand were created together and both share many simi-

Dhami said that today the country is having its first trib-



al women President which is a matter of great pride for all the citizens. He said that BJP in its Sankalp Patra has decided to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Birsa Munda in 2025 as Janjateeya Gaurav

He said that today India is

very powerful and is moving ahead on the path of becoming a developed nation which proves that our country is in safe hands. Listing out various schemes of social welfare, the CM said that these schemes are not merely on paper but are the guarantees of Modi. Apart from these schemes, PM Modi

has taken many historic decisions such as abrogation of article 370, law on triple talaq, Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Dhami said Uttarakhand has implemented Uniform Civil Code (UC) and taken stern action on land Jihad. He said that the Modi government has also focussed on infrastructure develop-ment of Jharkhand. Terming the INDIA bloc as a gang of scamsters, Dhami said that former CM Hemant Soren is in jail on charges of money laundering and land scam.

The 'royal family' of Congress party has looted the nation for 60 years while the RJD's Lalu family has many records in its name in corruption. Dhami appealed to the people to vote for the BJP candidate to make Narendra Modi, the PM of the country for the third consecutive term.

Raturi directs immediate release of relief amount in cases of public service vehicles' accidents

Taking serious cognisance of I the issue of delay in the cases pertaining to the Accident Relief Fund in the State, chief secretary Radha Raturi has directed the officials to immediately release the relief amount to the affected people in the cases of accidents of public service vehicles. Raturi clarified that now there is no need for a magisterial investigation report for the entitlement of relief amount. An amount of Rs 50 lakh has been allocated to the district magistrates for the Accident Relief Fund. Along with this, the chief secretary has directed the officials to keep a strict vigil on road accidents and crimes related to illegal mining activities in the State, especially in Dehradun and Haridwar districts. Instructing officials to give top priority to the quality of crash barriers instead of the formalities while chairing a meeting of the road safety monitoring committee on Thursday, Raturi directed the officials to also conduct a



third party audit of the quality of crash barriers. She further directed the officers to study other latest technologies and best practices in place of crash barriers in other countries and implement them in the State. The CS has directed the District Magistrates to ensure the mapping of the places with more accidents within the stipulated deadline and also to work on an action plan for corrective measures like speed breakers and crash barriers, among others at these places.

Raturi has advised the senior officers of Transport, Public Works Department, Finance and related departments to work with the vision of making Uttarakhand a zero accident State. Taking cognisance of the cases of vehicles being locked up at police stations and posts by the Transport department, she clarified that the officers concerned should immediately make arrangements to keep

the vehicles locked up at various police stations together by identifying a place near the city in each district. She also directed the district magistrates to identify/transfer land for this purpose in the districts.

The chief secretary directed the Public Works Department to get regular road safety audit done through a professional agency while directing the Transport department to strengthen the online challan system and run a campaign to encourage the use of helmets by users of two-wheelers. Officials of the Education department were directed to include awareness about road accidents in the curriculum and promote the Good Samaritan scheme.

Secretaries Dilip Jawalkar, Arvind Singh Hayanki, Pankai Kumar Pandey along with officers of various departments and all district magistrates were present in the meeting vir-

Covishield controversy: Cong demands high level inquiry

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Uttarakhand Congress has demanded a high level inquiry on the Covishield vaccine controversy. In a memorandum to the President of India, the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) said that new disclosures and admissions made by the British vaccompany

have shocked people.

The chief media coordinator of the State Congress, Rajiv Mehrishi who was part of the delegation of the Congress said that the government should also provide adequate compensation to the people affected by health issues due to vaccination. He said that the com-



AstraZeneca in the court about side effects of its vaccine responsibility of the treatment of the people. Mehrishi said that the accountability should be fixed for this episode in which the health of the people was compromised. The delegation included Mahanagar resident Jaswinder Singh Gogi, former president of Mahanagar Congress Lal Chand Sharma, vice president Puran Singh Rawat and others.

Cong propaganda on **Covishield part of its** political agenda: BJP

PNS DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party has alleged that the propaganda being spread by the Congress regarding the Covishield vaccine is part of its political agenda. The BJP State media in-charge Manveer Singh Chauhan said that the Congress is frustrated and anxious due to the developmental efforts undertaken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi which is why it is resorting to uneth-

He said that the Congress is spreading confusion on the issue of the vaccine for political gains without any concrete evidence on it. The company which manufactured the vaccine had already made it clear in the past that its side effects are rare, he said. "The intentions of the Congress are clear considering its allegations. It is questioning the quality of the vaccine and linking the issue with electoral bonds which is a sign of opportunistic politics. Questions were raised regarding the side effects of all vaccines made across the world during the Covid-19 pandemic but the instances of side effects of the vaccine made in India were rare.

When it was needed during the pandemic, this vaccine helped protect the lives of crores of people after its manufacturing was passed after stringent tests and research involving scientists of India and abroad. The company manufacturing the vaccine in India had already clarified the possible side effects but the risk was for less that one out of one lakh people administered the vaccine," Chauhan added.



A man and a woman herd their goats on the route to Dhanaulti near Mussoorie

India slams US body religious freedom report

India on Thursday slammed the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and said it continues to publish its propaganda on the country "masquerading" as part of an annual report.

In a sharp reaction to the USCIRF's latest report that has criticised India for alleged violations of religious freedom, of External Affairs(MEA)spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the organisation is known to be a "biased" entity with a political

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom is known as a biased organisation with a political agenda. They continue to publish their propaganda on India masquerading as part of an annual report," Jaiswal said. "We really have no expectation that the USCIRF will even



seek to understand India's diverse, pluralistic and democratic ethos," he added.

'Their efforts to interfere in the largest electoral exercise of the world will never succeed," Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.In its latest annual report, the USCIRF has criticised India for alleged violations of religious freedom as well as on certain other issues. New Delhi's response came after the USCIRF released its 2024 annual report and recommended designating 17 countries, including India, as Countries of Particular Concern (CPCs), for "engaging in or tolerating particularly

freedom of religion or belief". The USCIRF report alleged that the government imposed "discriminatory nationalist policies", "perpetuated hateful rhetoric" and "failed to address communal violence" among minority communities.

The report also cited various instances, including Manipur violence, Haryana violence, and several Kashmiri leaders and separatists being detained when the Supreme Court, last year, upheld the government's 2019 decision to scrap Article 370 that granted special status to the then state of Jammu and in Shaksgam Valley ing. "We further reserve the right to take necessary measures to safeguard our inter-

India protests against

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

India has lodged a strong protest with China for car-

rying out construction activities in the Shaksgam valley, in an "illegal" attempt to alter the

situation on the ground. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Thursday the

"We have consistently con-

(PoK).

China's illegal construction

ests," he said. The terse response came in the wake of China building roads in PoK near Siachen. The new road is part of the Chinese efforts to enhance infrastructure development in occupied Kashmir north of Siachen. The road lies in Shaksgam

Shaksgam valley is a part of India and New Delhi never Satellite pictures show the road in Shaksgam Valley, a part of accepted the so-called China-Pakistan boundary pact of Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) ceded to China in 1963, 1963 through which Islamabad "unlawfully" attempted to cede branches out from an extenthe area to Beijing. The sion of Highway G219 in Shaksgam valley is a strategi-China's Xinjiang and disapcally key region that is part of pears into mountains at a place Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (coordinate: 36.114783° 76.671051°) approximately 50 km north of India's northernveyed our rejection of the most point, Indira Col in same. We have registered our Siachen Glacier. Last year, protest with the Chinese side India also lodged strong against illegal attempts to alter diplomatic protests with facts on the ground," Jaiswal said at his weekly media brief-Beijing for showing Aksai Chin plateau as its official territory.

No political clearance sought or issued: MEA on Prajwal trip

from or issued by MEA in

respect of the travel of the said

MP to Germany," Jaiswal said at

his weekly media briefing while

replying to a volley of questions

on the MP's reported travel to

'Obviously, no visa note was

issued either. No visa is required

for diplomatic passport holders

On Wednesday, Karnataka

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah

urged the prime minister to

take swift action to cancel the

diplomatic passport of Revanna

MEA spokesperson said.

Germany.

A mid an escalating political row over alleged sexual harassment of several women by JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna who is not in the country, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday said Revanna travelled to Germany on a diplomatic passport and he did not seek political clearance for the trip.
On Karnataka Chief Minister

Siddaramaiah's demand for revocation of Revanna's diplomatic passport, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said such action can be taken only on the directions of a

Revanna, the grandson of former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, is said to have left India on April 27, a day after voting for the Lok Sabha elections took place in his Hassan con-

The Janata Dal (Secular) has already suspended the Hassan MP from the party. "No political clearance was either sought

travel abroad. Asked about whether the MEA

may consider revocation of his passport in view of the allegations of sexual harassment against him, Jaiswal did not give a direct reply.

"As regards the possible revo

cation of the passport of any individual, I would refer you to the relevant provisions of the Passport Act 1967. A direction should come from a court for revocation of passport. We are not in receipt of any directions from any court in this regard," he said.

Jaiswal said Revanna travelled to Germany on a diplomatic passport and that he did not seek any political clearance for the trip. The MEA spokesperson noted

to travel to Germany. The Ministry has not issued visa that parliamentarians are entinote for any other country," the tled to have diplomatic pass-

"The matter is being investi-gated and we will be doing whatever is needed to be done," he said in reply to another ques-

India, Indonesia to review bilateral Admiral Swaminathan takes defence ties during meet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Tndia and Indonesia will **⊥**review the entire spectrum of their bilateral defence ties here on Friday during the sev-Defence enth Joint Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting, Defence Ministry said here on

Giving details, officials said the meeting will be co-chaired by Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane and Secretary General of Ministry of Defence, Indonesia Air Marshal (Retired) Donny Ermawan Taufanto. Both sides will exchange views on regional and global issues of shared interest.

The India-Indonesia friendship, which was elevated to



the level of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2018, has widened the scope of bilateral relations to allow for new collaboration in the realm of defence industry,

nificantly more men than

women, further emphasizing

the importance of under-standing and addressing these

The study revealed that men

lost 45 percent more life years from Covid-19 compared to

women. This disparity under-

scores the need for targeted

interventions to address the

specific health challenges faced

by each gender. One notable

finding was the wide gap in

health loss related to low back

pain, which disproportionate-

ly disadvantaged women, par-

ticularly in regions such as

South Asia and Central Europe.

The research highlighted that

these health differences mani-

fest from adolescence and per-

sist throughout life, with women experiencing higher

levels of illness and disability

due to their longer life

The authors emphasized the

importance of implementing

"concerted, sex- and gender-informed strategies" to pro-

mote equitable health out-

comes. They called for

enhanced reporting of sex and

gender data to inform policy

decisions and improve health

interventions.Senior author

Luisa Sorio Flor of the Institute

for Health Metrics and

Evaluation (IHME) at the

University of Washington

stressed the timeliness of the

study, particularly in light of the

Covid-19 pandemic's profound

impact on health outcomes.

expectancy.

disparities.

science and technology. The defence relations form a significant pillar to this growing partnership.

engagements Defence between the two nations have

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

diversified to include wideranging contacts between the services, military-to-military exchanges, high-level visits, capacity building and training programmes, cooperation in UN Peace Keeping, ship visits and bilateral exercises.

The defence cooperation agreement signed in 2001 between India and Indonesia stipulated the establishment of the JDCC to explore and identify potential areas of cooperation, matters of common interest, initiate, coordinate, monitor and control the approved cooperative activities.

The Secretary General, who is on a visit to India from May 02-04, will also undertake discussions with Indian defence industries in New

of Congress, claims Kharge

Every Indian is votebank

charge as Navy Vice Chief Command (TC)on Monday. Air Marshal N Kapoor was

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan on Wednesday assumed charge as Vice Chief of Navy here. He was commissioned into the Indian Navy in July 1987 and specialist Communication Electronic Warfare, navy said here. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla; the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivenham, United Kingdom; the College of Naval Warfare, Karanja; and the United States Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, USA.

Swaminathan's educational qualifications include a BSc degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; MSc in



Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kochi; MA in Defence Studies from King's College, London; MPhil in Strategic Studies from Mumbai University; and PhD in International Studies from Mumbai University. In another appointment, Air

Wednesday assumed charge as 36th Commandant of the prestigious National Defence College here. He took over from Lt General S S Dahiya. Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor assumed the appointment of Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C) Training Defence Academy, Defence Services Staff College and National Defence College. A Qualified Flying Instructor and a Fighter Combat Leader, he has more than 3400 hours of During his illustrious career, the Air Marshal has held numerous field and staff appointments. His operational tenures include being the

commissioned into the Fighter

stream of the Indian Air Force on 06 December 1986. He is an

alumnus of the National

Commanding Officer of a fighter squadron in the Central Sector, Station Commander of a flying base in the Western Sector and Air Officer Commanding of a premier air

Men at risk of premature death while women grapple with poor health in life: Study



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

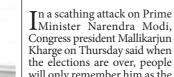
While men face a higher risk of premature death, women tend to spend more of their lifetime grappling with poor health, according to a recent global study published in Lancet Public Health. The findings, drawn from the

Global Burden of Disease Study 2021, highlight stark differences in the distribution of illness and premature mortality between genders over the past three decades, shedding light on the diverse and evolving health needs of men and women across the globe.

Researchers analyzed data spanning from 1990 to 2021, examining the prevalence of various health conditions and events leading to premature death.

Key findings reveal that mus-culoskeletal conditions, mental health issues, and headache disorders, though non-fatal, are more prevalent among women, leading to prolonged periods of ill health. This is compounded by women's longer life expectancy, resulting in higher levels of illness and disability throughout their

Furthermore, the study highlights specific conditions like ischaemic heart disease, lung cancer, and chronic kidney disease, where sex differences impact men at younger ages and exacerbate over time. Covid-19, the dominant health



the elections are over, people will only remember him as the PM who indulged in "divisive and communal speeches filled with lies" to avoid an inevitable Noting that the PM in his letter to NDA candidates had

claimed that reservation will be taken away from SC, ST and OBC and given to the Congress' "votebank", Kharge said, "Our votebank is every Indian — the poor, the marginalised, the women, the aspirational youth, the labour class, the Dalits and the Adivasis." In a letter to the prime minis-

ter, Kharge urged Modi to seek votes on the performance of his government over the last ten years instead of indulging in "hate speeches". The Congress president's remarks comes days after Modi levelled various charges against his party in his letter to NDA candidates after the second phase of the Lok Sabha polls.

Prime Minister Modi asked the BJP-led NDA candidates in



the Lok Sabha polls to spread awareness among voters about the Congress's intention to snatch "reservation from SC, ST and OBC communities and give it away to their vote bank". In a personal letter written to them, Modi also accused the Congress and its allies of having divisive and discriminatory motives, even though reservation on the basis of religion is unconstitutional.

"I saw the letter written by you to all the NDA candidates about what they need to communicate to the voters. From the tone and content of the letter it seems that there is a lot of desperation and worry in you which is leading you to use language that does not suit the

office of the prime minister," Kharge said in the letter. Kharge claimed the prime minister was not interested in talking about the ever widening inequality, unemployment and unprecedented price rise. "You are not interested in talking about the increasing atrocities on women by your leaders," he said in his letter to Modi.

"It is better as the prime minister if you seek votes on the performance of your government over the last ten years instead of indulging in hate speeches. The Congress Party would like to challenge you or anyone you depute to debate with us on our manifesto and the points you have made," he

Rahul accuses Modi Government of snatching quota from Dalits, tribals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

ongress leader Rahul CGandhi on Thursday accused the Government of "clandestinely snatching away" reservation from Dalits, tribals and backward classes by "blindly' implementing privatisation, and said his party guarantees strengthening the public sector enterprises and open the doors for employment.

In a post in Hindi on X, Rahul Gandhi said the mantra of Narendra Modi's campaign to remove reservation is -- 'na rahega baans, na bajegi bansuri', meaning neither there will be government jobs nor any reservation will be available.

"The BJP government is clandestinely snatching away reservation from Dalits, tribals and backward classes by eliminating government jobs through 'blind privatisation," the former Congress chief

In 2013, there were 14 lakh permanent posts in the public sector, which by 2023 stood at 8.4 lakh, he said. "By ruining top PSU's like BSNL, SAIL, BHEL etc., nearly 6 lakh permanent jobs



were eliminated from the public sector alone — these are the very posts which would have given the benefit of reservation," Rahul Gandhi said.

There is no count of the jobs that are being eliminated through the back door in institutions such as railways by giving government work on contract, he claimed. "The 'privatisation' of the Modi model is a plunder of the country's resources, through which the reservation of the deprived is being snatched away," he alleged. The Congress guarantees that it will strengthen the public sector enterprises and open the doors for employment for every section of the society by filling 30 lakh vacant

government posts, Rahul

Gandhi said.

equality.

Women sarpanchs set to shine on global stage at UN

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Supriya Das Datta, Sabhadhipati of Sepahijala Das Datta, Zilla Parishad in Tripura, utilises her Diploma in Pharmacy to champion women's participa-tion in decision-making and advocate for essential childcare facilities while Kunuku Hema Kumari, Sarpanch of Pekeru Gram Panchayat in West Godavari, Andhra Pradesh, leverages her Master's Degree in Technology to bridge access to vital healthcare services through organising medical camps. Likewise, Neeru Ŷadav,

Sarpanch of Lambi Aheer Gram

Panchayat in Jhunjhunu,

Rajasthan also known as 'Hockey wali Sarpanch' is armed with a Master's in Mathematics and Education and spearheads initiatives for girls' education and environmental conserva-These three extraordinary

women leaders, each blending their qualifications with unwavering dedication to community betterment, are set to shine on the global stage on May 3, 2024 at an event at the UN Headquarters in New York, showcasing their pivotal role in driving gender equality, poverty reduction, and inclusive development. The event titled "Localizing the

SDGs: Women in Local Governance in India Lead the Way," is being organized by the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations and the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) during the last

day of the 57th Session of the

Commission on Population and Development (CPD57) which started from April 29th April, 2024.

It symbolises India's groundbreaking approach to empowering Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in local government to advance Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs) given that India leads the world with 1.4 million women constituting 46 per cent of local elected officials.

Secretary Vivek Bharadwaj who will lead the delegation of these women from the grassroot level will discuss strategies derived from India's PRIs to foster gender equality and women's empowerment, focusing on poverty reduction and inclusive development.

Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, will inaugurate the event, emphasizing the crucial role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in advancing gender

The insights shared by Supriya, Kunuku Hema Kumari, and Neeru Yadav will highlight the transformative impact of women's leadership in enabling inclusive development and promoting women and girl-friendly governance. If Supriya will dwell on how she has been active in promoting child-care facilities to create a conducive work environment for women, Kunuku Hema Kumari will talk about her initiatives in establishing linkages between frontline health workers and women and girls in need of health services through her public out-

RJD stands for Rishwatkhor Jungleraj Dal: Nadda

PTI ARARIA (BIHAR)

Launching a frontal attack on the RJD, which is an alliance partner of the INDIA bloc in Bihar, BJP national president J P Nadda on Thursday said the party led by Lalu Prasad stands for 'Rishwatkhor Jungleraj Dal'.

Addressing a public rally in Araria Lok Sabha seat in support of BJP candidate Pradeep Kumar Singh, Nadda accused the opposition coalition of "protecting" corrupt people, whereas Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "striving hard" to end corruption in the country.

Araria will go to polls in the third phase on May 7.

"A majority of the leaders of the INDIA bloc, including those of the Congress and RJD, are either in jail or out

Rahul will be forced to

take out Congress Dhundho

Yatra after June 4: Shah

end corruption but the INDIA bloc leaders call for protecting the corrupt. RJD, whose leaders are on bail, means corruption. R stands for 'Rishwatkhori' (bribery), J for 'Jungleraj' and D means 'Daldal' (slough of mud)," he

"On one side, we have a PM who is working for the country and on the other, you have the INDIA bloc, a 'parivar bachao, dynasty bachao' alliance," he alleged. Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, RJD's Lalu Prasad and Tejashwi Yadav, all are out on bail, Nadda claimed.

"Parties of the 'ghamandiya alliance' are all 'parivarvadi' (dynastic)... Look at Farooq and Abdullah Abdullah, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and Mehbooba Mufti, Mulayam Singh Yadav and



PTI ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer (CEO)

Mukesh Kumar Meena on

Thursday published the final

electoral roll of the state in the run-up to the forthcoming

polls, pegging the total number of voters over 4.14

crore, which rose by nearly six

lakh from January 1. In exact figures, the total

number of voters in the southern state are 4,14,01,887, who include 2.02 crore male

voters, 2.1 crore female voters,

3,421 third gender voters and

"Voter list has been finalised

and frozen. On the day of freezing the list, April 25,

including all categories of

voters, service voters, male,

female and third gender voters, there are 4,14,01,887

said

addressing a press conference

The CEO noted that the

electoral rolls witnessed an increase by 5,94,631 voters

between January 1, 2024 and

April 1. The voter list was

updated until the last day of

receiving the nominations,

at the secretariat here.

Meena,

voters,"

April 25.

68,185 service electors.

Bharti, Mamata Misa Rabri-Tejashwi-Tej Pratap-Banerjee and Abhishek, KCR-

KTR-Kavita, Karunanidhi-Stalin-Udayanidhi... Congress has Sonia-Rahul-Priyanka... All of them are dynasts," the national president

"Corrupt leaders of INDIA bloc who are in jail include Delhi Chief Minister Arvina Kejriwal, and other AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and

Satyendar Jain," he added.
Reiterating that the BJP-led
NDA will win 400-plus Lok
Sabha seats, including all 40
in Bihar, Nadda asserted that the eastern state has developed only under NDA rule, with a six-lane highway being built from Varanasi and Kolkata which will pass through the state.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi's only aim is welfare of every person from the Dalit, tribal and backward sections

Final electoral roll has over 4.14

crore voters in Andhra Pradesh

brought a large section of the country's poor above the poverty line in the last 10 years. But INDIA bloc leaders want to give recommend. want to give reservation on religious lines. The Congress is giving tickets to those belonging to 'tukde-tukde' gang," Nadda added. "India was the 11th largest

economy when PM Modi came to power and now the country is the fifth largest economy, leaving behind United Kingdom and many other countries. We will be the third largest economy by 2027," he said.

Highlighting growth statistics of the country under NDA rule, Nadda, said, "Pharmaceutical and toy exports have surged... India

has become the third-largest automobile

Code of Conduct (MCC), Meena observed that two

deaths, 156 injuries and 13.4

lakh properties were involved

in cases of electoral violence.

Besides binding over 72,416

persons, the Election Commission has also

registered 9,337 seizure FIRs and 864 FIRs related to

enforcement such as

irregular meetings and others. Likewise, the poll body seized liquor, cash, drugs, precious

metals, freebies and other

inducements worth Rs 204 crore from March 16 to May

2. Further, Meena observed

that safety measures would be

put in place at polling stations

prone to heat waves, such as

setting up tents, canopies,

Likewise, cooling devices

such as fans will be arranged

at necessary polling stations

for maintaining comfortable

temperature for voters and

polling personnel, including

drinking water facilities at all

Elections for the 175-member

Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha

seats in Andhra Pradesh are

scheduled on May 13 and the

counting of votes will be held

along

and shade

with

loudspeaker

umbrellas

structures,

providing chairs.

the polling stations.

violations,

surpassing Japan."

Yogi accuses Kharge of hurting Hindu religious sentiments



PTI LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chiet Minister Yogi Adityanath Thursday accused president Mallikarjun Kharge hurting the religious sentiments of Hindus with his recent remarks on Lord Ram

and Shivam.
At a rally in Chhattisgarh on Tuesday in support of a party

Shivkumar

"His candidate Shivkumar Dahariya, Kharge said, "His name is Shivkumar. He can compete with Ram because he is Shīva."

"I am also Mallikarjun. Main bhi Shiv hoon," he said. Mallikarjun is another name for Lord Shiva.

The UP chief minister said that the party is facing significant setbacks in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and is resorting to disparaging the beliefs of the Hindu majority community to vent its frustration over impending defeat in the Lok Sabha elections.

Congress president's derogatory remarks are a "new beginning of the party's downfall," he said.

"The Congress's history is replete with such actions. Yet, during elections, such behaviour becomes conspicuous. By bringing up such issues, the Congress is not only disrespecting the faith of India but also hurting the sentiments of the majority community," Adityanath said while addressing the media at his official residence before embarking on election rallies

Firozabad. He condemned the attempt to pit Lord Ram against Lord Shiva in speeches of Congress

in Mainpuri, Etah, and

'Lord Ram and Lord Shiva hold significant reverence within its worship practices. In Ramcharitmanas, there are instances where Lord Ram worships Lord Shiva and vice illustrating their mutual respect complementarity", he said. "Our scriptures bear testimony to the fact that

betrayal of either Lord Shiva or Lord Ram inevitably leads to defeat and downfall," he said. "The Congress carries forward the British legacy of 'Divide and Rule'. It sows the seeds of discord in society based on caste, region, and language for petty political gains. The party will continue its divisive agenda in future as well to stay relevant in Indian politics," he added. He claimed that Congress in

its manifesto has pledged to include Muslims also among the beneficiaries of the reservation meant for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes.

He also expressed his disapproval of Congress' disregard for India's Sanatan traditions and accused the party and its president of disrespecting manipulating the country's

Chief minister Adityanath criticised the party leader for not only undermining the Hindu faith but also steering Congress towards oblivion through such divisive actions. He hoped that the divine wisdom of Lord Shri Ram and Devadhidev Mahadev Shiv would guide the Congress

leadership to embrace the path of truth amid these

challenges.

Meena called on the electorate to check their names and polling stations at Until Thursday, as part of the enforcement of the Model polling stations which were supplemented to regular alienate their vote bank. Budaun, and Azamgarh. BJP not against Muslims; Modi respected by several Islamic countries: Rajnath

https://electoralsearch.Eci.Go

v.In/ and on the voter helpline

Though more than 7.2 lakh voters are eligible for home

voting under the categories of

voters above 85 years of age and specially-abled, Meena said only 28,591 such voters

Further, he said that the

number of polling stations

rose from 46,165 to 46,389,

after factoring in the requirement of 224 auxiliary

in the

availed this facility.

PTI ■ SUPAUL/SARAN (BIHAR)

PTI ■ BAREILLY (UP)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday attacked Rahul Gandhi,

saying he started his party's

campaign with Bharat Jodo

Yatra that will end with a

'Congress Dhoondho Yatra,'

suggesting that the party will

get a severe drubbing in the

Addressing an election rally

here, Shah alleged that Rahul,

Congress general secretary

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and

SP's Akhilesh Yadav did not

attend the Ram Temple

consecration ceremony in

Ayodhya fearing this may

Lok Sabha elections.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday debunked the opposition charge that the BJP was creating a Hindu-Muslim divide, highlighting the goodwill enjoyed by Prime divide, Minister Narendra Modi in several Islamic countries.

who addressed election rallies in Supaul and Saran Lok Sabha constituencies of Bihar, also urged the minority community to be wary of the Congress and its ally RJD, charging the opposition parties with "seeking votes by kicking sand in your face".

The former BJP president,

"In at least five Islamic countries of the Arab world, Modi has been conferred with the highest honour. And they (the opposition) have the temerity of charging us with (creating divisions) between Hindus and Muslims," Singh asserted.

"I would, however, urge my Muslim brethren not to be ensnared by these people, the parties like RJD and Congress, which are trying to get your votes by kicking sand in your face," he said.

Shah said that this election is

for ending terrorism and

Naxalism and making India

the third major economy

Šhah hit out at the INDIA

bloc partner Samajwadi Party,

saying it indulges in dynastic

politics for its president

Akhilesh Yadav has given

tickets to five members of his

family in the current election.

He said that while Akhilesh is

contesting from Kannauj and

his wife Dimple Yadav is in

fray from Mainpuri, Akshay Yadav, Aditya Yadav, and

Dharmendra Yadav, all three

his family members, are contenders from Firozabad,

Singh, in his address, also said reservations along religious lines is not possible under the constitution.
"Of course, there is a

provision for quotas for the backward classes and those Muslim sections of population that are lagging behind are covered under the same," he said.

"Muslims should also understand our motive behind illegalising triple talaq. How can one tolerate such a practice which had inflicted untold miseries upon so many Muslim sisters and daughters? We took action without worrying about electoral consequences. I am glad to see that our stand against triple talaq has also been appreciated by many defence Muslims," the minister said.

NDA was on course to achieve its target of 400-plus



Lok Sabha seats, and "a beginning" has been made in where the BJP te got elected candidate unopposed, and in Indore, where the Congress nominee withdrew his nomination papers and joined the saffron

the opposition is Now, Singh also claimed that the crying hoarse that this would imperil democracy. Let me you

Independence, at least 28 candidates have got elected unopposed. Twenty of them belonged to the Congress and two were from its ally Samajwadi Party," Singh said, without elaborating.

He also said the grand old party would soon become extinct "like dinosaurs" and "future generations would have to be told that something called the Congress existed".

"Mahatma Gandhi wanted the party to be disbanded. It seems the party is being cursed by his soul," Singh said. The defence minister said he did "not wish to speak against anybody who has been the prime minister since it involved an institution and not just an individual", while drawing a contrast between the rule of Modi and Congress PMs since Congress Jawaharlal Nehru.

polling stations where the

upper limit of 1,500 electors

The highest number of

auxiliary polling stations (50)

Meanwhile, the CEO noted that 12,438 polling stations

out of the total have been

identified as critical while

proposed for 29,897 or 64

percent of the polling

has

been

have been added Visakhapatnam district.

has been breached.

webcasting

stations.

"I do not say that those in our ranks have been consecrated with milk. But, whenever somebody is found guilty of any wrongdoing, the BJP-led NDA has not shied away from

getting rid of tainted elements," asserted Singh. The senior BJP leader lauded his Bihar ally, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who heads the JD(U), saying, "You may have many grievances against him, but you cannot say that he is corrupt. In contrast, you have the RJD, which has been most notorious with regard to its track record on corruption, while in power".

"Beware of parties like the RJD, which want to take you back to the age of the lantern, and set up cow sheds doubling up as schools," said Singh, referring to the opposition party's poll symbol and a scheme launched by its president Lalu Prasad in the 1990s, when he was the chief minister of Bihar.

He also claimed that under Modi, the global standing of India has grown, citing the willingness of Russia and Ukraine to halt the war for a few hours to facilitate return of students. "Also, unlike in the past,

terrorists cannot strike at will as we have made known that India will hit back, even going across the border, if the need arises," the defence minister said.

He also alleged that the decade-long tenure Singh Manmohan marked by stagnation.

But, Modi worked a miracle. We have jumped to the fifth spot and experts around the world agree that we are poised

to be among the top three by 2027," said Singh, who also pointed organisations like the IMF say we have brought out 25 crore people from the of poverty,
which the clutches something Congress could not achieve despite slogans of 'garibi hatao"

Referring to the advocacy of inheritance tax by Sam Pitroda "an advisor of the Congress' top leadership who also heads the party's overseas wing", the former BJP president asked, "Do you want such a system to be in place?". The Union minister also

stressed on Modi's welfare initiatives, touching upon the 'Jan Dhan' scheme, and the proposal to bring "all people aged over 70 years, whether poor or not", under the Ayushman Bharat Yojana. We also intend to provide

300 units of electricity, free of charge, to every household through rooftop solar panels," Singh added.

Dharmendra Pradhan files nomination from Sambalpur

PTI ■ SAMBALPUR (ODISHA)

B^{JP} leader and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who filed his nomination from Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat in Odisha on Thursday, expressed confidence that his party will win not only the general elections but also the assembly polls in the state. Returning to the electoral fray

after 15 years, 54-year-old Pradhan visited Samaleswari Temple here in the morning to seek blessings. He then participated in a two-hour-long road show from the temple to the DC office where he filed the nomination.

'There is a demand for change in Odisha and the BJP is determined to win not only the Lok Sabha polls but also the upcoming Assembly elections in the State," he told

This election is for Modi's mission, not ambition, says PM; dares Congress to restore Article 370

PTI ■ JUNAGADH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the ongoing Lok Sabha elections were not for satisfying his personal ambitions, but for fulfilling his "mission."

A strong and government was important not only for the country but also for the world, he said at a poll rally in Junagadh in Gujarat.

"These elections are not for my ambition, as people have fulfilled that ambition in 2014. The 2024 elections are for Modi's mission," the PM said. Accusing the opposition

Congress of having a "dangerous mentality", Modi said its manifesto is written in the language of Muslim League. For Congress, this election was all about saving its existence and the party was taking help of its "Mazhabi vote bank" to stay afloat, the prime minister claimed.

In his address, he challenged the Congress to restore Article 370 in Jammuabolish Kashmir, Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the law that bans triple talaq.

"I have buried Article 370. It is gone now. I want to challenge the Congress' royal family and its 'shehzada' (a jibe at the Gandhi family and Rahul Gandhi) that if it is your hidden agenda, then come out in the open and tell people you will restore Article 370," he said. "I want to see how much

courage they (Congress) have to insult the Constitution drafted by Babasaheb Ambedkar. You (Congress) will fail because this (standing in your way) is Modi," the PM asserted. Referring to the controversy surrounding the Katchatheevu island, he said during the Congress rule, the Union Government had no idea about the exact number of islands India had.

done and found that we have 1,300 islands. Some of them are as big as Singapore. We will develop some of them for tourism purposes," said Modi. A Congress leader had "I then got a satellite survey

spoken recently separating South India and forming a new nation, while those in the Opposition INDIA Bloc also make The Congress just does not statements on similar lines, he care and had given away

said. "Congress leaders have inherited this mentality of partition. It was the Congress which accepted the country's partition for the sake of power," he said.

The Congress had gifted Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka nearly 30 years ago as it was their personal property, he said. "If Sardar Patel was not present, Junagadh would have gone to Pakistan. The Congress will create a dangerous situation for the country if it comes to power. They may give away the Kutch desert claiming no one

lives there," he said.

several uninhabited islands, the PM pointed out, adding "if given a free hand" that party will "sell off the Himalayan peaks".

Attacking Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge over a recent remark pertaining to Lord Ram and Lord Shiva, the PM said the opposition party had declared this election is a fight against Lord Ram.

The Congress president said his objective was to defeat Lord Ram and that Lord Shiva will defeat Lord Ram. What are they thinking? The Mughals destroyed Ram Temple in Ayodhya and Somnath Temple with this same mentality," the PM Speaking about reservation for Muslims, Modi said after Independence it was decided following deliberations that religionbased quotas would not be

Those deliberations went on

asserted.

for months. And no BJP or RSS leader was in the picture. Learned Congress leaders as well as Babasaheb Ambedkar took part in the discussion. After deliberations, they decided reservation will not be granted on the basis of religion," he said. The Congress now wants to snatch such quota and give it to others, Modi said.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Voter inertia

Low turnout in early phases of Lok Sabha polls is a cause of concern for parties, EC and democracy

The lukewarm voter response in the first two phases of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections raises several questions about the underlying reasons for their apathy. Is the weather a deterrent, or is it disillusionment with governance, scepticism towards nominees/parties, or lack of faith in electoral procedures like Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)? Indeed, there is a pressing need to rekindle voter enthusiasm and participation in the electoral process. An initial speculation regarding low turnout often points to adverse weather conditions. The scorching heat can indeed discourage voters, especially in regions prone to extreme climates. However, while the weather may play a role, it is seldom the sole determinant of voter participation. A more substantial factor contributing to voter apathy lies in the prevailing disillusionment with governance. Citizens, disappointed by unfulfilled promises, rampant corruption and inefficient administration, often perceive their votes as inconsequential. This disenchantment can lead to voter iner-



tia, where individuals feel disengaged from the political process altogether. Also, scepticism towards parties and their nominees exacerbates voter apathy. In an era marked by populism, polarisation and political opportunism, many voters struggle to identify with candidates or parties that truly represent their interests. The prevalence of dynastic politics and candidate selection based on nepotism only deepens this distrust. The leaders' conduct leaves much to be desired. Many times, they switch sides making a mockery of the voters' decision. Sometimes even the party the voters voted for joins hands with its arch-rival. In such scenarios, voters have reasons to feel cheated.

