**OPINION 6** 

MARKETS CLIMB ON BUYING IN RELIANCE, INFOSYS

DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

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**WORLD 8** 

IRAN'S SUPREME LEADER PRAYS

FOR LATE PRESIDENT, OTHERS

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## FAMILY TOO 12 SPORTS

## EC makes its presence felt

#### **Underlines nation's inviolable** socio-cultural

RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

7 ith only two phases of the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections remaining, the Election Commission has now upped the ante against political parties particularly the BJP and the Congress asking them to desist from campaigning along caste, community, language, and religious lines, asserting that India' socio-cultural milieu cannot be made a casualty to elections. The two phases will see polls

on 115 seats including in Delhi on Saturday. The Election Commission on Wednesday in a stern warning to both the BJP and the Congress, the EC has also directed them to issue a formal notice to its "star campaigners" disallowing making them from statements that "divide the society" and may cause tension between different castes and communities.

The EC had last month issued notices to JP Nadda on Opposition charges that Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a divisive speech in Rajasthan's Banswara. A similar notice had been issued to Mallikarjun Kharge, too, based on the complaints filed by the BJP against him and the main Opposition party's senior leader Rahul Gandhi regarding their remarks. The commission rejected the defence by Nadda and Kharge and asked them to instruct their parties' star campaigners to desist from campaigning along caste, community, language,



potentially

armed forces.

statements regarding socio-

economic composition of the

endure; even more enduring Congress not to politicise defence forces and make divisive The EC had broken from ensure that its norms when it issued notices

to the BJP and Congress presidents on April statements 25 on complaints against Modi by Opposition and against Rahul and Kharge by the ruling party. While the EC did not name Modi or Rahul, it asked Nadda and Kharge

periodic "Elections are exercises, they come and go, but political parties like yours

for their "comments" on the

"star campaigners" alleged

MCC violations.

preserve is India's sociocultural milieu; political parties are in the task of nurturing leaders for the country for present and future," the commission said. It also asked the Congress to campaigners and candidates

impression that the Constitution may be abolished or sold. The EC the presidents of the two national parties to issue formal notes to their star campaigners to correct their discourse, exercise care and maintain

replies to the notices issued to the statements of BJP's star

decorum.

them on April 25, the election "technical authority said loopholes or extreme interpretations of other political party's utterances" cannot discharge the parties and their campaigners from the core responsibility of their own content which ought to be corrective to the ongoing discourse "and not further plummeting the quality of campaign

discourse" It reminded the two parties of provisions of the model code which state that no party or candidate will include in any activity which may aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or cause between different tension castes and communities, religious or linguistic.

In his reply to the notice, Referring to their respective Nadda had maintained that campaigners rely on facts to expose the "mal intent" of the Congress to the nation. He had also told the EC that the Congress and the INDIA Bloc, in pursuance of votebank politics, have begun opposing India as a nation, its identity, its original Hindu religion.

The poll body rejected Nadda's defence describing it as "not-tenable" and asked him and his party's star campaigners to desist from campaigning on religious and communal lines. It also asked the BJP to stop campaign speeches that may society. commission expects BJP, as the ruling party at the Centre, to fully align the campaign methods to the practical aspects of the composite and sensitive fabric of India."

## **Voter sympathy** for Kejriwal ebbs

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Riding high on the electoral sympathy after the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) seems to have lost its advantages after the alleged assault on Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal in the run up for the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi. The Maliwal incident has

dented Kejriwal's image badly, who is facing corruption charges in the excise policy scam case, which is visible in the party's campaign. The saffron party seems to have an upper hand in all seven seats as this has not gone well among the women voters. Top BJP leaders are confident to repeat the 2019 results. The

BJP, which is banking on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charisma and corruption free administration in his 10 years rule, has now focussed its

strategy, utilising the alleged assault on Maliwal, to portray its top leadership, including Kejriwal, as responsible first through "silence". acceptance, and then a "direct attack" on Maliwal — for "denigration" and "assault" of their own women colleagues. On the other hand, Kejriwal who has maintained radio silence, seems to be on back foot, hurting the party's electoral prospects. The BJP's campaign strategy to counter the INDIA Bloc in Delhi has been to target the AAP more than the Congress.

Besides, the BJP has consistently raked corruption allegations against the AAP, including the nowscrapped excise policy and 10 other alleged scams. AAP hopes Kejriwal's arrest will

generate sympathy for the party in the general elections and help it win maximum seats in Delhi and Punjab. The BJP hopes that Kejriwal's arrest has dented his image and the image of a party with

a difference (AAP), and it would not get any sympathy votes in Delhi. BJP leaders in Delhi, however, are confident of retaining all the seven seats the party has held since 2014. political According to pundits, the election is being contested between two personalities -Modi and Kejriwal in Delhi. This is for the first time that an election is being fought without any issues. Interestingly, there is no anti-incumbency factor against the Modi Government at the Centre. The BJP has crafted its electoral campaign well planned to corner the

The BJP has also sought to balance the caste factor in announcing its candidates -fielding Harsh Malhotra a Punjabi from East Delhi AAP candidate against Kuldeep Kumar. Baniya leader Praveen Khandelwal from Chandni Chowk against Congress veteran Jai Prakash Aggarwal, MLA and Gujjar leader Ramvir Singh Bidhuri from South Delhi and AAP candidate Sahiram Pehalwan, Jat leader Kamaljeet Sehrawat

Kejriwal Government.

from West Delhi against AAl leader and former Congress MP Mahabal Mishra and Dalit leader Yogendra Chandolia from the reserved North West Delhi seat against Congress leader Udit Raj. It has retained sitting MP Manoj Tiwari from North East Delhi where Congress has fielded former JNU president Kanhaiya Kumar. Aggarwal and Mishra have posed some challenges to BJP candidates while Kumar is facing a financial crunch to run the campaign. Kumar is collecting money through crowdfunding. The alliance of AAP and Congress, which are

fighting jointly in Delhi, also seems to have not worked. Insiders said AAP supporters do not want to revive the Congress. Similarly, Congress supporters are also against the AAP.

Besides, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has also fielded seven candidates here with an aim for a stronger showing. In the early 2000s, the BSP emerged as a significant competitor to Delhi's established political parties. However, it gradually lost its support and voter share to the AAP and onwards. Despite this setback, the BSP's resilience and determination remained

## Modi rips into INDIA Bloc's Communal plank

make

false

which

P Modi on Wednesday tore into the INDIA Bloc accusing of being extremely "communal, extremely casteist and extremely nepotistic" as he alleged that the Congress is to be blamed for the anti-Sikh

Addressing a rally in West Delhi's Dwarka sector 14, the Prime Minister said the BJP's development model is committed to 'nation first' but for the Congress and the INDIA grouping, the only agenda is family first'.