As if all this were not enough, there are doubts about the efficacy of the electoral process itself. Many people are given to doubt the machinery employed, including the EVMs. The introduction of EVMs was hailed as a milestone in ensuring transparent and efficient elections. However, over time, scepticism and conspiracy theories surrounding EVMs have proliferated, eroding public trust in the process. Allegations of tampering, malfunctioning machines and lack of transparency in EVMs handling have sowed the seeds of doubt in the minds of voters. Their perceived vulnerability to hacking or manipulation, coupled with the absence of a paper trail for verification, has fuelled apprehensions about the sanctity of elections. In such an environment, restoring faith in electoral procedures becomes imperative to bolster voter confidence. The situation turned so grave that the matter was taken to the Supreme Court. On this front, introducing measures such as VVPATs alongside the EVMs can go a long way in rebuilding voters' trust. Indeed, it would take an effort by the Election Commission as well as the political class to instil a sense of confidence among people that their vote is sacrosanct. By demonstrating integrity and a genuine commitment to serving the public interest, political parties can rebuild the trust with for-now disillusioned voters.



People visit the seafront on a hot summer day, in Mumbai

Upholding the Fourth Estate in digital age



In an era marred by misinformation, censorship and threats to journalists, the celebration of press freedom assumes greater significance than ever before

should have a Government without newspapers, or newspapers without a Government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter - Thomas

Every year on May 3rd, the world comes together to celebrate World Press Freedom Day, a day dedicated to honouring the fundamental principles of press freedom, defending the independence of the media and paying tribute to journalists who risk their lives to report the truth. In an era marked by misinformation, censorship and threats to journalists worldwide, this day holds more significance than ever. Press freedom is the cornerstone of democracy. It empowers citizens by providing them with access to diverse viewpoints and information, enabling them to make informed decisions. A free press serves as a watchdog, holding Governments and powerful entities accountable for their actions. It acts as a voice for the voiceless, bringing attention to social injustices and human rights violations.

Despite the crucial role they play, journalists around the world face numerous challenges in their pursuit of truth. They encounter threats, harassment and violence, both online and offline. Many journalists risk imprisonment or even death for daring to report on sensitive issues. Censorship, propaganda and attacks on press freedom have become increasingly prevalent, hindering the ability of journalists to fulfil their vital role in society. World Press Freedom Day. Since 1993, it has been observed globally to honour a declaration made by African journalists in Windhoek, Namibia, in 1991. It commemorates press freedom principles and acknowledges journalists' courage. UNESCO awards the Guillermo Cano Prize to those

preserving press freedom. While technology has revolutionised the way information is disseminated, it has also present- with journalists being arrested new challenges for press free-dom. Social media platforms ed, newspapers censored and the Government exerting tight have become powerful tools for control over media outlets.



spreading information, but they have also been weaponised to spread misinformation and silence dissenting voices. Journalists must navigate through a digital landscape fraught with fake news and online harassment, often at great personal risk. India, home to one of the world's largest and most vibrant media landscapes, has faced scrutiny in recent years regarding its press freedom record. According to the World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), India's ranking has seen fluctuations. In the 2023 index, India was placed at 163 out of 180 countries, indicating significant challenges to press freedom within the country.

'When asked to bend, the media crawled. And when asked to crawl, it cringed."This statement was made by Advani in the context of the Indian media's behaviour during the Emergency period (1975-1977), imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. During this time, press freedom faced severe restrictions,

PRESS FREEDOM IS

THE CORNERSTONE OF A DEMOCRACY. IT **EMPOWERS** CITIZENS BY PROVIDING THEM WITH ACCESS TO **DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS AND** INFORMATION, **ENABLING THEM TO** MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS Advani's quote reflects his criticism of how certain sections of the media capitulated to Government pressure and failed to uphold journalistic integrity and independence. It suggests that instead of resisting unjust demands or censorship, some media outlets complied with the Government's wishes, even to the point of degradation. This quote serves as a reminder of the importance of a free and independent press in holding those in power accountable and safeguarding democracy. It highlights the need for journalists to remain vigilant in upholding the principles of press freedom, especially in times of political turmoil or authoritarian rule. British politician Edmund Burke is often credited with coining the term in the late 18th century, referring to the gallery of the House of Commons as the fourth estate, symbolising the press's influence on political affairs. The term "fifth estate" underscores the transformative role of social media in democratising access to information, enabling public discourse and chal-lenging established institu-

empower users to share news opinions and perspectives instantaneously, bypassing traditional gatekeepers of infor-

On World Press Freedom Day, we must reaffirm our commitment to defending press freedom and protecting journalists worldwide. Governments must uphold the principles of free speech and ensure the safety of journalists within their borders. Civil society plays a crucial role in advocating for press freedom and holding those who seek to suppress it accountable. Media organisations must continue to strive for independence, transparency and ethical journalism, even in the face of adversity. World Press Freedom Day is also a day to celebrate the courage and resilience of journalists who risk their lives to report the truth. It is a day to honour those who have faced persecution, imprisonment and even death for their commitment to upholding the principles of press freedom. Their dedication serves as a reminder of the invaluable guarding democracy and pro-

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

Time to curb fake videos in elections



Of course, technological

development has taken place

rapidly in the world in the last

few decades. The increasing

use of digital platforms has

made life easier and faster, but

along with this benefit, some

serious risks related to cyber

security are also coming to

the fore. With the boundless

nature of cyberspace, the

threats associated with it and

A deepfake video of Union Home Minister Amit Shah sparks outrage during the Lok Sabha election campaign

◄he ongoing Lok Sabha election campaign has suddenly taken a very ugly turn after a fake video involving Union Home Minister Amit Shah has surfaced. Accusations and counter-accusations are common during campaigns and are not considered harmful. However, it is unacceptable for anyone or political party to resort to using 'deep fake' technology to release fake videos against their opponents to win elections.

In a recent case, the country's Home Minister, Amit Shah, has become a victim of 'deepfake' technology. Amit Shah delivered a speech at a BJP election rally in Siddipet, Medak district of Telangana on April 25. The video of this speech was allegedly tampered with and shared on social media. Fact checks have proven this video to be

completely fake. In this fake video, Amit Shah is allegedly seen announcing the abolishment of reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC). Now, imagine if someone could abolish the

above-mentioned classes in the country. It is an impossible thing.

In reality, an old video of Amit Shah has been edited, in which he was talking about ending Muslim reservations. In this original video, ST and ST have been added in place of Muslims. However, the question arises as to how the fake video may look exactly like the real one.

Fake videos are created with the help of software. As we know, the use of machine learning and artificial intelligence tools has increased in the market these days. In this technology, the tone and voice of a person are captured with the help of machine

learning. In fact, with the help of new technology, the face of a person who is not even a part of reservations provided to the that video is fitted into the Mumbai.

video. It is difficult to tell the difference between real and fake in a video manipulated through this technique.

Whoever leader or political party created and released fake videos showing Amit Shah announcing the abolishment of reservations, how serious an act they have committed to spreading hatred in A complaint has been lodged

by Prateek Karpe, an office bearer of BJP's Mumbai unit, at Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) Cyber Police Station. The complaint states that a deepfake video of Amit Shah was created, posted and shared on the internet, to defame BJP leader Amit Shah. The complainant also requested the police to immediately remove the fake video and register a case against those accused who allegedly shared it to create enmity and hatred among various castes. Based on the complaint, a

case has been registered

against the social media han-

dle of Maharashtra Youth

Congress and 16 others under

various sections of the IPC

and IT Act at Bandra-Kurla

Cyber Police Station in

the deceitful methods and tools of cyber criminals, the trend of cyber-attacks is constantly changing. Apart from this, terrorism and fundamentalism are also finding shelter in cyberspace. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Cybersecurity is no longer limited to the digital world.

It has become a matter of national security." Cyberspace has become the new battleground. The Government must take strict action against these elements. Meanwhile, one only hopes that the authorities concerned would curb the menace of deep fake videos sooner rather than later with an iron hand.

(The writer is a senior journalist and author of two books; views are personal)

EMPOWERING VISUAL NARRATIVES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "A picture is worth a thousand words," published on May 1, this is my response. The depiction of sexual violence against women in the media often portrays them as helpless victims, reinforcing stigma and shame. Ankita Anand, a survivor herself, challenged this narrative by spearheading a campaign urging media outlets to rethink their imagery. Instead of portraying women as passive victims, she advocated for images that reflect their resilience and agency. Anand's efforts, along with initiatives like the image bank by the Hri Institute, mark a significant step in reshaping visual narratives around gender-based

violence. Through campaigns like "I Never Ask For It," survivors are reclaiming their stories, using mediums like textiles to challenge societal attitudes towards gender-based violence. These initiatives underscore the transformative power of imagery in shaping public perception and fostering empathy. Ultimately, the portrayal of sexual violence in the media should prioritise dignity and empowerment, amplifying the voices of survivors and challenging ingrained biases. It's a collective responsibility to ensure that visual narratives reflect the strength and resilience of those affected, rather than perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

Rian Mehta | Chandigarh

bilateral relations.

CHINA'S SHADOW POLITICS Madam — Apropos the news article, "Why is the BJP avoiding China in campaigning?" published on May 1, this is my response. The discourse surrounding China in Indian politics is a delicate dance where words and actions are carefully measured. While the former Army Chief's blunt assessment of China as India's primary threat is refreshing, it also underscores the gravity of the situation. The recent revelations about the India-China confrontation shed light on systemic failures and diplomatic intricacies shaping

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR **India's semiconductor mission**

tions and power structures.

Social media platforms

propos the news article, "Semicon ecosystem: A revolution in India," published on May 1, this is my response. The surge of semiconductor development in India marks a pivotal juncture in our technological evolution. As our reliance on technology deepens, so does the significance of these minuscule chips, which power everything from smartphones to space missions. India's strategic vision to foster a robust semiconductor ecosystem is commendable, as evi-

The Government's cautious approach, aiming for diplomatic disengagement while hinting at alternative alliances reflects the complexity of the issue. However, the opacity surrounding critical events like the Kailash Heights incident raises questions about political oversight and decision-making during times of crisis. As the election rhetoric tiptoes around recent confrontations, focusing instead on historical grievances, individuals like Naravane risk overshadowing the valorous efforts. Amidst the political manoeuvring, one thing remains clear: addressing the China challenge requires strategic foresight and resolute

Zara Khan | Mumbai

DANCE UNITES PEOPLE Madam — Apropos the news article, "Celebrating the Universal Language of Dance," published on April 30, this is my response. Dance is a lot more than just body movements. It is a universal language that speaks to the soul. By using dance as a tool for change, you can turn your passion into a powerful force for social good.

denced by ambitious projects and partnerships aimed at reducing import dependency and fostering innovation. Initiatives like the India Semiconductor Mission and skill development programmes underscore a concerted effort to nurture indigenous talent and infrastructure. Geopolitical shifts, especially amidst the China-US trade tensions, offer a timely opportunity for India to emerge as a preferred destination for semiconductor manufacturing.

However, challenges persist, particularly in bridging the skill gap and accessing advanced technology. Collaborations with global leaders and initiatives to attract talent back to India are steps in the right direction. The road ahead is promising, with India poised to not only meet its self-sufficiency goals but also emerge as a global leader in semiconductor innovation, contributing significantly to economic growth.

Advait Rao | Bengaluru

The wonderful aspect of dance is its ability to speak volumes without uttering a sin-

It is a great way to share one's passion for dance, impart new skills and foster a sense of unity. One of the greatest strengths of dance is its finesse and ability to touch people emotionally. Remember, every little step counts when it comes to making a difference through dance. Dance comes in many forms, from ballet to hip-hop and from contemporary to folk. A talented dancer will naturally embrace all these styles and weave them into choreography. This not only enriches the dancer's performance but also acknowledges the global tapestry of dance. A dance community is a great space for everyone, regardless of their age, race and gender. After all, diversity is the lifeblood of creativity. Said John Dryden, the literary critic and an accomplished poet from England: "Dancing is the poetry of

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

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FIRST COLUMN

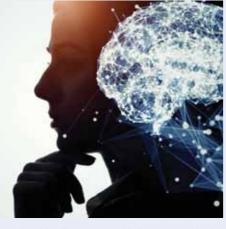
THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL **INTELLIGENCE**

The mastery of emotions is a pivotal factor in shaping success and fulfilment



n a busy world, as individuals navigate through various personal and professional challenges, their ability to understand and manage emotions plays a critical role in determining success, well-being and overall fulfilment. It is the emotions that shape how individuals interact, communicate, lead and innovate, thereby ultimately driving organisational success and fostering a positive work culture. Often it is found that much of an individual's behaviour is the result of emotions. However, these emotions are not a great guide to how one should behave in challenging situations. That is why identifying and working through them helps make better decisions. Feelings and needs are intertwined and knowing one helps an individual understand the other. it is the feelings that are the gateway into what health needs are thereby, promoting the individual to take appropriate action and enabling the self to grow and heal. If one is not in touch with their feelings, one may end up not knowing what they need which may further lead to indecision or emotional outbursts and the same is being faced in today's scenario be it the corporate world or the world of education.

The importance of emotional intelligence cannot be overstated in this fast-paced and interconnected world. At the workplace, what forms the utmost need is the combination of self-awareness, emotional intelligence, effective communication and a supportive work environment. By implementing such strategies, organisations can foster a culture where employees feel empowered to manage their emotions positively, leading to increased productivity, job satisfaction and overall well-being. Emotional intelligence positively correlates with job satisfaction. Employees with higher emotional intelligence are more satisfied with their jobs, as it fosters purpose, belonging and commitment.



Employees with high emotional intelligence excel in interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution and adaptability, while emotionally intelligent leaders inspire trust, motivate teams and cultivate a positive work environment. By promoting emotional well-being, organisations optimise employee performance and achieve better business outcomes. Recognising the importance of emotional well-being, organisations implement initiatives to support employees' mental health be it wellness programmes, counselling services or flexible work arrangements. Stressreducing activities, workload management, work-life balance and emotional validation can reduce absenteeism, turnover and healthcare costs, promoting a healthier and more resilient workforce.

Organisations should look for silver linings or alternative perspectives that can help reframe the situation in a more positive light, for emotionally intelligent employees can bounce back from failures, learn from setbacks and thrive in the face of uncertainty. By practicing self-compassion, focusing on strengths and investing in ongoing learning and skill development to enhance competence and confidence, can an individual effectively manage challenging emotions in the workplace and foster a more positive and productive work environment.

Remember, a workplace that acknowledges and supports the emotional needs of employees can promote mental health, reduce stress and prevent burnout. Emotions are not only inevitable but the most essential ingredient in the workplace. Recognising them and then cultivating them can lead to a more engaged, collaborative and resilient workforce which will ultimately contribute to the organisation's success and sus-

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

AFSPA repeal: A step towards 'Naya Kashmir'



Amit Shah's proposal to repeal AFSPA in J&K could restore normalcy, but it must consider the broader implications and evolving security of the region



ecently, the Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the Centre will consider the removal of AFPSA in J&K. This statement assumes significance as it reflects the Government's vision towards J&K and most importantly Prime Minister's promise of Naya Kashmir. Soon, after the Lok Sabha elections, the focus will be panned towards J&K as the Union Territory is scheduled to go for polls in September this year. After abrogating article 370, the Government seems to turning towards solving another long-standing conundrum in J&K- AFSPA. At the security and strategic level, this attempt will accelerate the cleaning of Pakistan's propaganda by cleaning up their psychological warfare designs in J&K and will provide full throttle for holistic development. Before the Government sets its approach, it must see the bigger picture

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act gives sweeping powers to armed forces (which also extends to CAPF under Section 2) and most significantly provides them legal immunity for their actions under Section / of the act. However, the Supreme Court in 2016 struck down this blanket protection from prosecution. The Supreme Court said "It does not matter whether the victim was a common person or a militant or a terrorist, nor does it matter whether the aggressor was a common person or the state. The law is the same for both and is equally applicable to both". The sweeping powers under Section 4 of the act include , Arrest without warrant,

·2. Fire (After due warning) upon or use other kinds of force even if it causes death, against the person who is acting against law or order in the disturbed area for the maintenance of public order.

·3. To enter and search any premises in order to make such arrests, or to recover any person wrongfully restrained or any arms, ammunition or explosive substances and

·4. Stop and search any vehicle or vessel reasonably suspected to be carrying such person or weapons. The AFSPA debate stems from two perspectives first is security necessity and second is cases of extrajudi-



THE IMPOSITION

OF AFSPA IN THE STATE OR UT ITSELF EXPLAINS THAT THE STATE HAS ALMOST LOST ITS CAPACITY TO **DEAL WITH THE** SITUATION AND WHEN THE STATE LOSES ITS CAPACITY, IT MEANS THAT THE ADVERSARY OR ANY ADVERSE SITUATION WILL SOON GRIP THE STATE, LEADING TO MAYHEM AND A BREAKDOWN OF

cial killings in the Northeast. The most debatable part is the second one which has made this act controversial. In 2004, a thorough review of the act of was done by the Justice Jeevan Reddy Commission which concluded that the act should be repealed and observed that "agitations such as in Manipur and elsewhere are merely the symptoms of a malaise, which goes much deeper" and called on the Government to address the "core issues.". However, the importance of National security somehow gets shadowed by a few cases of misuse of the act.

Call for AFSPA comes under extraordinary situations which if not controlled or mitigated can result in serious consequences from the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990, 1986 Kashmir riots killing 2000 2000 people primarily Hindus, Sopor firings in January 1993 killing 40 people to Bij Behara firings in October 1993 killing 60 people. Such horrifying incidents need stringent measures in place and a certain amount of free pass to operate efficiently. "We feel that by revoking special legal provisions, which are in place here, definitely our operational capabilities will be compromised," General Officer Command (GOC) of Army's Srinagar-based 15 Corps Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain said in 2011. To deal with a situation that is spiralling out day by day in a state requires effective operational dominance over the adversary which can only be possible if armed forces can freely operate.

The imposition of AFSPA in the state or UT itself explains that the state has almost lost its capacity to deal with the situation and when the state loses its capacity then it means that the adversary or any adverse situation will soon grip the state leading to mayhem and breakdown of

breakdowns are not ordinary and demand extreme measures and interventions to normalise and any constraints in intervention will affect the normalisation process therefore to let "normalisation" progress an effective emergency response mechanism is required which AFSPA provides. A call for the removal of AFPSA should only come when the security environment is significantly improved or secured as hurried removal might bring back the old situation. The case of a fresh wave of radicalisation in 2018 in J&K after the killing of terror poster boy Burhan Wani is one incidence where a cautious decision must be made to decide the removal of AFSPA.

AFSPA is not immune; it has its limitations and misuses. For example, the Nagaland case in 2021 of killing innocent 14 civilians or the 1995 Kohima Massacre where 16th Rasthtriya Rifiles fired upon civilians mistaking the sound of the tyre dursting for a domb attack killing 7 and injuring 36. The free pass or the freeness in the name of operational efficiency or capabilities has also led to some serious consequences which are eroding the primary objective of the act. The AFSPA Act is in place to mitigate the extreme situation in the state and to aggravate it. Such incidents aggravate the situation and further complicate the situation in a state. Therefore, these immunities either required a removal or needed a proper check to put caution in the exercise of powers by the armed forces which later was done by the Supreme Court in 2016.

AFSPA cannot stay for long as extraordinary or exceptional situations are temporary and once under control, AFSPA could be withdrawn. If it goes beyond necessity, then AFSPA's presence would hinder the normalisation process. The national security. Such situations of normalisation process does not

only include fighting with the adversary it also includes the restoration of a peaceful and harmonious environment. A state of being normal is only when the state begins to function without any constraints, fear and anxiety. AFSPA being in place distorts the state of being "normal" and rather heightens the anxiety and fear which in the long run affects the democratic ecosystem and governance in a state that might further lead to sociopolitical instability if overlooked. The case of J&K ever since the removal of Article 370 has significantly improved there was a 66 per cent drop in terror cases in J&K. The union territory has also seen a significant drop in terror recruitment under Army's Operation Sahi Raasta. According to reports only seven youth joined terror groups last

As the security environment in J&K is significantly improved, a call for the removal of AFSPA is well reasoned. Now, the CAPF presence would easily tackle any security situation if arises as the substantial threat of terror now seems to be subsiding. Like the Government withdrew AFSPA from Punjab in 1997 it should soon take a call on J&K as well, though few CAPF presence can be there considering bordering areas the operation of the act must

The removal of AFSPA will facilitate and exhort confidence and peace among people. Most importantly, eliminates the sense of fear and accelerates the pace of normalisation and developmental processes at socio-political levels. The Prime Minister's promise in Naya Kashmir lies beyond the security to society and politics which will only strengthen after the removal of AFPSA.

(The author is an Advocate based out of New Delhi, views

Engaging in the theatrics of India's electoral carnival

In the realm of political theatre, candidates await their turn in the merry-go-round of power, setting the stage with tension and anticipation

n anticipation of the 18th Lok Sabha elections in ■ India, political parties have fervently engaged in pre-electoral activities, including candidate selection, issue advocacy and public discourse-all these, much before the official announcement by the Election Commission (scheduled from April 19 to June 1, 2024). Of particular significance is the burgeoning cohort of 18 million first-time voters, who observe the electoral spectacle with keen interest as parties vie for their support by proffering ambitious pledges. Within this theatrical milieu, the composition of the Lok Sabha, comprising 543 parliamentary constituencies nationwide, assumes paramount importance. Each constituency plays a pivotal role in



electing a singular representative, who assumes the mantle of voicing their constituents' concerns within the Lower House of Parliament. Thus, amidst the cacophony of democratic fervour, the formation of the (18th) Lok Sabha emerges as a focal point, embodying the democratic ethos and the intricacies of electoral representation within India's diverse polity - as we witness this chaotic carnival

(read dance) of democracy. Now picture this: Rallies echoing with rehearsed oratory; meetings buzzing with the monotonous drone of 'scripted' discourse; and the landscape littered with towering hoardings and captivating advertisements—all vying for attention like desperate contestants in a reality TV show. Each candidate, eagerly awaits their fate in this grandiose spectacle, hoping to shine bright enough to avoid being relegated to the shadows of political obscurity. But, as they say, once a politician, always a politician.

This grand orchestra of democracy will see nearly a billion people herded like cattle into over a million polling booths, expected to cast their votes in a choreographed charade to determine the future Government.

In the realm of electoral politics, politicians assume the role of adept illusionists, skillfully concocting promises tailored to captivate the electorate. Through artful rhetoric, they conjure visions of development and inclusivity, appealing to voters' emotions despite the potential disparity with reality. Parties engage in a theatrical spectacle, donning elaborate garb and competing for attention with promises of infrastructure, welfare and prosperity. However, voters' decisions ultimately reflect both their susceptibility and the manipulative prowess of politicians. This electoral charade underscores the complex interplay between rhetoric, perception

and voter agency in contemporary democratic processes. Here past performances mat-

NATIONAL

SECURITY

Enter the Narendra Modi Government, riding high on the waves of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, with a later addition of 'Sabka Prayas'. Since 2014, the Modi administration has been pulling rabbits out of hats faster than a magician from electrifying villages to construction of toilets across the country in a bid to make India defecation-free, to digitising governance (Digital India), Startup India and standing up for the people and the world during emergencies like Covid19. Of course, like any good magic show, there's always a healthy dose of criticism to keep things interesting - after all, what's a politi-

cal spectacle without a little touch of drama? India's diplomatic endeavours have bol-stered its global stature, marked by strategic alliances with major powers and initiatives like the International Solar Alliance, etc., fostering collaboration in trade, technology and sustainable development. Concurrently, domestic developments such as Ayushman Bharat for healthcare, Saubhagya for rural electrification, Jan-Dhan Yojana for financial inclusion and so on, underscore efforts toward inclusive progress. Nonetheless, socio-economic disparities persist, emblematic of the ongoing challenges amidst India's democratic evolution on the world stage. The Indian electoral process is

One cannot forget that in this grand symphony, the Election Commission stands as the characterised by extravagant linchpin, ensuring the sancti-

rallies, serving as vibrant

showcases of democracy

where ordinary citizens are

swept into the extraordinary

theatre of politics. Whether

attendees arrive voluntarily

or are transported en masse,

these gatherings epitomise

the essence of democratic

engagement. Amidst a back-

drop of waving flags and res-

onant slogans, the democrat-

ic spirit radiates, offering a

glimpse of both the triumphs

and tribulations of competing

political factions. Central to

this spectacle, is the tireless

efforts of party workers,

orchestrating the mobilisa-

tion of supporters for these

ty of free and fair elections despite recurrent criticisms. Imagine the stalwart veterans anxiously clinging to their phones, praying for one more display of their experience in the political limelight, while the current faces (read chosen MPs) pace like restless lions in the corridors of authority, fearing either the sweet embrace of reselection or the bitter sting of rejection. But there's nothing to fear. For

in the unpredictable world of politics, one never knows when the pendulum of fortune will favourably swing back. So, let us Vote so that the elected parties work to fulfil their manifesto.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

Police dismantle pro-Palestinian Trump calls judge 'crooked' after demonstrators' encampment facing warning of jail time demonstrators' encampment

Police removed barricades and began dismantling a pro-Palestinian demonstrators' fortified encampment early Thursday at the University of California, Los Angeles, after hundreds of protesters defied orders to leave. Some people were detained, their hands bound with zip ties.

The action came after officers spent hours threatening arrests over loudspeakers if people did not disperse. A crowd of more than 1,000 had gathered on campus, both inside a barricaded tent encampment and outside it, in support. Protesters and police shoved and scuffled as officers encountered resistance. With police helicopters hovering, the sound of flashbangs, which produce a bright light and a loud noise to disorient and stun people, pierced the air. Protesters chanted, "Where were you last night?" at the officers, in reference to Tuesday night, when counter-protesters attacked the encampment and the UCLA administration and campus police took hours to respond.

Tent encampments of protesters calling on universities to stop doing business with Israel or companies they say support the war in Gaza have spread across campuses nationwide in a student movement unlike any other this century. The ensuing police crackdowns echoed actions decades ago against a much larger protest movement protesting the Vietnam War. In the Mideast Iranian state television carried live images of the police action as did Qatar's pan-Arab Al Jazeera satellite network. Live images of Los Angeles also played across Israeli television networks, as well. California Highway Patrol offi-

cers poured into the campus by the hundreds early Thursday. Wearing face shields and protective vests, they stood with their batons protruding out to separate them from demonstrators, who wore helmets and gas masks and chanted, "You want peace. We want justice." Police methodically ripped apart the encampment's barricade of plywood, pallets, metal fences and trash dumpsters.

Will Israel end war without group's destruction?



Demonstrators gather on the UCLA campus, after nighttime clashes between Pro-Israel and Pro-Palestinian

Beirut (AP): Hamas on Thursday was considering the latest proposal for a cease-fire with Israel that the United States and other mediators hope will avert an Israeli attack on the Gaza town of Rafah. But chances for the deal are entangled with the question of whether Israel can accept an end to the war without reaching its stated goal of destroying

The stakes in the cease-fire negotiations were made clear in a new UN report that said if the war in Gaza stops today, it will still take until 2040 to rebuild all the homes that have been destroyed by nearly seven months of Israeli bombardment and ground offensives in the territory.

It warned that the impact of the damage to the economy will set back development for generations and will only get worse with every month fighting continues. Hamas has insisted it won't sign onto the deal without assurances that, if it eventually releases all its hostages, Israel will end its onslaught in Gaza and pull its troops out of the territory.

The proposal that US and Egyptian mediators have put to Hamas -- apparently with Israel's acceptance — sets out a three-stage process that will bring an immediate six-week cease-fire and partial hostage release but also negotiations over a "permanent calm" that includes some sort of Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, according to an Egyptian official.

If Israel does agree to end the war in return for a full hostage release, it would be a major turnaround. Since Hamas' bloody Oct. 7 attack stunned Israel, its leaders have vowed not to stop their bombardment and ground offensives until the militant group is destroyed. They also say Israel must keep a military presence in Gaza and security control after the war to ensure Hamas doesn't rebuild.

Publicly at least, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to insist that is the only acceptable

He has vowed that even if a cease-fire is reached, Israel will eventually attack Rafah which he says is Hamas' last stronghold in Gaza. He repeated his determination to do so in talks on Wednesday with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who was in Israel on a regional tour to push the deal

The deal's immediate fate hinges on whether Hamas will accept uncertainty over the final phases to bring the initial six-week pause in fighting and at least postpone what it is feared would be a devastating assault on Rafah, Gaza's south ernmost town where some 1.4 million Palestinians have taken

Egypt has been privately assuring Hamas that the deal will mean a total end to the war. But the Egyptian official said Hamas says the text's language is too vague and wants it to specify a complete Israeli pullout from all of Gaza. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to talk about the internal deliberations.

Donald Trump returned briefly to the campaign trail Wednesday and called the judge presiding over his hush money trial "crooked" a day after he was held in contempt of court and threatened with jail time for violating a gag order. Trump's remarks at events in the battleground states of Wisconsin and Michigan were being closely watched after he received a USD 9,000 fine for making public statements about people connected to the criminal case. In imposing the fine for posts on Trump's Truth Social account and campaign website, Judge Juan M. Merchan said that if Trump continued to violate his orders, he would "impose an incarceratory punishment." There is no crime. I have a crooked judge. He's a totally conflicted judge," Trump said speaking to supporters at an event in



again that this and other cases against him are led by the White House to undermine his campaign. The gag order bars him from making public statements about witnesses, jurors and some others connected to his hush money case. Trump is still free to criticise Merchan.

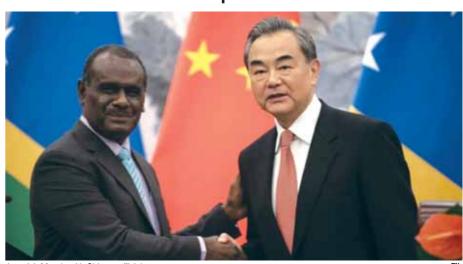
The former president is trying to achieve a balancing act unprecedented in American history by running for a second term as the while also fighting felony charges in New York. Trump frequently goes after Merchan, prosecutors and potential witnesses at his ral-lies and on social media, attack lines that play well with his sup-porters but that have potentially put him in further legal jeopardy. Trump insists he is merely exercising his free speech rights, but the offending posts from his Truth Social account and campaign website were taken down. Merchan is weighing other alleged gag-order violations and will hear arguments on Thursday. Trump has often called this case and other criminal cases against him "election interference," saying they keep him from campaigning for the presidential election in November. Attendees agreed he is being unfairly prosecuted, contending the trial and gag order were designed to dis-

Hartford. Hanson said he expected Trump's lawyers would "keep him in line" so he doesn't violate the gag order, as much as he likely wants to talk about the trial. Manhattan prosecutors have argued Trump and his associates took part in an illegal scheme to influence the 2016 presidential campaign by purchasing and then burying negative stories. He has pleaded not guilty. Trump's visits to Wisconsin and

Michigan mark his second trip to the swing states in just a month. For the previous rallies, the for-mer president largely focused on immigration, referring to people who are in the US illegally and who are suspected of crimes as "animals." Meanwhile, Democrats are hoping to remind voters ahead of these visits about Trump's position on abortion, which Trump has been openly concerned about being a political liability for him and

Solomon Islands lawmakers elect former Foreign Minister as new prime minister

Colomon Islands lawmakers On Thursday chose former Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manale as the new prime minister of the South Pacific island nation that has grown closer to China in recent years. The withdrawal of pro-Beijing former Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare from the contest to remain head of the government to make way for Manale as their party's candidate is an indication the country could follow a similar direction. The prime minister was chosen in a secret ballot of 49 lawmakers who won general elections on April Governor General David Vunagi said Manale received 31 votes. Sogavare had hoped to become the first Solomons prime minister to maintain power in consecutive four-year terms following the election. During his previous term, China's influence increased more in the Solomons than anywhere else in the South



tract him . "It's a trial looking for

a crime," said Ray Hanson, of

Jeremiah Manale with Chinese official

Sogavare switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to Beijing and struck a secret security pact that has raised fears of the Chinese navy gaining a foothold in the region. Meg Keen, the director of the Pacific Islands program for

Lowy Institute, a Sydney-based international policy think tank, said Manale will be a "less fiery and combative leader for the West to manage but he will continue to pursue close relations with China.

"As the former foreign min-

ister he helped broker the security deal with China that panicked the West. But he is also a seasoned diplomat with experience at the UN and in western countries — he's no stranger to western engagement," Keen said in an email.

Over 40% of Americans see China as enemy: Report

AP WASHINGTON

More than 40 per cent of Americans now label China as an enemy, up from a quarter two years ago and reaching the highest level in five years, according to an annual Pew Research Center survey released Wednesday.

Half of Americans think of China as a competitor, and only 6 per cent consider the country a partner, according to the report. The findings come as the Biden administration is seeking to stabilise US-China relations to avoid miscalculations that could result in clashes, while still trying to counter the world's second-largest economy on issues from Russia's war in Ukraine to Taiwan and human rights.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen have both recently visited China in the administration's latest effort to "responsibly" manage the competition with Beijing. Despite those overtures, President Joe Biden has been

competing with former American attitudes toward presumptive Republican nominee in November's election, on being tough on China. The Pew report, which is drawn from an April 1-7 survey of a sample of 3,600 US adults, found that roughly half of Americans think limiting China's power and influence should be a top US foreign policy priority. Only 8 per cent don't think it should be a priority at all. For the fifth year in a row, about eight in 10 Americans report an unfavourable view of China,

the Pew report said. "Today, 81 pe cent of US adults see the country unfavourably, including 43 per cent who hold a very unfavourable opinion. Chinese President Xi Jinping receives similarly negative rat-

ings," the report said. About eight in 10 Americans say they have little or no confidence in Xi to do the right thing regarding world affairs. About 10 per cent said they have never heard of him.

ical after the US launched a trade war against China in 2018 and since the emergence of COVID-19, which was first reported in China

Beijing's human rights record, its closeness to Russia and its policies toward Taiwan and Ĥong Kong also have left Americans with negative views of the country, according to Pew's previous analyses.

At the same time, the US government has been overt about competing with China on economic and diplomatic issues. Following that, 42 per cent of Americans say China is an enemy of the US, the highest level since 2021, when Pew began asking the question. The share is much larger among Republicans and Republicanleaning independents, Pew said, with 59 per cent of them describing China as an enemy, compared with 28 per cent of Democrats and those leaning Democratic.

Norway to increase defence spending

AP ■ COPEHNAGEN

The Norwegian centre-left government said on Thursday that it wants to add 7 billion kroner (USD 630 million) to the Scandinavian country's armed forces over the next 12 years amid increased tensions in the region. The announcement came on top of plans announced last month of a "historic increase" of 600 billion kroner (USD 54 billion) in the oil-rich country's defence budget over the same period.

'We must increase the operational capability of the Armed Forces," Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, citing heightened tensions in the region as the reason for the boost.

Gahr Store said on Thursday that the combined budget increase meant that Norway would be able to reach NATO's goal of military spending of 2 per cent of each member country's GDP this year.

In 2024, the Scandinavian country's defence budget is expected to increase to 104 billion kroner (USD 9.4 billion).

Finance Minister Trygve Slagsvold Vedum called it "a strong growth" and said it was "a necessary investment to strengthen our freedom".

Gahr Store heads a coalition that includes his own social democratic Labour party and the left-leaning Centre Party. He is expected to win support for the proposal in the 169-seat Storting assembly. No date for a vote was set.

On Tuesday, party leaders in the Norwegian parliament announced that the Scandinavian country was donating 7 billion kroner to Ukraine as part of a five-year support package. That comes on top of the 75 billion kroner (USD 6.8 billion) which Norway already has said it will donate, making it one of the world's biggest donors to wartorn Ukraine.

Georgia parliament cancels session after huge protests

AP ■ TBLISI (GEORGIA)

The parliament of Georgia ■ cancelled its Thursday plenary session following massive protests against a proposed law that critics fear will stifle media freedom and endanger the country's bid for membership in the European Union. The parliament's announcement said the cancellation was connected to damage the building suffered during Wednesday protests in which police used water cannon, tear gas and pepper spray against the tens of thousands of demonstrators. The legislature on Wednesday approved a second reading of the bill that would require media and non-commercial

organizations to register as "pursuing the interests of a foreign power" if they receive more than 20% of funding from abroad. The third and final reading was

expected in mid-May and it was not clear if the cancellation of Thursday's session would affect the bill's progress. The



ruling Georgian Dream party withdrew a similar proposal last year after large crowds protested.