Modi denounced communal and casteist agendas of the INDIA Bloc, accusing them of prioritising vote-bank politics over the welfare of the nation. He criticised their divisive tactics and highlighted instances of communal violence and corruption under their rule. "The country also understands



Delhiites throng Dwarka sector 14 to welcome Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday

alliance, that vote is not going to be of any use to the country. Every vote given to BJP will

that if by mistake any vote is saying in one voice 'Phir Ek cast in favour of the INDIA Baar Modi Sarkar'," he said. Baar Modi Sarkar'," he said. He said, development model says, Nation First. On the other strengthen the resolve of 'Viksit Bharat'. That is why this huge sea of people is also first. This INDI alliance is a

symbol of every evil that exists in the country today. They are highly communal, casteist, and family-oriented. Our Delhi has been a direct witness to their communalism."

Attacking the Congress and the INDIA Bloc, he referred

to 1984 riots when Sikhs development and efficient were burnt alive. "It was in governance, contrasting it with Delhi that my Sikh brothers and sisters were burned alive with burning tires around their necks. Whose crime was this? Congress. Today, every party standing under the Congress umbrella is guilty of the Sikh riots. It is Modi who is delivering justice to the victims of the Sikh

riots. As soon as Modi came to power, an SIT was formed. Hundreds cases were reopened. The Congress leaders who were roaming freely have been punished by us," he

During his speech, Modi emphasised the stark differences between the governance models of the BJP and the Congress-led INDIA Bloc. He underscored the BJP's commitment to fast-paced

injustice perpetuated by the

Congress and its allies. Speaking about the Congress and INDIA Bloc's misrule and caste-based politics, Modi said, "Who doesn't know about the prestigious Jamia Millia Islamia, a Central University in Delhi? For

60 years, it remained a regular educational institution, even Dalits, there, backward classes, and tribals used to

get reservations. But in 2011, the Congress Government played a trick. Suddenly Jamia was declared a minority institution. This imposed a 50 per cent reservation for Muslims in Jamia. Earlier, all SC/ST/OBCs used to get reservations in admissions. Now even that has been restricted based on

tried to protect her little sister

— Lia (3) during the attack.

extraordinary courage and a

strong spirit, inspiring the

have

They

religion.'

## **SC** slams Soren for half truths, he withdraws plea

**NEW DELHI** 

Tailed former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Wednesday failed to get any relief from the Supreme Court which pulled him up for "suppressing material facts" in his plea against his arrest in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam.

A vacation bench of justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma allowed Soren's counsel Kapil Sibal to withdraw the pleas for interim bail for Lok Sabha poll campaigning and against his arrest after the apex court indicated that it would dismiss them as Soren has not approached the court with clean hands. The court pointed out that

Soren did not apprise it of the April 4 order of the special



PMLA. court cognisance of the prosecution complaint, which is the Enforcement Directorate's equivalent to a charge sheet, and also that his regular bail petition was filed on April 15 and dismissed on May 13. ... You had approached two

courts for the same relief... We have doubts that your client (Soren) was acting in a bonafide manner...," it said.

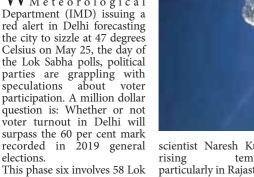
guest. Despite the deep wounds inflicted by the Hamas

## WORST NOT OVER YET! Brace up for more fire from the skies

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

With the India
Meteorological
Department (IMD) issuing a red alert in Delhi forecasting the city to sizzle at 47 degrees Celsius on May 25, the day of the Lok Sabha polls, political parties are grappling with speculations about voter participation. A million dollar question is: Whether or not voter turnout in Delhi will surpass the 60 per cent mark recorded in 2019 general

Sabha constituencies across six States, including Delhi, Haryana, Odisha, and Bihar, as well as two Union Territories. All seven seats in Delhi and all ten seats in Haryana will be contested in this phase amid fear of blistering heat with temperature going up.



According to senior IMD expected to rise again in the and Delhi till Sunday.



scientist Naresh Kumar, the coming days. rising temperatures, As per the IMD, heatwave to particularly in Rajasthan, have severe heatwave conditions are very likely in most prompted the issuance of red alerts, indicating parts of Rajasthan, extreme heatwave conditions. In Punjab, many/some pockets Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, while there has over Punjab, Haryana-Chandigarh, been a slight decrease in Rajasthan and West Uttar Pradesh, in isolated pockets of temperatures due to a western

disturbance, the mercury is

Mahesh Palawat, president of Skymet Weather and a private Indian weather forecaster, was quoted by a media report that, "Our warning indicates that temperatures are likely to reach high heatwave levels in the national Capital."

The apprehension surrounding voter turnout in Delhi's upcoming elections is likely to be compounded by the heat index, which measures the apparent temperature that people feel the outside due to a combination of high temperature and humidity.

West

northwest Madhya Pradesh

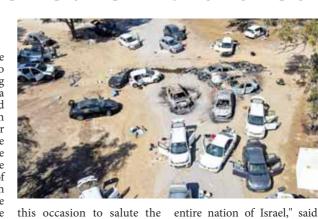
For example on Wednesday Delhi faced scorching temperatures at 42 degrees Celsius, however, the heat index soared to a staggering 51.6 degrees Celsius, highlighting the severe heat stress and discomfort endured by residents.

#### **Israel honours Kerala caregivers** KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Naor Gilon, the Ambassador of Israel to India, while celebrating National Day of Israel in India said both the Government and the people of India stood on the side of Israel since October 7. Gilon thanked the Government of India and the people for standing with the Jewish nation in its hour of crisis. "From October 7, both the Government and the people of India stood on the

side of Israel. And this we will never forget. The amount of support we get here is nothing short of amazing. It's a testimony of the extraordinary relations between the Indian and the Jewish people," said the Israeli Ambassador.

Ambassador also tributes to two Keralites who risked lives to save aged couple during the attack by Hamas on October 7. "I take



shown

heroism of people of Indian Gilon. descent: Meera and Sabitha, The 76th anniversary of Israel caregivers from Kerala, who was observed on Tuesday at New Delhi with a call to the saved an elderly couple during the terror attack; and Hamas to release the 128 Romi (6), an Israeli child of citizens of Israel who were Indian descent, whose parents were murdered in front of her,

taken hostage by the Hamas on October 7, 2023. Israel's National Day was organised by the Embassy of Israel in India with Vinay Mohan Kwatra, the foreign secretary of India, gracing the occasion as chief

terrorists on Israeli people, the Ambassador paid glowing tributes to the two caregivers from Kerala who saved an aged couple from the jaws of death. He stated that this Independence Day was complicated and painful. "But our resolve is strong. While we mark this Independence Day, our thoughts are with the 128 loved ones who are still held captive. Their immediate release remains our sincere hope and ongoing mission. Speaking at the event, Foreign Secretary Kwatra said, "We join the people of Israel to celebrate this momentous occasion. It is deeply inspiring that the extraordinary journey of a nation that has not only survived and thrived against all odds, but also transformed itself into a

landscape of

advancement,

flourishing

innovation,

and growth.

## **Extreme heat wave warning for 16 districts in the State**

STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

evere heat waves and heat Swaves would be witnessed in more than 16 districts in the next 24 hours warned Met; alert of thundery activities and gusty winds has been issued by Met for several regions.

The day witnessed extremely hot sunshine in Bhopal since Wednesday morning. There was scorching heat in the afternoon. The temperature was recorded at 43 degrees Celsius. The situation was such that even in areas which are usually crowded, there was very little traffic. People kept avoiding going out.

However, it became cloudy in the afternoon. Strong winds blew and it started raining around 4 pm, Rainfall was witnessed in many areas including MP Nagar, Arera Hills, Jail Pahari, Govindpura, Tulsi Nagar. Even

There is a trend of scorching heat in Bhopal in the month of May, In 8 out of 10 years the temperature has crossed 44 degrees. In the year 2016, this record was 46.7 degrees. This year, the heat remained mild in the first fortnight, but from May 18 onwards it started becoming extremely hot. On Tuesday, May 21, the mercury reached a record 43.3 degrees Celsius. On Wednesday there was also severe heat in the

The temperature remained around 40 degrees in April, but it is expected to be hotter in May. The average maximum temperature of the month is 41.1 degrees and the minimum temperature is 26.6 degrees. In the last 10 years the mercury has remained above 43 degrees. It has even crossed 46 degrees once.

there are sometimes rainy periods in North India. Along with lightning and thunder, it also rains. It has also rained in the last

The highest temperature of 45 degrees was recorded in Ratlam. Ratlam remained the hottest in the state for the second consecutive day. Whereas, Bhopal and Indore were the hottest of the season.

On Wednesday, the maximum day temperaturé was 43.9 degrees in Bhopal, 43.4 degrees in Indore, 43.7 degrees in Gwalior, 43.8 degrees in Ujjain and 42 degrees in Jabalpur, Whereas in Shivpuri, Sagar, Naugaon, Datia, Guna, Khajuraho, Khandwa, Khargone, Shajapur, Damoh and Dhar, the temperature was recorded at 44 degrees or more.

It rained in Budni of Schore. The Meteorological Department has

after this it remained cloudy till Due to Western Disturbance, also issued an alert of thunderstorm and rain in Betul, Chhindwara, Pandhurna, Sconi, Balaghat on Wednesday.

The cities with maximum temperatures were Ratlam 45 degrees celsius, Bhopal 43.9 degrees celsius, Ujjain 43.8 degrees cel-sius,Gwalior 43.7 degrees cel-sius,Indore 43.4 degrees celsius and Jabalpur 42 degrees celsius. These days the temperature is rising in almost all the districts of the state. The day becomes intensely hot due to bright sunlight from the morning itself, while the nights are also hot. Along with Gwalior-Chambal, now Malwa-Nimar is also hot. Here the day temperature reaches beyond 45 degrees. Senior meteorologist of IMD, Bhopal, Dr. Vedprakash Singh said, the entire state will be in the grip of heat wave from May 24-25.

Maheshwar of Khargone district, people are flocking to the banks of Narmada as the evening approaches. Getting relief from the heat by taking a bath in the

The temperature of Jabalpur has been reaching beyond 42 degrees for the last three days, in such a situation, Jabalpur Municipal Corporation has taken initiative to provide relief to the people of Jabalpur, Defogger machines are being run at major intersections of the city. People are being provided coolness through artificial rain

i.e. water fogging. In Ratlam's Alot, Shri Govardhan Gaushala is spraying water on the cows to save them from the heat. There are about 470 cows in the cowshed. There is severe heat in the area. The temperature here has been above 43 degrees for three days.



#### Various programmes being held at vehivle factory

PNS JABALPUR

nder the cleanliness campaign program Fun by the Government of India, Ministry of Defence, many programs are being orga-nized at Vehicle Factory Jabalpur, a unit of AVNL. In this sequence, a cycle rally will be organized on May 26, 2024 at 6:00 am at the security gate number 01 of the vehicle factory under the leadership of the Chief General Manager of the fac-

Regarding the organization of the rally, Chief General Manager of the factory Sanjeev Kumar Bhola said that the purpose of this rally is to make everyone aware about the benefits of cycling. Cycling not only benefits the environment but also gives us a healthy life both phys-

ically and mentally. If we make cycling a part of our life, we feel more healthy and confident. Apart from the officers and employees of the vehicle factory, officers and employees of GCF, Khamaria and OFJ, children of various schools and city residents will also participate in the cycle rally and will give the message of

Regarding the organization of the rally, the Chief General Manager said that the factory is committed to maintaining cleanliness in all its plants and estate premises and through this cycle rail cycle rally, we want to give this message not only to the estate video but also to all the city residents. That by ensuring cleanliness around us, we can contribute in making our country clean and beau-

To participate in the clean-liness rally, all the participants will have to fill the registration form issued by the factory. The last date to fill the form is 23 May 2024. Cycling jersey and welcome kit will be provided to the participants taking part in the rally. For more information you

can contact on mobile number 930044 2884. To make this rally successful, Kamlesh Kumar General Manager, Lieutenant Colonel Rupinder Singh, Senior Security Officer, Vipul Bajpai Work Manager, Shailendra Singh, Subi Samuel, Golu Jharia, Rupesh Mishra, Ajay Awasthi, Prashant Ahirwar. Including a large number of officers and employees, they are making efforts and have appealed to the city residents to participate in this rally in large numbers.