Protesters denounce the bill as "the Russian law" because neighboring Russia uses similar legislation to stigmatize independent news media and organizations critical of the Kremlin. Eighty-three of Georgia's 150

lawmakers approved the bill in its second reading, while 23 voted against it. Georgian President Salome

Zourabichvili, increasingly at

odds with the governing party, has criticized the bill and vowed to veto it if it is passed by Parliament.

But the governing party can overrule the veto and ask the parliamentary speaker to sign the bill into law. The EU's foreign policy arm

earlier this month also criticized Georgian Dream's decision to reintroduce the law. which it said "raises serious concerns" around media freedom in the country — something it called "crucial for the EU accession process."

New form of mpox that spreads easily found in Congo's biggest outbreak

AP ■ CONGO

ongo is struggling to con-Ctain its biggest mpox outbreak, and scientists say a new form of the disease detected in a mining town might more easily spread among people.

Since January, Congo has reported more than 4,500 suspected mpox cases and nearly 300 deaths, numbers that have roughly tripled from the same period last year, according to the World Health Organisation. Congo recently declared the outbreak across the country a health emergency. An analysis of patients hospitalised between October and January in Kamituga, eastern Congo, suggests recent genetic mutations in mpox are the result of its continued transmission in

humans; it's happening in a town where people have little contact with the wild animals thought to naturally carry the

"We're in a new phase of mpox," said Dr. Placide Mbala-Kingebeni, the lead researcher of the study, who said it will soon be submitted to a journal for publication. Mbala-Kingebeni heads a lab at Congo's National Institute of Biomedical Research, which studies the genetics of dis-

The lesions reported by most patients are milder and on the genitals, Mbala-Kingebeni said, making the disease trickier to diagnose. In previous outbreaks in Africa, lesions were mostly seen on the chest, hands and feet. He also said that the new form seems to have a lower death rate.

In a report on the global mpox situation this week, WHO said the new version of the disease might require a new testing strategy to pick up the muta-

With experts pointing out that fewer than half of people in Congo with mpox are tested, Mbala-Kingebeni said: "The risk is that unless patients themselves come forward, we will have a silent transmission of the disease and nobody will know.

Mbala-Kingebeni said most people were infected via sex, with about a third of mpox cases found in sex workers. It was not until the 2022 global emergency of mpox that scientists established the disease was spread via sex, with most cases in gay or bisexual men. In November, WHO confirmed sexual transmission of mpox in Congo for the first time.

There are two kinds, or clades, of mpox, which is related to smallpox and endemic to central and west Africa. Clade 1 is more severe and can kill up to 10 per cent of people infected. Clade 2 triggered the 2022 outbreak; more than 99 per cent of people infected sur-

Mbala-Kingebeni and colleagues said they have identified a new form of clade 1 that may be responsible for more than 240 cases and at least three deaths in Kamituga, a region with a significant transient population travelling elsewhere in Africa and beyond.

2 years after SC draft leak, abortion consuming US politics and courts

AP WASHINGTON

wo years after a leaked draft of a US Two years after a leaked didn of a Co Supreme Court opinion signalled that the nation's abortion landscape was about to shift dramatically, the issue is still consuming the nation's courts, legislatures and political campaigns — and changing the course of lives.

On Wednesday, a ban on abortion after the first six weeks of pregnancy, often before women realise they're pregnant, took effect in Florida, echoing laws in two other states.

In Arizona, meanwhile, lawmakers voted to repeal a total ban on abortion dating back to 1864, decades before Arizona became a state. Also this week, the Kansas Legislature increased funding for antiabortion centres, while advocates in South Dakota submitted the required number of signatures for a ballot measure to enshrine abortion rights in the state constitution. The status of abortion in states across the

country has changed constantly, with lawmakers passing measures and courts ruling on challenges to them. Currently, 14 states are enforcing bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy, with limited exceptions. Most Democratic-led states, meanwhile, have taken steps to preserve or expand access.

Some of it's exactly what we knew would happen," said David Cohen, a professor at the Thomas R. Kline School of Law at Drexel University who studies abortion policy, "and others have been big surprises that have put, frankly, the anti-abortion

movement on their heels". Although more than 20 states have begun enforcing abortion bans of varying degrees since the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in June 2022, studies have found that the number of monthly abortions nationally is about the same — or higher

 than it was before the ruling. Asked to weigh in on the emotional debate, voters have supported the position favoured by abortion rights advocates on

all seven statewide ballot measures since

The Supreme Court's decision in the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization case was released officially on June 24, 2022, upending nearly 50 years of abortion being legal nationwide. But the world caught a glimpse of it about six weeks earlier, on May 2, after a news outlet published a leaked draft.

"With the Dobbs decision, the will of the people is now able to be adhered to," said Stephen Billy, vice president of state affairs for Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America. He said abortion rights supporters have amplified uncertainty in laws — especially over whether abortion is allowed in medical emergencies: "They've tried to sow political division just to advance their policy agenda," he said.

At the time Politico published the leaked draft, Amanda Zurawski was undergoing fertility treatment and was about two weeks away from learning she was finally preg-

Senior PML-N leader signals possibility of early elections

Bid to pave way for Nawaz Sharif's fourth stint as PM

PTI ■ LAHORE

senior leader of the ruling APML-N party has hinted at the possibility of fresh elections in Pakistan within the next two years to pave the way for Nawaz Sharif to secure a record fourth term as prime minister, according to a media report on Thursday

Senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Javed Latif's comments came during an interview with a private TV channel.

Nawaz Sharif, 74, was all set to become prime minister for the fourth time but his party failed to get a clear majority in the National Assembly on its own in the February 8 general elec-

In a surprise move, he allowed his 72-year-old younger brother and the incumbent party president Shehbaz Sharif who is considered the favourite of the military establishment to lead a six-party coalition government at the Centre.

Latif said whether the elections take place in two or five years, Nawaz Sharif, the PML-N supremo will take the reins of power for the fourth time. He hinted that early elections

could be in the cards within the next two years to pave the way for Nawaz Sharif's fourth stint as the country's prime minister, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Pressed to explain how Nawaz Sharif could reclaim the top spot within two years, especially with his brother currently occupying it, Latif said it would be possible through elections. "The elections can happen

tomorrow," he said. Nawaz Sharif returned to Pakistan from London in October 2023 after ending his nearly four-year-long selfimposed exile, hoping to be the prime minister again.

He predicted that even those who once obstructed Nawaz Sharif's path to a fourth term as premier would now rally



He pointed out that a party a two-thirds majority often struggles to complete its term. The senior PML-N politician warned that the withdrawal of support from even one coalition party could jeopardise the current government's survival. Latif is the only remaining active party member who continues to take swipes at his own party's central government. Given the track record of his colleague Rana Sanaullah who, after throwing jabs at his own party's central government, promptly joined the same Cabinet he accused of being chosen by the establishment—many in the party view his criticism of the party as Latif's desperate attempt to bargain for a position in the government, the paper said. source within the Prime Minister's Office revealed that Sanaullah was brought into the cabinet to exert control over him. The source said he was a senior party leader and president of Punjab, adding that any

party's interests. When questioned about whether Rana Sanaullah and Ishaq Dar's appointments were decisions made by Shehbaz Sharif, he said he was not at liberty to divulge any specifics, noting that in the PML-N party, Nawaz Sharif remains the founder and his decisions reign

action against him—even if approved by Nawaz Sharif—could have been harmful to the

He said that Latif, inspired by Rana Sanaullah, might have chosen to go all out. He added that it was up to Nawaz Sharif to assess his party leaders who deviated from the party line.

Pak Military aware of its constitutional limits: Army chief

 $P_{\text{Asim Munir on Thursday}}^{\text{akistan Army chief General}}$ said the military was "well aware" of its constitutional limits and expected others to uphold the Constitution, amid allegations of the powerful army's involvement in politics and interference by the intelligence agencies in the working of the judiciary

The general, who was the chief guest at a passing out parade, said that those who flout the clear restrictions imposed on freedom of expression in the Constitution cannot point fingers at others.

We are well aware of our constitutional limits and expect others to uphold the Constitution," Gen Munir said while addressing the Pakistan Air Force's passing out parade at the Asghar Khan Academy Risalpur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

"Article 19 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan clearly defines the limits of freedom of speech and expression of opinion," he said. His remarks came two days after Pakistan's Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa said that pushing the judiciary towards taking a certain action was akin to interference in the judicial process. The top judge was referring to a letter written by six Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges on March 25, alleging interference of agencies in their matters. The apex court took suo motu notice of the letter and later several bar councils also filed petitions

The powerful army, which has ruled Pakistan for more than half of its 75-plus years of existence, has hitherto wielded considerable power in matters of security and foreign policy. However, the military has denied meddling in the coun-

and they were made parties to

the case.



try's politics

Gen Munir lauded the PAF for patrolling the airspace in all kinds of difficulties, terming the shooting down of an Indian fighter jet in February 2019 as a great example of the same. 'You are the centre of our hopes, the guardian of the skies and the guarantors of regional unity," the army chief told the cadets. Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman shot down the Pakistani F-16 jet during an aerial combat before his MiG 21 Bison aircraft was hit on February 27, 2019. He was captured by the Pakistani Army and later released on the night of March 1.

Without naming any country, Gen Munir highlighted that the arms race posed a risk of disturbing the region's balance of

"Specific technologies, including artificial intelligence, roboting, and quantum computing, and quantum computing, and provide the provide are changing the use of air power as well as expanding its scope," he noted. Gen Munir also pledged Pakistan's "moral, political and diplomatic support" to the Kashmiri people.

Verdict reserved on petition seeking transfer of Imran Khan's wife

Islamabad (PTI): A top court in Pakistan on Thursday reserved its verdict on the peti-tion filed by former prime min ister Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi requesting her transfer to the high-security Adiala Jail, where her husband is incarcerated. The 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Khan has been lodged at Adiala Jail at Rawalpindi after conviction in multiple cases while Bushra Bibi, 49, is currently jailed at Bani Gala — Khan's home in Islamabad – which was turned into a sub-jail since the couple was sentenced in the 'un-Islamic nikah' case in February. After hearing the arguments from both sides, Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) reserved the verdict in the peti-tion requesting Bushra Bibi's transfer from the Bani Gala sub-jail to the Adiala jail, The News International said.

Former first lady's lawyer Usman Gul said the process of declaring the residence as a sub-jail was completed within a few hours. The court said that the Adiala Jail Superintendent had informed that they could not accommodate Bushra Bibi as the jail was already over-crowded. "Apparently, it was already decided that she had to be transferred to Bani Gala," it added. Justice Aurangzeb posed an array of questions on declaring Bani Gala a sub-jail, asking the state counsel if its notification was prepared in a minute, The News International said further quoting the proceedings. "Don't you feel it was already decided that Bushra Bibi had to be transferred (home)? How many women have been brought to Adiala jail, after sending Bushra Bibi home?" he inquired.

The IHC judge questioned if the 141 women brought to the jail after that had lesser rights. "Why don't you send the other women home as well?" he asked. Responding to the judge, the government's lawyer said Bushra was transferred to Bani Gala due to a threat to her in jail. Justice Aurangzeb said he would be overjoyed if he was "willingly" confined to his house and questioned how a prisoner's property could be made a sub-jail without their

Pak witnessed 77 militant attacks in April: Report

 $F_{\text{March, militant attacks in}}^{\text{ollowing a brief lull in}}$ Pakistan surged once again in April, as the country experienced 77 verifiable attacks last month, a security assessment report by an Islamabad-based think-tank said.

Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) in a report said the attacks, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa particularly bearing the brunt, resulted in 70 fatalities, including 35 civilians and 31 members of security forces, Dawn News reported on Thursday.

It said four militants were killed, and 67 individuals — 32 civilians and 35 security personnel — were injured in the attacks. In comparison, March saw 56 militant attacks, resulting in 77 fatalities and 67 injuries. This indicates a 38 per cent increase in the number of militant attacks, although there was a nine per cent decline in deaths, with no change in the number of injuries. The security report also underscored

security forces in thwarting numerous potential attacks during the month. At least 55 suspected militants were killed and 12 others arrested, including individuals involved in the Basham suicide attack, marking a 55 per cent increase in militant deaths compared to

The report further said that 73 per cent of the total number of militant attacks reported in April took place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the tribal districts of the province. Fifty-six attacks were reported in the province during the previous month. The attacks killed 43 people — 26 members of security forces and 17 civilians, the report said.

The number of the injured stood at 32, with 19 members of security forces and 13 civilians with injuries. Within KPK, mainland districts saw more attacks and fatalities than tribal districts (formerly Fata). Mainland KPK witnessed 31 attacks, resulting in 25 fatalities and 10 injuries.

Khan, Lakki Marwat, Bannu, and Tank were the most affect ed, with D.I. Khan and Lakki Marwat facing seven militant attacks each, Bannu facing six, and Tank experiencing two attacks. Together, these districts accounted for 71 per cent of the attacks in mainland KPK. Additionally, Peshawar faced four attacks while Swat, Swabi, Charsadda, Shangla and Battagram experienced one attack each. In the tribal districts of KPK

(formerly Fata), PICSS recorded at least 25 attacks, resulting in 18 fatalities and 22 injuries North Waziristan, Bajaur, and South Waziristan were the most affected districts, with nine five, and four attacks reported respectively. According to the report, Balochistan faced 16 attacks, resulting in 21 fatalities, including 17 civilians and four security personnel, with 31 individuals injured. Most of these attacks occurred in the province's Baloch belt, particularly in the south and

Bad weather returns to UAE, several flights cancelled

 $H^{\text{eavy rains and thunder-storms lashed the UAE on}}$ Thursday, leading to the cancellation of several international flights, two weeks after Dubai was hit by unprecedented storms that paralysed the emirate for days.

On Wednesday, the country's National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority (NCEMA) elevated the readiness and preparedness levels of the national system to deal with the situation. While these rains are expected to be less severe than the unprecedented downpour that hit the country last month, the public is urged to take precau-

On April 14-15, extreme rainfall battered regions of the Arabian Peninsula, with Dubai experiencing the heaviest rains on record since 1949. Dubai-based Emirates airline

announced the cancellation

due to bad weather across the UAE as movements at Dubai International Airport (DXB) were reduced.

"Customers arriving or departing from Dubai airport on 2 May can expect some delays as flights are rescheduled," Emirates said in a statement. The following flights have been cancelled on May 2: EK 123/124 - between Dubai and Istanbul, EK 763/764 between Dubai and Johannesburg, EK 719/720 – between Dubai and Nairobi, Ek 921/922 - between Dubai and Cairo, EK 903/904 between Dubai and Amman, and EK 352/353 - between Dubai and Singapore (EK353 departing 3 May, 12.30 am - UAE time). The airline has also waived rebooking charges to help stranded passengers. "Based on the expected weather conditions, the Ministry of Interior recommended, in

coordination with NCEMA.

Thursday and Friday for all educational institutions, with decisions to be made by the competent authorities at the federal level and officials of local emergency management teams, in coordination with the Ministry of Education and the Emirates Schools Establishment," it said on Wednesday.

As heavy winds and light rains

lashed across the main cities, residents appeared more equipped to ride it out. Remote work systems were advised for all government and private sectors on Thursday and Friday, except for vital jobs that require presence at the workplace and those involved in response and recovery efforts. The Ministry of Interior, in coordination with NCEMA also decided to close all roads leading to areas prone to flash floods, water accumulations, and dams during the weather

Microsoft to invest USD 2.2 bn in Cloud and AI services in Malaysia

Microsoft is investing USD 2.2 billion over the next four years in Malaysia's new cloud and artificial intelligence infrastructure as well as partnering with the government to establish a national AI centre, its CEO Satya Nadella said on Thursday. It marks Microsoft's single largest investment in Malaysia, as the tech giant seeks to bolster support for AI development in the region and worldwide. "We are committed to supporting Malaysia's AI transformation and ensure it benefits all Malaysians," he said "Our investments in digital infrastructure and skilling will help Malaysian businesses, communities and developers apply the latest technology to drive inclusive economic growth and innovation across the country." Nadella on Tuesday also announced a USD 1.7 billion

investment in cloud and AI ser-

visit there as part of his centre in Thailand.

investment in Japan and USD 1.5 billion in G42, an AI firm in Abu Dhabi.

Microsoft also pledged to provide AI training for 2.5 million people in Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam by 2025. Nadella earlier met Prime

said the investment will be the key support pillar for the government's goal to enhance AI capacity in Malaysia. The new investment will include AI training for another 300,000 people, the establish-

ities and supporting the growth of Malaysia's developer commu-

Microsoft runs one of the Southeast Asia tour. On world's largest cloud computing Wednesday, he said Microsoft operations and has taken a will build its first regional data leap into artificial intelligence through its partnership with In April, the tech giant similarly unveiled a USD 2.9 billion OpenAI, developers of ChatGPT. Since then, Microsoft has integrated an AI assistant into its Microsoft Edge browser, named Copilot, helping lift its profits by 20 per cent in the

Microsoft sees Southeast Asia, with its population of over 600 million people, as a growing market and potential location Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who for more AI product development. A study held by global consulting firm Kearney said AI could contribute nearly USD 1 trillion to Southeast Asia's GDP by 2030. Indonesia is expected to capture USD 366 billion of the total and Malaysia USD 115 ment of a national AI centre of billion. Microsoft said in a statement that the investment in excellence, enhancing the Malaysia will build on its 2021 nation's cybersecurity capabil-

first quarter.

Death toll jumps to 48 in southern **China's highway**

Beijing (AP): The death toll climbed to 48 on Thursday as search efforts continued in southeastern China after a highway section collapsed in a mountainous area, sending more than 20 cars down a steep slope. Officials in the city of Meizhou said three other people were unidentified, pending DNA testing. It wasn't immediately clear if they had died which would bring the death toll to 51. Another 30 people had non-life-threatening injuries. The collapse happéned about 2 am on Wednesday after a month of heavy rains in a mountainous part of Guangdong province. Vehicles fell down the slope and sent up flames as they caught fire. The search was still ongoing, Meizhou city Mayor Wang Hui said at a late-afternoor news conference. No foreigners have been found among the victims, he said.