#### Bhopal BHEL achieves the title of top unit in performance in the year 2023-24 STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

Due to the scorching heat in

M Ramanathan, Executive Spirector, BHEL, Bhopal, while congratulating the employees and officers present in large numbers in the cultural hall on Wednesday for the successful performance of BHEL, Bhopal in the year 2023-24

He said that the same has been possible due to their hard work and dedication. In the financial year 2023-24, BHEL, Bhopal has achieved the title of the top unit in performance at the corporation level. While thanking all the depart-ments of the unit for achieving the set target, he said that BHEL, Bhopal has achieved a Turnover of Rs.3403 crore (15% more than the year 2022-23) and earned a profit before tax of Rs. 98 crore (42% more than 2022-23) which is a significant achievement in the

current competitive business environment.

Addressing the employees, he said that the company has taken care of the interests of all its employees and stakeholders even in the most difficult circumstances and today when it is very difficult to make profit due to competition, BHEL has achieved a respectable turnover & have earned prof-

This has been possible only due to the successful guidance of the Chairman and Managing Director of BHEL and the members of the Board of Directors and the hard work of all the employees and their attachment and dedication towards the company. In his address, he told all the employees and especially the engineering sector employees that we have to continuously focus on development in new business areas and develop new



products as per the expectations of the customers keeping in mind the product diversification arena. Undoubtedly, today BHEL and BHEL, Bhopal have a very good order book, but it is our responsibil-ity to complete all these orders within the stipulated time limit. Along with this, we need to make the design, process and working systems simpler & easy to reduce the cost of the product. He also directed that while ensuring the availabili-ty of material, we have to take

care that production should never be interrupted due to shortage of material. Ramanathan said that in the next financial year we not only have to achieve more turnover but also have to earn more profit while ensuring all the standards of production. RK Aggarwal, General Manager (CPX) gave a pre-sentation on the performance by BHEL, Bhopal in the year 2023-24. He said that BHEL Corporation has achieved a total turnover of Rs 22920 crore during the financial year

than the previous year 2022-Similarly, the company earned a profit after tax of Rs. 260 crore. The company has booked orders worth Rs 77907 crore in the year 2023-24 which is 231% higher than the orders received for 2022-23 worth Rs. 23548 crore. This is

2023-24which is 3.5% more

a testament to the trust and confidence of customers towards BHEL products. He shared information about the performance of various departments of Bhopal Unit and the achievements of the

BK Singh, General Manager (HR) welcomed all the officers and employees at the beginning of the program and congratulated them for the good turnover and said that BHEL, Bhopal has always worked with great enthusiasm maintaining the tradition of industrial harmony, we will contin-ue to contribute fully to the progress of the company. While wishing everyone good luck for the new financial year, he said that the coming time belongs to BHEL and it is the duty of all our employees to work with full dedication and take this great company to new heights.



Hajj pilgrims being given a warm send off by their relatives and family members before they leave for an annual Hajj journey to Mecca shrine, at State Haj House in

## On the orders of High Court, UMC sub-engineer suspended

STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

the sub engineer and for-mer building officer of Ujjain Municipal Corporation has been suspended after a bailable warrant was issued against the Municipal Corporation Commissioner for not removing the encroachment even after the order of the High Court.

In another case, an order has been issued to remove the cashier of Berasia Municipality, who came under the investigation of Lokayukta. Cashier has been posted to Municipal Corporation Gwalior.

Urban Development and Housing Department Commissioner Bharat Yadav has suspended former building officer and sub-engineer Harsh Jain posted in Ujjain Municipal

During the suspension period, Jain's headquarters will be the office of the Divisional Joint

Corporation.

Housing Department Commissioner **Bharat Yadav** has suspended former building officer and subengineer Harsh Jain posted in Ujjain Municipal Corporation

Director, Urban Development, Indore, and he will get a living allowance from Ujjain Municipal Corporation, According to the order issued by Yadav, Jain was made the building officer incharge in the order issued on January 11, 2023.

After this, on August 23, 2023, Neha Khattar had complained about encroachment on which action was directed. Due to non-action on this, a case was filed in the High Court, after

which the court ordered action. Jain was then given orders to take action on this, Instead of taking action on the order given in the case number WP 26258/2023 filed in the High Court, Building Officer in-charge Jain had only given Due to this, a bailable warrant

against the former Municipal Commissioner Ujjain. In this way, taking serious note of the negligence of the former building officer and sub-engineer in the matter of removing encroachment, orders for their ension have been issued. On the other hand, another case is related to the cashier who came in the proceedings of Lokayukta police in Berasia municipality. It was told that Sachin Kathane is posted as Cashier and Assistant Accountant in Municipality Berasia. Crime number 45/24 has been registered against them

was issued by the High Court

in Lokayukta Police Organization, Bhopal under Section 7 Prevention of Corruption Act. Lokayukta Police had written a letter to the Urban Development and Housing Department to transfer this employee from Barisya Municipality to somewhere else. After this, action has been taken in the case of traps and raids on the basis of the rules of the General Administration Department. In such cases, within three days of receiving information through any medium regarding the accused officer-employee or the case coming to cognizance, such officer employee is removed from the post in which he was held, or has come under the radar of raids. There is a provision to remove it from somewhere else. Therefore, Sachin Kathane Cashier and Assistant Accountant have been transferred to Municipal

#### CBI inspector axed, three including DSP suspended: College scam

STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) terminated the services of inspector Rahul Raj, who was caught red-handed and arrested by the agency while accepting a bribe to give clean chit to nursing colleges affiliated with the Nursing Council of Madhya Pradesh, officials aware of the matter said on Wednesday, The CBI on Monday arrested

13 people, including two of its inspectors, in connection with the scam.

In the first information report (FIR) filed by the Delhi CBI vigilance team, the agency has named four officers, deputy superintendent of police Ashish Prasad, inspector Rahul Raj and two inspectors of MP police - Rishikant of MP police -Asathe and Sushil Kumar, who were on deputation in the CBI, with 19 others for accepting bribe of Rs.2 lakh to Rs.10 lakh to give a positive report regarding facilities, infrastructure and faculties at nurs-

ing colleges. According to an officer of CBI, Raj has been terminated from service with immediate effect under the "zero toler-

ance policy". "Rahul Raj and Sushil Kumar were arrested after they were caught red-handed while accepting a bribe, while Prasad and Asathe have been removed and will be arrested after the probe", an agency official said. The action by the vigilance team comes after collecting details for the last three months following the Madhya Pradesh high court's order for conducting state-wide inspections to ascertain whether nursing colleges were following the laid down norms and were up to standards in terms of infrastructural facilities and

The CBI had inspected 308 nursing colleges out of the total 364, against which the high court had issued the direction in December 2022.

During its probe, the CBI found 169 colleges suitable to run the nursing course, 74 col-leges deficient with minimal problems, which can be rectified and the remaining 65 colleges were found unsuitable

to run nursing courses. The CBI is also inspecting the remaining 200 colleges affiliated with Madhya Pradesh Nursing Regulatory Committee.

#### DGP awards 51 cops for remarkable work

STAFF REPORTER # BHOPAL

irector General's Commendation Roll (DGCR) Award Ceremony was organized at the Police Officers' Mess of Police Headquarters on Wednesday with the aim of honoring the police officers and employees who have made significant contributions in maintaining law and order in Madhya Pradesh by demonstrating their devotion to

In the program, DGP Sudhir Saxena honored 51 police officers and employees who did remark-able work in various fields by giving them citations and discs.

On this occasion, DGP Saxena said that I appreciate the sacrifice and dedication of all the policemen. Our policemen, standing firm on the path of duty and facing all kinds of challenges, have set an example of dedicated public service in the field of crime control and civil security. Your family members also have an important contribution in your success. You have made the motto of patriotism-public service meaningful.

He said that crimes should be controlled while being sensitive towards the weaker sections and women.

In the investiture ceremony organized at the Officers' Mess of

PHQ, DGP Saxena said that in the glorious journey of Madhya Pradesh Police Department since its inception till now, it has played an unforgettable role in maintaining intact the traditions of law and order, peace, mutual love and brotherhood in the state. have contributed. Many brave officers and sol-

diers have played an important role in taking Madhya Pradesh Police to this position. Recognizing the work of police personnel encourages a culture of excellence. All the police officers and soldiers of the state should take inspiration from him. He said that police do not have personal lives, we always have to be ready to work amidst challenges to perform our duty. In such a situation, it is very important to honor and encourage the police officers and employees doing good work by organizing such events to boost their morale. DGP Shri Saxena said that apart from the 51 police officers and employees honored in this program today, there are many other policemen who have done excellent work. I request all the officers to identify such officers and

as well as to improve the working environment. Keep making continuous efforts to increase the efficiency of the police by doing self-assessment and always keep working with full devotion and dedication.

The conferment of the Director General's Commendation Roll (DGCR) is a unique tradition of the uniformed forces in which the Head of the Force confers a decoration in public recognition of the outstanding work done by his officers/men to boost

morale Following this tradition, a grand ceremony was organized by DGP Saxena to confer this decoration from the year 2023. Under this, all the selected officers/employees are being respectfully invited to the Police Headquarters and given the said decoration in front of all the senior officers in a dignified ceremony. In this series, in November 2022, decorations were awarded to selected officers/employees who performed

well in excellent work. On achieving commendable achievements during anti-bandit campaign, anti-Naxal campaign and other campaigns. Having employees and reward them in excellent and clean records contheir respective units. He said that tinuously for 15 years. For drivers the Madhya Pradesh Police on continuous excellent and acci-Department is also making dent free driving for 15 years.On resolving unresolved issues. On efforts to increase the efficiency of all police officers and soldiers doing other praiseworthy work.



NSUI activists burn an effigy of CBI during a demonstration against the state's nursing college scam, at PCC headquarters in Bhogal on Wednesday

#### NCC cadets organise 'Nai Roshni Scheme' programme

Bhopal: All the cadets of 4 MP BN NCC organized a program on Wednesday on the "Nai Roshni Scheme" under the leadership of the Commanding Officer, Colonel Ajay Kohli, The guest at the event was social

activist Meeta Wadhwa. This scheme majorly focuses on the leadership development of minority community's women According to the Sachar Report of 2011 the participation and involvement of minority women

compound to the majority one is only 51%, in the workplace it is confined to 13% and their political representation is only 1% in rajya sabha and 7% in lok sabha. Under the "Nai Roshni Scheme" these minority women are provided interventions for leadership development, financial literacy as well as skill development. Through an online webinar video conference lecture respected ANOs along with the cadets joined and got enlightened over the same. About 10 institutes joined through the online meet, total strength comprised 180 cadets.10 PI Staff/ANOs. It emboldens minority women to move out of the confinements of their home and hold a dignified position in our society. This initiative also promoted the women empowerment amalgamated with the idea of digital India and many such events will be further promoted.

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## Maoists asked to suggest rehabilitation scheme

STAFF REPORTER ■

Chhattisgarh Home Minister Vijay Sharma on Wednesday urged Maoists to surrender and asked them to suggest a new rehabilitation policy for them in

The Minister issued an e-mail ID and a Google form for this purpose and said the rehabilitation would be done under the Niyad Nellanar scheme of the government.

Talking to the media, Sharma said: "The Maoists must join the mainstream and accept the constitution for playing a key role in making Chhattisgarh a better

Chhattisgarh had earlier announced the Niyad Nellanar scheme to boost development in Maoist-affected areas.



According to government, considering the basic needs of these villages, initiatives will be taken for infrastructure as well as all-around development of tribal Along with the development of basic facilities in Maoists affected areas, villagers there will get benefits of 32 individual schemes. For this, so far, 14 new police camps cum development The Minister issued an e-mail ID and a **Google form for** this purpose and said the rehabilitation would be done under the **Niyad Nellanar** scheme of the government.

centres have been started in Maoist-affected areas. People living within a fivekilometer radius of these camps

are eligible for this scheme.

### MLA to adopt 24 children of Kawardha accident victims



STAFF REPORTER

hhattisgarh MLA Bhawna Bohra has announced that she will adopt the 24 children orphaned by an

accident which left 19 people dead at Kawardha.

Taking to 'X', Bohra said she has decided to take care of 24 children.

responsibility for their

"I will take the responsibility for their education, employment and marriage"

education, employment and marriage," she said.

She said this after visiting Kukdur village from where the entire accident victims hailed.

# Now cashless payments at liquor stores in C'garh

**STAFF REPORTER** 

The Chhattisgarh government is starting the facility of cashless payment at liquor shops across the state, an official communiqué said Wednesday.

There have been complaints that many shops sell liquor at higher prices than those fixed by the government.

This has caused a lot of dissatisfaction among consumers.

Presently, liquor is sold by scanning the QR code marked on each bottle and against cash. This system has been proved faulty for many reasons.

With the introduction of a cashless online payment facility through UPI, liquor shops won't be able to charge more than the prescribed amount.

Shop-wise QR codes are being obtained from banks,



which will be pasted outside each shop. After scanning the QR code, liquor can be purchased at the prescribed retail sale rate.

Liquor will be sold in a more systematic manner; this will reduce the crowds and get rid of the problem of change as well.

The priority is to curb corruption by ensuring maximum transparency.