Russia proposes UN resolution on banning weapons in space

AP UNITED NATIONS

ussia has circulated a UN Russia has circulated a resolution calling on all countries to take urgent action to prevent putting weapons in outer space "for all time" a week after it vetoed a US-Japan resolution to stop an arms race in

The Russian draft resolution, obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press, goes further than the US-Japan proposal, not only calling for efforts to stop weapons from being deployed in outer space but for preventing "the threat or use of force in outer space," also "for all time." It says this should include deploying weapons "from space against Earth, and from Earth against objects in outer space." Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told the Security Council when he vetoed the US-Japan draft that it didn't go far enough in banning all types of weapons in

space. The vetoed resolution focused solely on weapons of mass destruction including nuclear arms, and made no mention of other weapons in

 $I\bar{t}$ would have called on all countries not to develop or deploy nuclear arms or other weapons of mass destruction in space, as banned under a 1967 international treaty that the US and Russia ratified, and to agree to the need to verify compliance.

was put to a vote on April 24, Russia and China proposed an amendment that would call on all countries, especially those with space capabilities, "to prevent for all time the placement of weapons in outer space, and the threat of use of force in outer spaces."

The vote was 7 countries in favour, 7 against, and one abstention and the amendment was defeated because it failed to

Before the US-Japan resolution

get the minimum 9 "yes" votes in the 15-member Security Council required for adoption. US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the council after the vote that Russian President Vladimir Putin has said Moscow has no intention of deploying nuclear weapons in space

"Today's veto begs the question: Why? Why, if you are following the rules, would you not support a resolution that reaffirms them? What could you possibly be hiding," she asked. "It's baffling. And it's a shame."

Putin was responding to White House confirmation in February that Russia has obtained a "troubling" antisatellite weapon capability, although such a weapon is not operational yet. Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said after casting the veto that the US-Japan resolution cherry picked weapons of mass destruction.

Lanka continues to service loans despite default

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lanka has maintained strict financial discipline while taking unpopular decisions to facilitate economic recovery and continues to service its multilateral debt despite the default announced in 2022 state minister of finance Ranjith Siyambalapitiya said on Thursday. He said USD 2.5 billion debt in 2022 and USD 2.6 billion debt in 2023 had been repaid to multilaterals such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Only the bilateral external debt payments had been suspended with the announcement of the debt default in mid-2022.

'We have maintained strict financial discipline while taking unpopular decisions to facilitate recovery, economic Siyambalapitiya Meanwhile, the official sources said the talks with sovereign bondholders to restructure about USD 46 billion debt are

being continued.

Ukrainian soldiers say rear defensive lines barely exist amid Russian advance

During pitched battles with far better-armed Russian forces, Ukrainian soldier Batyar's unit has few options. Devastating Russian aerial glide bombs that can drop up to 1.5 tons of explosives out of range of most of Ukraine's air defences are gnawing away at his men's positions in a new

Yet, to retreat carries no promise of safety — the rear defensive lines meant to give them cover barely exist, he said. Lack of ammunition is forcing the outnumbered Ukrainian soldiers to pull back, one village after another, including three surrendered on Sunday, as intense fighting roils the countryside surrounding Avdiivka nearly three months after the strategic city fell to Russia. "It's necessary to increase the pace of building fortifications

will retreat to a prepared position," said Batyar, a unit commander who gave only his military call sign in line with brigade protocols. "These fortifications are not enough."

so that when we retreat, we

Facing an outcry after Avdiivka's fall, Ukraine is rushing to build concrete-fortified trenches, foxholes, firing positions and other barricades on the front lines. But relentless Russian shelling, lack of equipment and crippling bureaucracy plague construction across vast 1,000-kilometre (600mile) front, even as a new Russian offensive looms, according to a dozen Ukrainian soldiers, government officials and construction company

Associated Press. The much awaited aid package passed by the US Congress last month is expected to help Ukraine close the firepower

directors interviewed by The

gap. But until replenishments arrive, which could take weeks, Russia will continue to exploit Ukraine's weaknesses.

program to support inclusive

DIG AND FIGHT

economic growth.

Ukraine has allocated nearly 38 billion hryvnias (USD 960 million) to build an extensive fortification network this year. Soldiers across the front line maintain that should have happened last year, when Ukraine had the upper hand in the fighting, not in the heat of bat-

Besides trenches and other barricades, the layered system includes mines and anti-tank obstacles known as "dragon's teeth", normally built in advance of fighting.

Russia's preparedness paid off during Kyiv's failed counteroffensive last summer: Ukraine's momentum was slowed in the Zaporizhzhia region by Moscow's extensive fortifica-

But Ukraine was slow to follow suit; it was not until this spring, when weather conditions improved, that any real progress was made. In March, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced Ukraine was building 2,000 kilometres (1,240 miles) of fortifications across three lines of defence.

"There was an absence of responsibility. ... People didn't understand that fortifications can save your life if you do it in advance," said Oleksandr, a deputy infantry commander with the 47th brigade in the Avdiivka area who gave only his first name in line with military rules. "Many people thought we ... wouldn't need to

prepare such lines. They didn't

expect a new Russian offen-

sive." Unlike Russia, Ukraine

does not have the option of

forcing thousands of prisoners

to do the work. That means

lines must both fight and dig their own trenches. "It's very hard to do both," Oleksandr Building the second line, 2 to

5 kilometers behind the front line and within range of Russian artillery, is the responsibility of Ukraine's poorlyresourced engineering force. The third line, at a greater distance from battle, is constructed by companies under military contracts.

The reasons for Ukraine's lack of preparedness are rooted in the years after independence when it began downsizing its military because it couldn't afford to maintain the large force inherited from the Soviet Union. Its engineering regiments were dismantled until there were only a handful left. Equipment, including excavators and plows so direly needed now, were sold off.

"We entered the war with nothing," said a serviceman in Ukrainian soldiers on the front Ukraine's engineering force, who spoke on condition of anonymity to talk openly about the lack of preparation. When he arrived to build fortifications in Ukraine's east in October, all his unit had were aging equipment from the 1960s and shovels, he said. "Accordingly, that's the kind of trenches we made."

DISCONNECTED PITS

Ukraine's lack of adequate defensive lines has helped Russia make significant military gains, and constant enemy fire hinders building.

Five commanders in Avdiivka and Chasiv Yar, which have been under relentless Russian assault, said without well-prepared positions they were unable to gain a foothold in unfamiliar terrain and defend without suffering huge losses. In Chasiv Yar, a strategic hilltop town in Donetsk, the lack of fortifications helped turn the tables in Russia's favor.

In mid-March, Ukraine's 67th brigade was rotated in to hold positions roughly 3 kilometers from the town. "I would be hard-pressed to describe them as 'positions," said a Ukrainian serviceman who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the failings candidly.

He expected dugouts, a labyrinth of trenches and firing positions, but what he found were a series of pits, barely large enough to hide in during artillery barrages. Under fire, "soldiers would

climb out of pits and start digging in each other's direction so that there is at least some connection between them", he said. The soil was so sandy that whenever shells struck, the trenches they dug crumbled. With nowhere to take cover and no means to match the Russian barrages, they retreated 2 kilometers back. Over 100 Ukrainian soldiers were killed or are missing, he said. "We lost department comman-

ders, platoon commanders, company commanders and sergeants," he said. "That is, we lost the entire skeleton of the brigade."

TIME, MONEY, PRESSURE To rush building across the third line, construction compa-

nies were awarded contracts without the usual bidding process. "There was no time," said Kharkiv Gov. Oleh Syniehubov. The move speeded things up but raised concerns of potential corruption a worry Syniehubov asserted was overstated. "Believe me, we have so many checks-and-balances and government agencies overseeing the building, it is impossible to steal something,

Stock markets rebound as GST revenues hit record in April

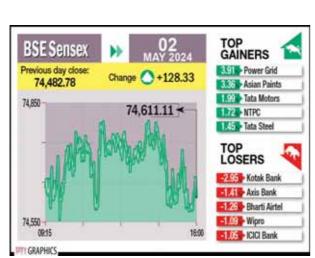
Stock markets rebounded on Thursday with Thursday benchmark Sensex closing higher by 128 points as record GST collections in April, positive manufacturing data, and foreign fund inflows boosted investor sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 128.33 points or 0.17 per cent to settle at 74,611.11. During the day, it jumped 329.65 points or 0.44 per cent to 74,812.43.

The NSE Nifty went up by 43.35 points or 0.19 per cent to 22,648.20.

From the Sensex basket, Power Grid, Asian Paints, Tata Motors, Tata Steel, Pharma, NTPC. Sun Mahindra, Mahindra HDFC Bank, Consultancy Services and JSW Steel were among the major gainers.

Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharti Airtel, Axis Bank, Wipro, ICICI Bank and IndusInd were among the



Goods and Services Tax India's manufacturing sector collections grew 12.4 per cent to a record high of Rs 2.10 lakh crore in April, aided by strong economic momentum and increased domestic transactions and imports, the finance ministry said on Wednesday.

The GST collections have breached the Rs 2 lakh crore mark for the first time in April this year, it said in a

second-best improvement in the health of the sector for three-and-a-half years.

In Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction. In Asian markets, Hong Kong settled with gains while Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai ended lower. European markets were trading on a mixed note. Wall Street ended mixed on

Wednesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.02 per cent to USD 84.29 a barrel..

Foreign Institutional (FIIs) bought Investors equities worth Rs 1,071.93 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. Domestic equity markets were closed on Wednesday on account of Maharashtra Day. Snapping its two-day winning run, the BSE benchmark declined 188.50 points or 0.25 per cent to settle at 74,482.78 on Tuesday. The NSE Nifty dipped 38.55 points or 0.17 per cent to finish at 22,604.85.

India among fastest growing markets with potential to be among top 10: Airbnb CBO

but said India is a "focus

area" and "is one of our

When asked as whether India

figures among Airbnb's top

10 markets globally, Stephenson replied in negative. Further he said, "It should be one of the top 10 markets. It is getting to be a

large travel market and we definitely think it can be.

specifically in India, where a

number of tourists travelling

to foreign destinations as

well as domestic places are

on the rise post-pandemic

and is supporting them to

stay in its range of "inexpensive homes all the

It has witnessed a whopping

75 per cent jump in

international group travel

families/friends are going

way to luxe homes".

investing

That would be the goal."

Airbnb

fastest-growing countries".

markets

India is one of the "fastest-growing markets" for accommodation hosting platform Airbnb and the country has the potential to be among its top 10 global markets in the coming years, according to its Business Officer Chief Dave Stephenson. The company is investing in India to tap the opportunity of a rapid rise in tourists travelling to foreign destinations as well as domestic places that are rapidly growing post-pandemic and where 90 per cent of its first-time bookers are Gen Zs.

"It (India) is one of our growth markets and we see a huge opportunity for growth in India in the future. In In India, in the future. In India, nights booked grew by almost 30 per cent YoY (Year-on-Year) in 2023 compared to 2022 which in the future. 2022, which is a positive sign," Stephenson told PTI. For Airbnb, India is going to

be "a large travel market", where it has seen a "strong desire" among the "Indian travellers to venture overseas as well as explore domestic destinations, especially those off the beaten path", he said. Though, Stephenson did not any specific growth numbers it is helping these groups find a perfect place. "Indians are inspired by Cricket and Bollywood, and

they want to explore the world. If they stay domestically, they are going to places like Goa and enjoying. But also, if they have the opportunity to travel abroad, they love to go to Italy and places that they're inspired by from the

movies," he said. Currently, 90 per cent of its first-time bookers are Gen Zs. Moreover, Airbnb is supporting the inbound flow of international travellers coming to India.

Airbnb is "working closely with the government in their vision to make India one of the most sought-after tourist destinations in the world" Stephenson said.

It has partnered with the Ministry of Tourism and curated a dedicated microsite which spotlights heritage stays across India. It has also partnered with governments Goa. Pradesh, Madhya Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, among others,

bookings from India, where to promote lesser-known abroad for vacations. It has destinations and conduct added features like the c a p a c i t y - b u i l d i n g workshops, he said. collaborative wishlist, where

SK Finance files draft papers with Sebi to garner ₹2,200 crore via IPO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $V_{{}^{
m ehicle}}$ finance and business loans-focused non-bank lender SK Finance has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to garner Rs 2,200 crore through an initial share sale. The proposed initial public offer (IPO) is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 500 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to Rs 1,700 crore by promoters and investor shareholders, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Wednesday.

As a part of the OFS, Norwest Venture Partners X-Mauritius and TPG Growth IV SF PTE Ltd will offload shares worth Rs 700 crore each, Evolvence Coinvest I will divest shares to the tune of Rs 75 crore and Evolvence India Fund III Ltd will sell shares worth Rs 25

Additionally, promoters -Rajendra Kumar Setia and Rajendra Kumar Setia HUF offload aggregating to Rs 180 crore and Rs 20 crore, respectively. The Jaipur-based SK Finance plans to utilise proceeds from the fresh issue for augmenting the capital base to meet future business requirements of the company towards onward lending and for general

corporate purposes. The NBFC has been operating in two verticals — vehicle financing and financing for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). It has a presence across 11 states and one union territory through 535 branches as of December

According to a Crisil report, the overall vehicle financing segment in India stood at around Rs 11.85 lakh crore as of fiscal 2023, marking a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 11 per cent from fiscal 2019 and forward, outstanding credit is expected to grow at a CAGR of 16-18 per cent from fiscal 2023 to fiscal 2027 to reach Rs 21 lakh

Earlier this year, SK Finance raised Rs 1,328 crore from investors. Motilal Oswal Private Equity pumped in Rs 415 crore for a minority stake in the NBFC.

Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Ltd, Jefferies India Private Ltd, Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors Ltd and Nomura Financial Advisory

Digital payment has transformed financial landscape: Airtel Payments Bank CEO

activity moderated in April

but still recorded the second

demand, a monthly survey

HSBC India Manufacturing

Purchasing Managers' Index

(PMI) fell from 59.1 in March to 58.8 in April, signalling the

improvement in

buoyant

conditions

seasonally adjusted

fastest

operating

three-and-a-half

supported by

said on Thursday.

Airtel Payments Bank CEO Anubrata Biswas is optimistic that the payments bank momentum in India will yield strong growth horizons and opportunities in the coming years, supported by financial supported by inclusion imperatives and rapid pace of economic and digital growth.

In an interview to PTI, Biswas said FY24 has been a "remarkable year" for Airtel Payments Bank, which has been growing in double digits across all key metrics such as users, revenue, and profits. "We are still closing the books (for the fiscal) but as we stand today, we are going to see high doublegrowth rates on revenue, profit and users continue," he said.

Airtel Payments Bank has 500,000 banking points spread across the country, today.

It offers end-to-end digital banking solutions, along with a bouquet of digital and



Payments Bank has three clear segments when it comes to serving customers across geographies — the urban rural underbanked, and industries, and businesses.

Earlier this year, Airtel Payments Bank had cited a strong growth trajectory for the December 2023 quarter with revenues at Rs 469 crore, up 47 per cent year-on-year, while net profit stood at Rs 11 crore up 120 stood at Rs 11 crore, up 120 per cent over the year-ago period. Biswas asserted that

sustained have investment solutions. Airtel momentum on digital

banking in India which is a growing spectrum of urban users wanting a secondary digital banking option for payment and transaction needs. This is a business where we have seen dramatic surges over 3-6 months, which has driven up

revenue...," he said. Airtel Payments Bank is dominant in rural markets, he said, adding that "rural and urban combined, we are now opening a million bank accounts a month". 'The

momentum the momentum on digital structural which means we about the next few years as well,

Whether the pace of new account openings accelerated at the fag end of the fiscal in the backdrop of the recent Paytm Payments Bank crisis, he said while on B2B and rural side of the business, the momentum has broadly been the same, there has been a significant uptick and uplift on the digital side from urban customers.

The uptick has been "very significant" in the number of new customers applying online for opening bank accounts, and offerings like FASTag.

Consumers looking at digital banking options is itself a 100 million opportunity, he said. "In India, digital payments has come, deepened and transformed the financial landscape. The time for digital banking has now come... People will use digital bank accounts to make payments, feel safe, and then look at many other second order needs," he said.

Biswas said he is optimistic about the prospects of market growth in FY25 and

banking digital opportunity, to our mind, is itself a 100 million user opportunity... The entire financial inclusion and digital inclusion market is actually a 500 million user opportunity... It will need several large banks with several different models because India is a large country, and it will need a variety of ways in which consumers will be served given India's aspirations for a USD 7-trillion economy in the coming years, and the growth targets beyond," he said.

So, while the banking momentum will remain strong, Biswas said, the payments bank momentum given the unique positioning of it as a regulated fintech — is going have "even stronger horizons

opportunities? "As consumers come to our platform and start using products and services, the opportunities remain for deepening both revenue as well as the user base itself, and equally on the rural consumer side. On the B2B side, we have just started... And there are a opportunities, as well," he

Federal Bank Q4 profit rises marginally to ₹906 crore

Federal Bank on Thursday reported a marginal rise in March quarter net profit at Rs 906 crore, impacted by pension provisions. In the year-ago period, profit was Rs 903 crore. In the full fiscal year FY24, profit increased to Rs 3,720 crore from the year-ago's Rs 3.010 crore.

The private sector lender said it is yet to send the names of potential candidates to succeed MD&CEO Shyam Srinivasan. His term ends in September this year.

In the March quarter, its core net interest income rose 15 per cent to Rs 2,195 crore on the back of a 20 per cent credit growth and narrowing of net interest margin to 3.21 per cent from 3.36 per cent in the yearago period.

Speaking to reporters, Srinivasan said the bank would want the risk adjusted calculated after including the credit costs to sustain between

3.20-3.25 per cent going forward.

It is targeting a loan growth of 18 per cent in FY25, and hopes that the 18 per cent growth in deposits in FY24 will keep

In the March quarter, it was hit by a Rs 162 crore provision towards pension which hurt the overall net profit, Srinivasan said. On the asset quality front, the

fresh slippages came down to Rs 352 crore from the quarterago's Rs 479 crore and Rs 436 crore in the year-ago period, resulting in improvement in gross non performing assets ratio to 2.13 per cent as on March 31, 2024. Its overall capital adequacy stood at 16.13 per cent as on March 31, 2024. Amid speculation over the next candidate to succeed Srinivasan, the incumbent MD and CEO said there is a board search panel on the job and that it will be submitting a list of candidates in the next few

and Securities (Indi Ltd are the book-running lead Rupee falls 3 paise to settle at 43.46

crore.

against US dollar **PTI** ■ MUMBAI

markets.

The rupee stayed range-bound and closed 3 paise lower at 83.46 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday amid a strong American currency and rising crude oil prices in global

Forex traders said positive sentiment in the domestic equity markets and the inflow of foreign capital capped a sharp fall in the domestic currency.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened strong at 83.41 and touched the intra-day low of 83.49 against the greenback. The local unit finally settled at

83.46 (provisional) against the dollar, down 3 paise from its previous close. The rupee had settled 2 paise

higher at 83.43 against the dollar on Tuesday, a day after losing 7 paise on Monday. The foreign exchange market was closed on Wednesday on

account of Maharashtra Day. On Wednesday, the US Federal Reserve decided to maintain the status quo on the benchmark interest rates, in line with the market expectations

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the rupee fell on disappointing PMI data from India. "However, positive domestic markets...Cushioned the downside?

India's Meanwhile. manufacturing PMI fell to 58.8 **RUPEE VS DOLLAR**

in April 2024 from 59.1 in the previous month.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), however, recorded the second fastest improvement in operating conditions in threeand-a-half years supported by buoyant demand, a monthly survey said on Thursday.

'We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on dismal PMI data and expectations of a recovery in the US dollar amid further delay in rate cut by Fed. However, weak crude oil prices and positive domestic markets may support the rupee at lower levels," Choudhary said, adding, "USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.25 to Rs 83.70". Analysts also said market

participants are expected to keep a close watch on the US non-farm payroll data to be released on Friday. Besides, weekly unemployment claims, trade balance and factory order data from the US may provide

China, Hong Kong account for 56 per cent of India's total imports of electronics, telecom, electrical products: GTRI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's imports of electronics Itelecom, and electrical products soared to USD 89.8 billion in 2023-24 and over half of these imports are sourced from China and Hong Kong, economic think tank GTRI said in its report. China dominates with a commanding 43.9 per cent

share of India's imports in electronics, telecom, and electrical sectors, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said. The data highlights a deep-

seated dependency on these two countries that has seen a dramatic escalation over the years, it added. It said that reducing this

dependency is crucial, not merely to boost economic resilience but to safeguard India's digital and technological sovereignty in a

American Express will open its state-of-the-art

campus in India, reaffirming

the company's commitment

to the country. Spanning

nearly one-million square

feet, this new facility

exemplifies a forward-

sustainability, health, and

Colleagues will begin moving

wellness for its colleagues.

thinking approach

PNS NEW DELHI

American Express will

to

design,



world that is becoming ever more interconnected.

'These sectors are integral to the daily lives of millions, enhancing communication, commerce, and information access. However, India's heavy dependence on imports, especially from China, presents formidable challenges to the nation's strategic autonomy and economic security," the report said. GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava

said that this profound

May 2024.

American

Environmental

campus

dynamic work environment.

for Building Design and Construction (BD+C) Core

and Shell Development.

Express

exposes severe vulnerabilities within India's supply chain and underscores the necessity strategic diversification of sources and enhancement of domestic production capabilities.

In the electronics segment, the report said that integrated circuits have experienced a significant import growth from USD 166.1 million during 2007-2010 to USD 4.2 billion in 2020-2022.

These circuits are critical for powering a wide range of electronic devices, from computers to smartphones illustrating a deepening technological dependency on China, with their market share increasing from 19.2 per cent to 33.4 per cent.

Similarly, communication devices, including phones and other wireless devices, have also seen a significant increase in imports, rising to USD 3.691 billion with over half of the market now dominated by China.

"Diodes, transistors, and similar semiconductor devices have seen their imports skyrocket from USD 113.3 million to USD 2,334.8 million, with the Chinese per cent, indicating a significant dependency on Chinese semiconductor market share jumping to 67.5 technology," it said.

Paul John Nirvana bags Gold medal in London competition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

John Distilleries Ltd's Paul John single malt whiskey Nirvana' has been awarded "Gold" medal in the prestigious London Spirits Competition 2024. JDL's two other offerings — Roulette London Dry Gin and Paul John XO Brandy — have also wen "Silver" medals. JDL is won 'Silver' medals. JDL is the only Indian company to have been awarded in three different categories

whiskey, gin and brandy. 'We are honoured to have been awarded at the London Spirits Competition. It is indeed a privilege to be appreciated for the quality of our products," said JDL Chairman and Managing Director Paul P John.
JDL is one of the most

awarded Indian companies end consumers. Judging internationally as it has criteria include quality, bagged various prestigious value for money, awards in the events like the



International Wine and Spirit Competition, the World Whiskey Awards and the San Francisco World Spirits Competition.

London Competition, organized by Beverage Trade Network, aims to recognise and promote spirits brands that resonate consumers and offer value for both trade buyers and packaging appeal.

Jindal Stainless to operate stainless steel melt shop in Indonesia Investment (FDI) and they would get a **PIONEER NEWS SERVICE** ■ NEW DELHI

open its campus in India

Tindal Stainless, on Wednesday, to the new facility, located in announced its entry into a joint venture sector 74A Gurugram, in with a Singapore-based company to phases, starting at the end of develop and operate a stainless steel melt shop (SMS) in Indonesia. The company further announced that it will invest around rupees 1,900 crores to expand its dedication to fostering a downstream lines in Jajpur and Odisha to increase their melting capacity. Jindal Stainless will also acquire a 54% equity The facility has received Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design stake in Chromeni Steels Private Limited (CSPL). (LEED) Gold certification

Abhyuday Jindal, Managing Director of Jindal Stainless, said, "With these acquisitions and investments, they have orchestrated a clear growth plan to become one of the leading players in the

world." He further added that this is a plug-and-play model, and there will be good growth in three years.

The company also addressed that although Jindal Stainless already has a facility in Indonesia, this will be a completely separate facility that will be operational in 2 years. The government of Indonesia promotes Foreign Direct

secure availability of raw materials and increased production efficiency in The Government of Indonesia has banned the export of nickel ore and is

promoting investments into downstream facilities through long-term tax holidays. The acquisition of Chromeni supports our strategy to increase cold rolled products in our product mix." said the CEO & Wholetime Director, Tarun Kumar Khulbe. Anurag Mantri, Executive Director & Group CFO, said these investments will especially contribute to the overall balancing of their downstream cold-rolled capacities, bringing them closer to the global benchmarks.

Travel Across Enchanted Landscapes

At an exhibition celebrated as Earth Day last month we stepped into a world where art embraces nature, says SAKSHI PRIYA

magine wandering into a world where art reflects the vibrant spirit of nature, capturing its rhythmic seasons and climates with elan. This is the es.sence of 'Paradise Regained,' an exhibition at Palette Art Gallery which celebrated Earth Day with a stunning display of landscape.

In a harmonious blend of acclaim for nature and artistic mastery, the title of the exhibition draws inspiration from renowned English poet John Milton's epic poem by the same name; indeed, a fitting tribute to Earth Month in April. Curator Uma Nair explains the choice, stating, "April is Earth Month, and landscapes are the most important part of the Earth. 'Paradise Regained' thus becomes a powerful symbol, not only honouring the artistic legacy but also emphasising the critical role landscapes play in our world."

The exhibition featured works by 10 exceptional artists, each offering a unique perspective on the beauty and importance of landscapes. It was in fact a symphony of artistic interpretations. Each artist, with his or her unique style and vision, came together to paint a mesmerizing portrait of nature in all its splendour. Sanam

Narayanan's work invites us into a fantastical realm. His paintings, meticulously crafted on canvas with rice paper as the base, depict houses adorned with Kerala's verdant foliage. The technique of pointillism is used to create a captivating sense of depth and detail, highlighting the soil conditions and the ethereal mist that seem to cling to the trees. This interplay of imagination and reality creates a truly magical experience.

BY SAKSHI PRIYA



incomparable odes to nature's multilayered beauty. brushstrokes transport us to a world where nature thrives, and constantly remind us of power to captivate. His pieces are a subtle testimony to the delicate balance between humans and nature, an a stark pointer to the connection we humans often tend to overlook or

Paramjit Singh, a veteran artist with over six decades of experience, showcases his love for nature with vibrant oil paintings. His landscapes are pathways that draw the viewers in and invites them to explore a kingdom in which flowers reign supreme. Each piece reflects a lifetime dedicated to the artistic exploration of the natural world.

The beauty of 'Paradise Regained' is transcendental and is etched in one's memory beyond the initial visual impact. Each artist offers a window to his or her creative process and evokes artistic emotions through art. Sanket Viramgami's intricate miniature landscapes offer a glimpse into the future world, like postcards from an imagined future. Jyodip Acharjee presents a stark contrast

THROUGH TIME AND IMAGINAT

with his geometric interpretations of landscapes, offering a fresh

Shaji Appukuttan transports

perspective of familiar scenes.

viewers to the lush, tropical forests of Kerala, so lifelike they almost seem to breathe. His detailed artwork captures the essence of a vibrant ecosystem. Curator Uma Nair describes artist Prasad KP as "the greatest discovery" by the Gallery. His paintings, with pathways and figures amidst detailed landscapes, offer a deeper look as we move forward. Jayashree Chakravarty's work draws inspiration from Kolkata's Salt Lake region, translating its unique beauty onto canvas. Sumesh Kamballur's work demands attention for not only depicting the magical essence of night, but for how he transforms it into a poetic dreamscape. Bathed in the soft glow of moonlight, his paintings capture the essence of nature with a touch of surreal beauty. The moonlight itself becomes a character and illuminates details with nature's signature writ large.

KP Pradeep Kumar delves into the realm of autobiographical landscapes. His paintings are not





just depictions of nature, they are reflections of his own lived experiences and emotions. In a conversation artist Pradeep Kumar described his artwork as a language that explores a multitude of themes; he emphasises that his art is a source of self-expression, a way to process his inner world. He finds freedom in creating art that resonates with him, hoping it will connects with others as well. He describes it as an "execution of my thought process into the painting," a freedom that allows him to explore his identity and translate his unique perspective onto the

Kumar emphasises that his artwork serves as a resource for him, a way to process and express his inner world. He finds a sense of freedom in the creative process, stating, "I never make art by keeping in mind that everyone would have to like it." His primary motivation is to create art that resonates with him, hoping it will connect with others as well. Uma Nair's vision as a curator

takes centrestage in 'Paradise Regained,' as her discerning eye for talent and craft come through in her exhibition that about the very essence of nature. Through an insightful walk-through, she acts as a guide, enriching the visitor's experience with each piece. Her discerning eve reveals every artist's inspiration and the deeper meaning informing their landscapes, allowing viewers to appreciate not just the art, but also the emotional depth that informs each piece of poetry. 'Paradise Regained' serves as a

powerful reminder of the importance of appreciating and protecting our planet, each piece a masterpiece in its own right, offering visitors a chance to experience the wonder of landscapes through the unique lens of artistic expression. This exhibition is truly a celebration of Mother Earth where one can immerse oneself and draw lessons from the fact that Earth Day is not just another Day; it is a call for action for each one of us, every day, a chance to celebrate and protect the paradise we have been blessed with. Only by appreciating its beauty, understanding complexities, and taking steps towards its preservation, can we ensure a healthier planet for ourselves and future generations. Photos: Pankaj Kumai

wonderland, a reality world that makes you think of the past and the future."

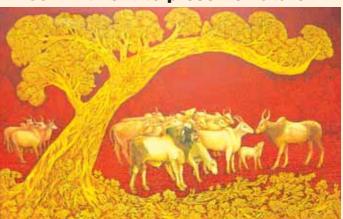
Saxena's exhibition is a testament to the power of art to inspire, provoke thought, and ignite our imagination. The exhibition showcases Saxena's excellence in creating a world that captivates everyone who views it, inviting them to lose themselves in his artwork. The paintings are evidence of his artistic vision, showcasing a world that seamlessly blends mankind's history and artist revealed that his main source civilization with each artwork telling a unique story of balance

> 'It Makes Me Wonder' is a dreamlike experience. transporting viewers to a world that is both familiar and unknown. Saxena's works is a testament to his ability to create a sense of wonder inviting viewers to get

lost in the fantasy world reflects the past but also speaks to he has created that transports you to a world where time stands still creativity to transform our lives and our world.

AN ARTIST FINDS SOLACE IN NATURE

Ompal Sanswal's solo Exhibition JIVA reflects his unwavering commitment to preserve nature



BY SAKSHI PRIYA

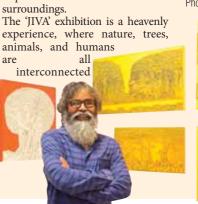
enowned for his exquisite artistry, National Awardwinning artist Sansanwal's solo exhibition, JIVA is a mesmerizing journey into the heart of nature. Featuring around 60 of Ompal's paintings, this marks his first solo outing after a hiatus of 15 years. Each piece of art in the gallery feels like a shower of rainbows, with every stage of colour highlighted, showcasing the artist's unparalleled skill and artistic vision. It serves as a poignant reminder of the beauty and importance of our natural surroundings, particularly as the world observed Earth Month last month.

Each artwork evokes a profound connection to nature, reminding us of the beauty that the artist has captured. It's akin to sitting in a peaceful forest, listening to the gentle chirping of birds — a hall full of paintings that truly lives up to the title of 'Meditations on Trees.' In his meticulously crafted paintings, the long roots and branches heavy with leaves take on various shapes, telling different stories mythological, others resembling human-like figures with eyes, nose, and mouth. Each painting reflects the deep bond between Ompal and his mother, evoking a sense of nostalgia and connection.

Curated by renowned art historian and scholar Uma Nair, the exhibition was hosted by Black Cube Gallery for its debut at Bikaner House. Uma Nair's eyes for art never fail to impress, showcasing each painting in its true essence, beyond mere visual appeal. Her ability to highlight the intricate details and deeper meanings embedded in each artwork elevates the exhibition to a whole new level. The timing of the exhibition during Earth Month in April adds to its significance.

Sanya Malik, the director of Black Cube Gallery, has played a pivotal role in bringing this exhibition to life. Her keen eye for detail and her dedication to presenting Sansanwal's paintings in the most captivating manner have truly enhanced the overall experience of 'JIVA.' As the world celebrates Earth Month, this exhibition serves as a poignant reminder of the beauty and importance of our natural

experience, where nature, trees,



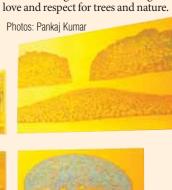
through Ompal's artistic vision. The balanced colors and techniques in each canvas create a visually stunning display. Ompal's fascination with trees is evident in every piece, embodying not just isolated entities in time but dynamic elements in a complex interplay with the environment.

The acrylic, pen and ink on canvas, and watercolor pieces are striking for their intricate treatment and vibrant colors. They beautifully represent the connection between humans and trees, offering an immersive impact on viewers. Ompal's 15 years of paintings depict his journey of getting lost in his own world of art, where trees are not just subjects but extensions of his being, evoking beautiful stories. It's a meditation not just for him but for all visitors who stand in awe of his work, appreciating each piece.

In a conversation with the artist Ompal, he shared that his mother is his greatest inspiration. Growing up surrounded by trees and forests near his hometown, he drew inspiration from the stories and environment around him. For Ompal, painting trees and nature, and even humans, is a form of meditation, deeply involving him in the process of creating art. His paintings, deeply rooted in humanity and nature, carry a special message to love and preserve trees and nature—plant as many as you can and save our planet.

The 'JIVA' exhibition by Ompal Sansanwal is not just a collection of paintings but a profound reflection of the artist's soul and his deeprooted connection with nature. Through his meticulous artistry, Sansanwal transports viewers into a world where trees are not mere subjects but living beings, each with its own story to tell. His paintings, with their intricate details and vibrant colors, evoke a sense of tranquility and harmony, inviting us to contemplate our relationship with the natural world.

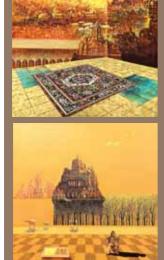
'JIVA' is not just an exhibition—it's a journey, a meditation, and a celebration of our deep-seated connection with nature. It urges us to cherish and preserve our environment for generations to come, echoing the artist's message of



tep into a world where art tells stories, and dreams come to life. Kumar Vikas Saxena's latest exhibition, 'It makes me wonder, is a magical journey through time and imagination. Each painting is like a window to a different world, inviting you to explore and discover. Drawing inspiration from history and culture, Saxena's art blends reality

with dreams, that is unique and captivating. 'It Makes Me Wonder,' is a series of paintings that explores the human subconscious through surrealistic lens. Each painting is a visual narrative of history and culture, seamlessly weaving together elements of the past and

present, taking viewers on a breathless journey through time. The well-balanced colours of yellow and brown, coupled with the rustic feel of the theme, evoke a sense of time travel to ancient civilizations. Saxena's solo exhibition is a historical and an immersive experience through a series of thought-provoking paintings. Each artwork feels like a pathway to a history book, every piece discovering its own historical



reflection of humanity, nature, and history. What sets his artwork apart is the combination of different architectural styles, his creations resonating with his love for ancient architecture.

What sets Saxena's artwork apart is his ability to combine different architectural styles, creating a harmonious blend that resonates with his love for ancient architecture. His paintings are not mere depictions of buildings; they are monuments to the human spirit, testaments to our capacity for greatness and our quest for meaning.

Saxena's childhood spent in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, where his home environment was full of art, is reflected in his solo exhibition. His love for nature, nurtured during his solitary moments in the lush pine forests of the mountains, is evident in every piece of art. Each painting captures the beauty of nature in the raw, a textured rawness that retains its innocence. Saxena's art is a tribute to his sense imposing his thoughts on his viewers, preferring instead to let them interpret his artwork in their own way. "I don't give titles to my paintings because I don't want to impose my thoughts," he says adding, "I want people to think whatever they want to think of my

of freedom. He does not believe in

This approach has resulted in a body of work that is both personal and universal, inviting viewers to embark on their own journey of discovery. In a conversation the of inspiration is his love for ancient architecture. "I love creating art between man and nature.

that is mostly in a rustic form, which takes me into history whenever I go to any historic place," he says, emphasising that, "I want to live in that moment, as if I was there at that time." He expressed a desire to

create art that not only

the present and the future. His paintings are a testament to his belief that the future is built upon the foundations of the past, and he seeks to celebrate the timeless beauty of heritage while embracing the dynamism of progress.