In the initial stages, this premium foreign liquor shops. If results are positive, it will be implemented in other shops as

#### **Renewal of ration card** causing inconvenience to people: Congress



STAFF REPORTER

hhattisgarh Congress Chief Deepak Baij on Wednesday accused the government depriving people of food for the last three months. Speaking in Raipur, he

said Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai began renewing ration cards to put his picture on them. Due to this, poor people are unable to get food.

There are 77 lakh ration card holders in the state. More than 14 lakh of them have not been able to renew them, and 56 lakh such people have not received rice for the last three months, he said.

During Congress rule,
35 kg of rice was
distributed every month and additional rice was also distributed under the Pradhan Mantri Garib

Kalyan Yojana, he said.

The BJP government has reduced the 35 kg ration distribution to 5 kg per person and deprived lakhs of people of food in the name of ration card renewal, he said.

## Monsoon likely to arrive early in Chhattisgarh



STAFF REPORTER RAIPUR

Thhattisgarh is going to heave a Chhattisgarii is going to men sun and intense heat soon as

monsoon is expected to arrive early. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday predicted the arrival of monsoon in Chhattisgarh between June 12 and

There are also chances of premonsoon showers by June 5, the IMD said. According to the Department, the monsoon will become active in Kerala by the end of May.

The IMD also predicted heavy rains with thunder and lightning in many parts of Chhattisgarh.

A trough is located from North West Uttar Pradesh to North Bihar which will cause the rains in Chhattisgarh, the IMD said.

## Chhattisgarh gears up for **World Environment Day**

STAFF REPORTER

Chhattisgarh is gearing up to hold competitions and awareness campaigns environmental preservation and climate change World Environment Day on June 5.

communiqué said the state Environment Protection Board will hold a postermaking competition in Raipur on the theme of 'Climate Change: The Biggest Challenge of the Century'.

The competition will be held in four categories. The first will be for children under age 12, the second for 13–17 year olds, the third will be for 18-21 year olds and the fourth category will



be for the disabled. Registration will be

venue: Naveen Rest House, Civil Line, Raipur. done at the competition Attractive rewards will be

**Environment Protection Board will hold** a poster-making competition in Raipur on the theme of 'Climate **Change: The Biggest** Challenge of the Century'.

given to those who bag the



Glimpses of vulture buddies working towards the conservation of Griffon vultures in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on International Biodiversity Day on Wednesday. The endangered avians have made a comeback to the region after a long

### Family history raises skin cancer risk more than sun exposure



**AGENCIES** 

 $M^{
m ore\ than\ exposure\ to\ sun,}_{
m family\ history\ or\ inherited}$ genes play a larger role in the risk of developing melanoma -- skin cancer -- than previously thought, finds a study on Wednesday. Researchers from Cleveland Clinic in the US noted that genetic screens to assess risk factors for patients with a family history of melanoma are rare as previous, limited studies showed that only 2-2.5 per cent of all cases are genetic.

Up to 15 per cent (1 in 7) of patients who received melanoma diagnoses between 2017 and 2020 showed mutations in cancer susceptibility genes, revealed their results, published in the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology.

Joshua Arbesman from the Clinic said that genetic testing can help physicians to "proactively identify, screen and even treat the families" with inherited genes.

He urged physicians and insurance companies "to expand their criteria when it comes to offering genetic testing to individuals with family histories of melanoma".

It is "because inherited predisposition to it isn't nearly as rare as we think it is", he added.

The findings also support an increasingly popular opinion amongst cancer biologists: there are risk factors beyond sun exposure that can influence an individual's chances of developing

"Not all of my patients had inherited mutations that made them more susceptible to the sun,"

"There's clearly something more going on here and more research is needed," he said.

## Depression, anxiety common among attention deficit children

AGENCIES

Asmaller brain region responsible for control over behaviour, processing of emotion, and communication may explain why about one in two children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is likely to experience depression, anxiety, and explosive outbursts, according to a study on Wednesday.

ADHD affects around one in 14 young people under the age of 18 and in around half of these cases it persists into adulthood.

Mood disorders such as depression, anxiety disorder, and verbal or physical outbursts due to an inability to regulate their emotions in children with ADHD were previously thought to be a result of problems with cognition and motivation.

But in the study, scientists from Fudan University in Shanghai, China, and the University of Cambridge



showed that emotional dysregulation occurs independently of these, and is because of a brain region called pars orbitalis.

"The pars orbitalis is a well-connected part of the brain, and if it hasn't developed properly it might make it difficult for individuals to control their emotions and communicate with others appropriately, especially in social situations," said Barbara Sahakian from the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Cambridge.

For the study, published in the journal Nature Mental Health, the team identified 350 individuals with high symptoms of ADHD and found that more than half (51.4 per cent) had signs of emotion dysregulation and this was independent of

cognitive and motivational problems.

Children with only low-ADHD symptoms but with a high score of emotion dysregulation at age 13 years were 2.85 times more likely to have developed high-ADHD

symptoms by age 14 years.
Using brain imaging data, they found that pars orbitalis was smaller among children who scored highly for ADHD and emotional problems.

The research also revealed that the commonly-prescribed drug to help the condition Ritalin appears to be less effective at treating this

symptom. Adding emotional dysregulation as a key part of ADHD will help people better understand the problems the child is experiencing, Sahakian

He said this may help advance effective treatments for the regulation of emotion, such as cognitive behavioural therapy.

## 2024 LS elections have 8,360 candidates, highest since 1996

Atotal of 8,360 candidates are contesting the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, the highest since 1996, according to an analysis of official data.

In the 2019 polls, there were 8,039 candidates, and in 1996, a record 13,952 candidates were in the fray for 543 seats of the Lower House of Parliament.

The 2024 general elections are being held in seven phases, with five rounds of polling completed. The sixth and last rounds will be held on May 25 and June 1, respectively. Counting of votes will be taken up on June 4.

The fourth phase of the elections held on May 13 had the highest number of candidates in the fray, 1,717 in 96 parliamentary constituencies in 10 states and Union Territories (UTs). The first phase held on April 19 had 1,625 candidates in 102 constituencies in 21 states and UTs, according to Election Commission (EC)

There were 1,198 candidates in the second phase on April 26 in 89 constituencies across 13 states and UTs, 1,352 candidates in the third phase on May 7 in 94 constituencies in 12 states and UTs and 695 candi-



dates in the fifth phase on May 20 in 49 constituencies across eight states and UTs.

In the upcoming sixth and seven phases on May 25 and June 1, there are 869 and 904 candidates, according to the EC data. Fifty-seven constituencies are going to polls in seven and eight states and UTs on May 25 and June 1, respectively.

The number of candidates contesting the Lok Sabha polls has seen a rise of over four times from 1,874 in 1952 -- the first time elections were held -- to 8,360 in 2024, and the average number of candidates constituency, the number

per constituency has increased from 4.67 to 15.39 on an average, according to official data. There used to be only around three to five contestants per Lok Sabha seats on an average till as late as the sixth Lok Sabha elections in 1977 but in the previous elections 14.8 candidates contested per constituency across the country. There has been a marked increase in the total number of candidates contesting the elec-

tions over the years. While in

1952 there were 1,874 candi-

dates for 489 seats with an aver-

age of 3.83 contestants per

steadily increased to 2,784 candidates in 1971 with an average of 5.37 per constituency, according to official data. In 1977, 2,439 candidates con-

tested and average candidates per constituency stood at 4.5. The 1980 elections saw an increase in the number of candidates to 4,629 with an average of 8.54 per seat, the data showed. In 1984-85, the eighth general elections, had 5,492 candidates with an average of 10.13 contestants per con-

The ninth general elections in 1989 had 6,160 candidates in the fray with an average of

in the tenth general elections in 1991-92, 8,668 candidates contested for 543 seats with an average of 15.96 per constituency, according to official

There were a record 13,952 candidates in the fray for 543 Lok Sabha seats in 1996 with the average contestants per seat increasing to 25.69 from 16.38 in the previous elections in 1991, the data showed. The increasing of security deposit from Rs 500 to Rs 10,000 by the EC apparently helped in bringing down the number of contestants per seat to 8.75 candidates in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections.

It was after a long gap that the total number of contestants was less than 5,000 (4,750) that only increased marginally in the 1999 general elections to 4,648 candidates, averaging 8.56 candidates per seat.

In 2004, the number of contestants again crossed the 5,000-mark with 5,435 contestants in the fray for 543 Lok Sabha seats, averaging just over 10 contestants per seat. The 2009 general elections saw a 8,070 candidates with the average of contestants per seat sharply increasing to 14.86. A total of 8,251 candidates are in the fray in the 2014 Lok Sabha

## Women less than 10 per cent of LS picks: ADR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

ess than 10 per cent of the Less than 10 per cent of the candidates contesting in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections are women, according to an analysis of data shared by the poll rights body Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). Of the 8,337 candidates analysed, only 797 are women, representing a mere 9.5 per cent of the total candidates contesting across the seven phases of the elections.

This is the first election since the passage of the women's reservation bill to reserve onethird of seats in Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women, reviving a bill pending for 27 years for want of consensus among parties. The bill is yet to come into effect.

During the first phase of the elections, out of 1,618 candidates, only 135 were women. This pattern continued in the subsequent phases, with women candidates remaining a small fraction of the total. Phase 2 saw 1,192 candidates of which affidavits of 1,198 candidates were analysed and as

many as 100 were women. Phase 3 had 1,352 candidates, including 123 women and 244 with criminal cases. In phase 4, affidavits of 1,710

out of 1,717 candidates were analysed and 170 were women. Phase 5 had the fewest candi-

dates at 695, with 82 women, while in phase 6, affidavits of 866 out of 869 candidates were analysed, and there were 92 women. In phase 7, there will be 904 candidates candidates, with only 95 women.

This significant gender imbalance has sparked criticism from political analysts and activists, who question why political parties are waiting for the women's reservation bill to be implemented instead of proactively issuing tickets to women.Ór. Ramaswamy, Professor at Delhi University's Jesus and Mary College, has emphasised that political parties should take concrete steps to promote women's candidacy.

"Political parties should have been more proactive and fielded more women candidates," she said, highlighting the effectiveness of seat reservations for women within party structures, as seen in Britain's Labour Party.

With women constituting near-

ly half of India's electorate, their under-representation in the candidate pool raises broader questions about the barriers hindering women's full participation in the political sphere, Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad Ansari, Associate Professor at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), said. Beyond symbolic gestures and promises, he stressed the importance of structural reforms to ensure equal opportunities for women in politics, underscoring the critical role of party leadership in promoting gender diversity. "Political parties must prioritise gender inclusion in candidate selection and provide adequate support to women aspirants," he

The issue of women's political representation extends beyond numerical quotas to encompass systemic changes in party dynamics and electoral processes, noted Farhat Jahan, a retired faculty member at Abdullah Women's College at

emphasised.

## SC cancels bail given by HC to eight PFI members

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday set aside a verdict of the Madras High Court which had granted bail to eight accused in a case registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against alleged PFI operatives, holding that national security is of paramount importance.

A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal directed the accused, who were granted bail by the high court on October 19 last year, to surrender forthwith and go back to jail. "The impugned order passed by the high court is set aside," the bench said while pronouncing its judgement.

The court observed it can't be denied that national security is always of paramount imporrorism is liable to be restricted. The bench delivered its verdict on a plea filed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) challenging the high court judgement granting bail to these accused.

The eight accused -

Abuthahir, Mohammed, Syed Ishaq, Khaja Mohaideen, Yasar Arafath and Fayaz Ahmed — were arrested in September 2022.

apex court had posted the NIA's plea challenging the high court order for hearing after advocate Rajat Nair, appearing for the anti-terror agency, mentioned it for urgent listing. In its plea, the NIA had claimed that the PFI is a fundamentalist Islamic organisation and it was formed only to achieve the

"dangerous goal" of establishing Muslim rule in India governed by Sharia law. It had said an FIR was registered against the alleged office bearers, members and cadres of the PFI, which had been spreading the extremist ideolestablishing its state headquarters at Purasaiwakkam in

Chennai and offices in various districts of the state through their frontal organisations. The petition said the accused had "conspired to commit acts of terror, recruited members for

Barakathullah, Idris, Mohamed furthering their extremist ideology and imparted training to commit terrorist activities, organised mass drills for displaying their might by gathering their members in combat On October 20 last year, the uniforms, intending that participants shall be trained to use criminal force for violence against other religious communities to spread fear or alarm or insecurity.

'It is respectfully submitted that the leaders/cadres of PFI had formed the organisation only to achieve a dangerous goal of 'Vision India 2047', that is to make this country ruled by Muslims as per sharia law," it had said.

The plea claimed tactical weapons training was being imparted and there was evidence on record which showed that PFI cadres where influtrinated by the accused.

'All the acts were done by the accused in an effort to raise an armed militia to take up the fight for usurping and violating the sovereignty and integrity of the country," it had alleged.