In the words of Kumar Vikas Saxena, "Every piece of art resonates with a dream within a dream, the mesmerizing art that allows us to get lost in the fantasy world. Each piece of artwork takes you on a journey to a fascinating



and imagination knows no bounds. So take a moment to immerse yourself in the timeless wonder of Saxena's art and let your imagination soar. It is a beautiful journey through history, mankind, and nature, inviting viewers to explore the beauty of the past and the potential of the future. His artwork is a gift to the world, and it reminds us of the power of

Balancing professional and civic duties

URVASHI RAUTELA has been in the limelight of late for the song 'Vigdiyan Heeran' with singer HONEY SINGH. In a conversation with SAKSHI PRIYA, she reflects on the significance of a citizen's duty as a voter

ou recently cast your vote. How important is it for celebrities to actively participate in the democratic process?

It is very important. I was the first person in the queue to cast my vote at 6:45 am to focus as it is our birthright, and similarly for responsible Indian citizen. At the same time as artists, we inspire today's generation, so it is very important for all of us to set a great and positive example. I feel the more youth participate in the electoral process, the better the result for our country and nation.

What challenges did you face breaking into Bollywood as an outsider, and how did you overcome them?

I believe people are familiar with my journey, including my background, the titles I have won, and my filmography. I feel the power and love of my audiences, which has made the entire journey great. I am grateful and blessed by the kind of love I have received on social media. I

visited a blind school in and the fondness for Honey Whether it's a house, property, or Uttarakhand for some Urvashi Rautela Foundation work, and the response was beautiful.

Vigdiyan Heeran with Honey Singh has generated a lot of excitement. What drew you to this project, and what can audiences expect from it?

Yes, it has received a lot of love. Even though the video was short, being a part of the legendary and cult song 'Love Dose,' 'Vigdiyan Heeran' instantly became a hit the moment it was announced. It's a great track, part two 'Love Dose' after 10 years. There will be a part three as well as people love me and Honey's pairing. They have an emotional connection with us, and fans love us together. It's all about the love from the people

Theres a great back-and-forth energy between you and Honey Singh in the video. How was it working with him again?

My experience working with Honey Singh was amazing and fantastic. But I really want to ask Honey Singh about his working experience with me. Next time, I will definitely meet him and ask as I really want to know.

Finally, there is a lot of buzz about your stunning palace-like home in Uttarakhand, reportedly valued at Rs 25 crore. Why has it

taken so long to complete? It is a beautiful property, and generally, amazing and beautiful things take time to build.

even the Ram Mandir, it takes time to construct. It will be ready soon, and I will definitely do a housewarming soon.

As a public figure, you often face both praise and criticism on social media. How do you handle negative comments?

I don't let success get to my head, and I don't let negative comments affect me either. They are just momentary things for me. I believe in improving myself and keeping things simple. I focus on making myself better and don't really pay attention to negative

Looking back at your journey so far, what would you say has

moment of your career, and This is a difficult question for

me, but I believe there isn't just one defining moment. Meeting the Prime Minister of Israel stands out to me. I gifted him the Bhagavad Gita and had a two-hour conversation with him and my family. He is a very powerful political leader and one of the most influential people in the world. Additionally, being the youngest judge in the history of Miss Universe was another defining moment for me.

What are your thoughts on the current music scene in India, and how do you see it evolving in the future?

been the most defining I believe that old songs had a different charm, and their lyrics meaningful. very However, today, I feel more inclined towards old cinema and songs from the 80s and 70s. I think that era was great, and I prefer the music from that

> professional commitments, especially in an industry as demanding as Bollywood?

> How do you balance your personal life with your

I believe it's all about balance. Despite the demanding nature of the industry, I try my best to balance my personal and professional life. For example, I recently voted and also made sure to spend quality time with my family.

KKR look to iron out flaws against off colour MI

olkata Knight Riders will look to iron out their flaws and get the better of a misfiring Mumbai Indians when the two teams, placed on the opposite ends of IPL points table spectrum, clash here on Friday.

With six wins in nine games giving them 12 points and the second position in the IPL points table, a berth in the playoffs looks within the grasp of two-time winners KKR. But the Shreyas Iyer-led side will have to find consistency across departments and avoid any slip-ups in order to make it to the final four. Each of their three losses have come in the last six games for KKR, who were at the receiving end of a record run chase by Punjab Kings but did well to bounce back with a seven-wicket thrashing of Delhi Capitals. With the bat, KKR's requisite firepower in the ranks entwined with an ultra-aggressive approach has delivered the goods more often than not but it is their bowling which needs improvement.

Mitchell Starc has given nearly 12 runs an over while managing a mere seven wickets in eight outings. On flat, batting-friendly pitches, the

lanky Australian's lack of control has also been exploited well by zealous batters. Harshit Rana is among those with most wickets (11) for KKR this season but the right-arm seamer will serve a one-match ban for his animated celebrations after dismissing DC's Abhishek Porel.

Vaibhav Arora's nine scalps in five games make him KKR's best bet with the ball. A small Wankhede Stadium with a batting-friendly wicket tends to encourage scores in excess of 200 and the team would be mindful of that.

Spotlight will also be on Rinku Singh, whose exclusion from India's main squad for the T20 World Cup, has triggered an outpouring of sympathy for the 26-year-old. The power-hitter has not got enough game time this season which probably tilted the scales against

For Mumbai Indians, the race to the IPL playoffs seems lost even though the five-time winners have five

more games to play. Even if Mumbai Indians win each of these, they can only get to 16 points and somewhere in the middle of the points table - not necessarily challenging those who have been consistently good.



Gerald Coetzee (13) have been MI's best bets with the ball but despite their impressive showing, the batters' collective failure has resulted in the team's underwhelming season. Tilak Varma has been MI's best

batter with 343 runs, including three fifties this IPL, but his performances have not been enough to hide the failings of

Ishan Kishan has struck the ball well but severely lacks consistency at the top and losing wickets in heaps in the powerplay has been one of MI's biggest woes in this season. India skipper Rohit Sharma's (315 runs at strike rate of 158.29) selfless

approach with the bat has not given him big scores consistently but his form will be in focus given the T20 World Cup is now just one month

All eyes will also be on Suryakumar Yadav who has two fifties in seven IPL games this season, but it is not the consistency which is expected from the batter of his calibre.

Mumbai Indians' under-fire skipper Hardik Pandya has neither dazzled with the ball nor the bat after a long injury lay-off. But the fact that he vice-captain for the World Cup should motivate him to turn things

TEAMS (FROM):

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

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Singh, Varun Ramandeep Narine, Chakravarthy, Sunil Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Gus Atkinson, Állah

Ghazanfar, Phil Salt

Deepak Chahar does not look good: Fleming on his possible injury

Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming admitted that seamer Deepak look good" but he is hoping for a positive report from the franchise's medical team ahead of the business phase of the

ongoing IPL. Although Fleming did not divulge any details on Chahar's new injury, the 31-year-old seamer was seen pulling off his run-up in just the second ball of Punjab Kings chase here on Wednesday night.

possible It could be a hamstring injury as, after having a chat with skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad and the physio, Chahar walked off ground holding his hamstring and did not bowl any further in the match.

Chahar's career has been marred by injuries in the last couple of years, costing him a permanent spot in the Indian team. "Yeah, the travelogue is pretty busy. There's a lot of ins and outs. So, Deepak Chahar doesn't look good," said Fleming during the postmatch presser.

"The initial feeling wasn't great. So, I'm hoping for a more positive report when the physio and the doctor have a

Chahar's injury somewhat forced Gaikwad to bring in Shivam Dube for an over, who has mainly been used as a batter this season.

But Dube went for 14 in the only over he bowled, and Fleming admitted that with the Impact Player rule, Dube is not suited for the role in the IPL and will have his chances in

proper conditions. "He (Dube) is ready to bowl and is working hard on it. He will play a role in the right conditions, and with the Impact Player rule, we have players who can fit the role better. Currently, his necessity to bowl is pretty much small,"

the coach said. CSK suffered a seven-wicket defeat to PBKS, their second loss at home this season, managing a meagre 162 for 7, which was comfortably chased down with 13 balls to spare.

Talking about the demanding

wicket at Chepauk, Fleming said, "It's difficult, and we have spoken on the unpredictability of the wickets here before. Batting first makes it difficult dge as to what a good competitive score is.

We had a couple of 200s (before), which was in our minds today. But, the wicket was very stićky. "We also had a good start in

the (first) six overs before things became difficult. We also tried a few lefties in the form of Dube and (Ravindra) Jadeja but we just couldn't get anything through the middle. They bowled really well, they got good purchase and held onto it. We just got stifled through the middle, which prevented us from getting a score of 180," he said.

With a low score to defend, Fleming was impressed with the commitment and performance shown by English pacer Richard Gleeson, who made his debut last night.

"Richard Gleeson was good, and it was a positive. Losing Fizz (Mustafizur Rahman) is disappointing.
"Tushar (Deshpande) has a bit

of flu going around as well. So, we've had to make a few changes, which is unusual. Again, that's part of it, and we have got the resources," he said. "Just they haven't had the game time to be really comfortable with their roles and us to be comfortable with a game plan, which we're struggling a little." Although veteran opener Ajinkya Rahane managed to get to double figures after a lean phase in the last four games, he didn't last beyond a

24-ball 29. "I thought he (Rahane) was good today. He's been probably a bit too aggressive in what he wants to do," Fleming

observed. "Keep in mind, we're batting on wickets here that we don't know how they are gonna play. So, we got to take a bit of a pause to see what a good score is. If you are 3 for 30, the game

is pretty much over.
"His (Rahane) hitting that was so good last year, is more crisp. It's not for lack of intent. He has doubled up on intent. We're fine with Jinks and the role he

Füllkrug fires Dortmund to 1-0 win over PSG

AP DORTMUND

Niclas Füllkrug scored and Borussia Dortmund earned a 1-0 win over Paris Saint-Germain in the first leg of their

Champions League semifinal.

Dortmund defender Nico Schlotterbeck sent a long pass over the top for Füllkrug to control brilliantly with his first touch before firing it past PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma with his next in the 36th minute on Wednesday.

"It's not the first time that I've tried to stick

"It's not the first time that I've tried to stick the ball in at the near post this season. This time it worked out and I'm even happier time it worked out and I'm even nappier that it's in such an important game," Füllkrug said. The win gives Dortmund a narrow advantage before the teams play again in the second leg in Paris next Tuesday, when the French champion will need to overturn the result if it's going to capture Europe's biggest prize before Kylian Mbappé leaves the club. PSG is under pressure to finally win to the

PSG is under pressure to finally win to the Champions League to justify more than a decade of huge investment from its Qatari

Dortmund's win ensured it qualified for the tournament next season and it gives the Bundesliga five teams in the expanded tournament. Dortmund is assured of finishing at least fifth.

Roared on by most of the 81,365 fans ding the famed behind one of the goals, Dortmund made the busier start and maintained its intensity for the whole game. The home team ran 119.7 kilometers - almost 10

hasing another Champions

League crown, Real Madrid

already has its fingertips on the

Spanish league title.



OTHER SPORTS

more than the visitors. Defender Lucas Hernández went off injured after trying to stop Füllkrug from scoring. It looked like Hernández suffered

PSG pushed hardest early in the second half, when Mbappé hit the right post before Achraf Hakimi struck the left post. Gregor Kobel saved Mbappé's next effort and Dortmund survived the pressure and Dortmund survived the pressure.

Füllkrug went on to miss further good chances for the German team, while Marquinhos made a crucial block to deny Julian Brandt late on. It would have been nice if we could have

made our counterattacks count to get a goal at the end veteran Mats Hummels said.

"But now we have to come through in Paris.

Real Madrid can clinch Spanish league title

The visitors missed chances, too.

Ousmane Dembelé should have scored on his return to Dortmund when he blazed a shot over late, then Vitinha flashed a shot wide of the left post.

We tried to keep the ball from them but it's so difficult because they have a lot of quality," PSG coach Luis Enrique said. They are a great team on the ball and off

the ball. Today in that environment they were great in both aspects of the game. I think we had maybe a lack of intensity in the first half, but in the second half we created clear, clear chances. But we couldn't score?

Dortmund coach Edin Terzic only made his first substitution in the 83rd, when he sent on veteran Marco Reus for the exhausted Karim Adeyemi.

The winner of the two-leg tie will play either Real Madrid or Bayern Munich in the final in London on June 1.



Salima replaces Savita as skipper

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mid-fielder Salima Tete on Thursday replaced replaced veteran goalkeeper Savita Punia as captain of the 24strong Indian women's hockey squad for the Belgium and England legs of the FIH Pro League starting later this month.

Navneet Kaur has been India will play her deputy for the named tour.

"I am happy that I have been appointed to lead the team. It is a big responsibility and I am looking forward to this new role. We have a strong squad and it's a mix of experienced and young players," Salima was quoted as saying in a Hockey India press release.

"In the upcoming Belgium and England legs of the FIH Hockey Pro League 2023-2024, we look to put our strong foot forward. We have worked on areas where we needed to improve," she said. Savita had captained India during the failed Olympic qualifying campaign and the pro league matches at home after that.

Barring three changes, the squad was the same that took part in the Bhubaneswar and Rourkela legs of the Pro League in February this year. Defender Gurjit Kaur, mid-fielders Sonika and Nisha and

striker Beauty Dungdung have been dropped and were replaced by Mahima Chaudhary, Manisha Chauhan, Pretti Dubey and

Deepika Soreng.
The matches in Belgium will begin on May 22 and end on May 26, while the England leg will commence on June 1 and conclude on June 9.

against na and Argent during the first leg, starting May 22 against Argentina. During the London leg, the team will take on Great

Britain and Germany.

with the prestigious Hockey

India are currently placed sixth in the FIH Pro League table with eight points from as many matches. Salima was recently honoured

India Balbir Singh Sr Award for Player of The Year in the women's category at the sixth Hockey India Annual Awards. The goalkeeping responsibilities will rest with Savita and Bichu Devi Kharibam, while the defensive line-up includes Nikki Pradhan, Udita,

Chaudhary, Monika, Jyoti Chhatri and Mahima. The midfield will be marshalled Salima, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke,

Navneet, Neha, Jyoti, Baljeet Kaur, Manisha Lalremsiami.

AP MADRID

arlos Alcaraz's bid to win a Cthird straight Madrid Open title ended with a threeset loss to Andrey Rublev in the quarterfinals.

got off to a good start but then was outplayed by the seventh-seeded Rubley, losing 4-6 6-3 6-2 at the Caja Magica centre court on Wednesday. Alcaraz, who had already struggled in a three-set win over Jan-Lennard Struff on Tuesday, looked out of sorts and was mistake-prone

It was his first tournament after missing Monte Carlo and forearm injury. The 20-year-old Alcaraz had arrived in happy to play three or four matches in the Spanish capital. Already in a hole in the third



With the domestic title apparently a question of time, Madrid's priority is its Champions League semifinal with Bayern to safety.

brace on Tuesday. Bayern comes to Madrid next Wednesday to decide who will face Paris Saint-Germain or Borussia Dortmund in the June 1 Led by Jude Bellingham, Vinícius and

Munich. Madrid earned a 2-2 draw in

Germany thanks to Vinícius Júnior's

veteran midfielder Toni Kroos, Carlo Ancelotti's side has lost only once in 33 league games in this campaign.
Ancelotti rotated his starting lineup for the last round where Madrid won

at Real Sociedad, so it is likely that he will also rest some key players against a Cadiz side that is in danger of relegation. The team from southern Spain is in 18th place, inside the drop zone, and five points behind Celta Vigo, the last team clinging

Alcaraz loses to Rublev in Madrid Open quarterfinals near the end. In the beginning, I was not serving that well but little by little, after set one, I served better and better and finished really well." 12th-seeded

defeated 22nd-ranked Francisco Cerundolo 6-1 3-6 6-3. It was the 250th tour-level win for Fritz, who is the third American man to reach the Madrid semifinals and first since Robby Ginepri in 2005. Andre Agassi won the Madrid title in 2002.

Cerundolo, the Argentine who upset world No. 5 Alexander Zverev in the fourth round, was trying to reach his second

ATP 1000 semifinal. Top-seeded Jannik Sinner withdrew because of a hip injury, saying he didn't want to risk making it worse. Sinner defeated Karen Khachanov on Tuesday and was scheduled to face Felix Auger-Aliassime in the quarterfinals on Thursday SABALENKA ADVANCES: Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka defeated 17-yearold Mirra Andreeva for the second straight year in Madrid to reach the women's semifinals.

The second-seeded Sabalenka didn't face a break point on her way to a 6-1 6-4 win in Wednesday's quarterfinals. She had beaten the teenage sensation in straight sets in the

The two-time Australian Open champion has won 10 straight matches in Madrid and is trying to match Petra Kvitova's three titles in the

Sabalenka will next play fourth-seeded Rybakina, who saved two match points en route to a 4-6 7-6(4) 7-5 win over Yulia

The second-seeded Spaniard

the runaway favorite since it beat Girona,

toward the end.

Barcelona because of a right Madrid saying he would be set, Alcaraz pressed the forearm during a stopover. He was wearing a long sleeve over the injured arm.

"Today probably I felt more in the forearm than yesterday's match. I mean, playing three hours yesterday, I knew that I'm going to feel something or I'm going to think about it even more," the third-ranked "Playing someone like Rublev that I couldn't push him to the limit in every point is tough."

Alcaraz plans to play in Rome to continue his preparation for the French Open later this month. "I'm going to go to Rome. I'm going to work to be close to 100% or in a good way to play Rome, but I'm going to decide these days. But I think I'll be OK," he said. "I have to work hard if I want to go to Rome with good feelings, without pain, without

thinking about my forearm, but it's going to be a slow process, I guess. I have to be

patient in that way."

Alcaraz said.



Alcaraz was trying to become the first player to win the claytournament three straight times. He hadn't lost on Spanish soil since 2021. Rublev, seeking his second ATP 1000 title after winning Monte Carlo last year, will play

Taylor Fritz in the semifinals.

The world No. 8 was solid

the start overpowered Alcaraz with 30 winners. "The serve saved me a lot of

times today," Rublev said. "The key was I was completely

calm the whole match. I did not say one word, even if I was losing. That was the key and I was able to serve even better

fourth round last year. Spanish capital.

Putintseva.