#### **Congress questions EC** over difference in voter turnout data

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday raised questions over the difference between the real time voter turnout data and the final figures released by the Election Commission, and said voters are worried over the 'strange goings-on" in the poll

Congress leader and head of media and publicity depart-ment of the party Pawan Khera said the difference is around 1.7 crore votes, and termed it as unprecedented.

Voters are worried about the strange goings on in the Election Commission through the four phases of voting. First, the Election Commission takes 10-11 days to bring out the final difference between real time data and final figure turns out to be 1.7 crore votes. This is truly unprecedented," Khera said on X. "Unanswered questions about the missing EVMs are also very worrying," he



AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "This difference of 1.07 crore overall translates into an increase of 28,000 in each LS seat. This is HUGE." "The discrepancy is maximum in states where BJP is expectis happening?" Ramesh asked. Other opposition parties have also raised questions over the delay in release of final voter turnout. Lok Sabha polls are being held in seven phases

and the results will be declared

## IAF chief inaugurates emergency medical helpline for Air Force staff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $\mathbf{I}^{ ext{n}}$  order to provide expert guidance and definitive care during medical emergencies of serving personnel and their families of the Indian Air Force (IAF) across the nation, an Emergency Medical Response System (EMRS), was inaugurated by IAF chief V R Chaudhari at Command Hospital Air Force, Bengaluru on Tuesday, IAF officials said here on Wednesday.

The EMRS is a first of its kind 24/7 telephonic medical helpline for serving IAF personnel and their families across India. The system aims to provide prompt response by a team of medical and paramedical professionals to the caller experiencing the emer-

The responding medical professional shall provide immediate advise to the caller, while simultaneously getting in touch with the IAF medical facility nearest to the caller. This facility symbolises IAF's commit-



ment towards incorporating technology to deliver high quality healthcare in the event of an emergency. The sole aim lives. The event featured a demonstration of the system's capability and outreach, highlighting the ease with which expert guidance would be provided to the distressed caller, as well as expeditious launch of a medical support team from

the nearest medical echelon. IAF chief, who originally envisioned this concept, highlighted the importance of the EMRS tive is not just a milestone for the Indian Air Force but a significant advancement in medical readiness, representing a critical step forward in the ongoing efforts to provide immediate and expert medical care during emergencies".

## CBI terminates service of inspector held taking bribe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has terminated the services of its inspector Rahul Raj who was arrested by the agency while allegedly taking a bribe of Rs 10 lakh from the chairman of a Madhya Pradesh-based nursing college, officials said on Wednesday.

Following its policy of "zero tolerance towards corruption", the agency sacked Raj under Article 311 of the Constitution that allows termination of services of government employees, they said. Raj was caught "redhanded" on Sunday while allegedly accepting an illegal gratification of Rs 10 lakh from Malay College of Nursing chairman Anil Bhaskaran and his wife Suma Anil, an official alleged. The couple has also been arrested.

The CBI has also attached its Deputy Superintendent of Police Ashish Prasad to the headquarters. He was named in the FIR in the case. Sushil Kumar Majoka and Rishi

Kant Asathe, both on attachment with the CBI from the Madhya Pradesh Police, will be repatriated to the state police soon as their alleged role in the bribery racket has surfaced.

The CBI swung into action

after inputs and surveillance by its internal vigilance unit indi cated that one of the support teams constituted on the orders of the Madhya Pradesh High Court to examine infrastruc ture in nursing colleges in the state was indulging in corruption. "CBI, ACB, Bhopal, had constituted seven core teams and three-to-four support teams, comprising officials from CBI, those nominated by nursing colleges in Madhya Pradesh and patwaris, in compliance of the directions of the high court for conducting statewide inspections to ascertain whether nursing colleges satisfied the laid down norms and standards for nursing colleges in respect of infrastructural facilities and faculty," CBI spokesperson said. The agency said during mon-

itoring of inspections being car-ried out by the various teams, officials of one of the support teams, including Raj, were found to be indulging in corruption. It said it was observed that they were giving favourable inspection reports in lieu of bribes collected through conduits. The CBI has arrested 13 people, including Raj, for giving favourable inspection reports to nursing colleges in Madhya Pradesh in exchange for bribes collected

through conduits, officials said.

## Alert citizens helping DoT prevent cybercrimes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Vigilant and alert citizens are playing an indispensable role in preventing cybercrimes. Through their proactive reporting of suspected fraud communications via the Chakshu-Report Suspected Fraud Communications facility on the Sanchar Saathi portal, these alert citizens are contributing significantly to a safer digital environment.

Their watchful eyes and swift actions protect not only themselves but also countless others from falling victim to scams, phishing attempts, and fraudulent activities. By reporting suspicious messages, calls, and impersonation attempts, these citizens act as the first line of defence against cyber criminals, ministry of communications said here on Wednesday. This prompt approach of citizens helps the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) combat and prevent cyber-crimes. The DoT expresses gratitude to the vigilant citizens who enable the Department in ensuring a safer and secure digital ecosystem.

With these inputs, the DoT has been taking prompt and strict action on cyber/financial frauds. In the latest cases, people were being duped by fraudulent communication in the name of fake LIC officials and Insurance company represen-



tion of SBI Rewards.

The DoT received inputs from citizens on 19.05.2024 regarding such frauds from 14 mobile numbers. Within 24 hours, the DoT analysed these cases and generated all linkages for these mobile numbers. Therefore, 372 mobile handsets

linked to these mobile numbers were blocked on pan-India basis on 21.05.2024 Also, 906 mobile connections were suspended and flagged for re-verification. The Department has urged citizens to stay vigilant and report such fraud communications at 'Chakshu -Report Suspected Fraud Communications' facility of Sanchar Saathi portal (www.sancharsaathi.gov.in/sfc). Such proactive reporting helps DoT in prevention of misuse of telecom resources for cybercrime, financial frauds, etc. Advisories have been issued on

a regular basis for the public to

create awareness on fake

DoT/TRAI, suspected fraud communications and malicious calls via press, SMS, and social

This collaborative approach is safeguarding citizens against fraudsters and DoT expresses gratitude to them for coming forward and reporting, keep vigilant, keep reporting and Let's fight it together Chakshu is the latest addition

to the citizen centric facilities already available on the Sanchar Saathi portal of the DoT. 'Chakshu' facilitates citizens to report suspected fraud communication received over call, SMS, or WhatsApp with the intention of defrauding like KYC expiry or update of bank account/payment wallet/SIM/gas connection/electricity connection, sextortion, impersonation as government official/relative for sending money, disconnection of all

#### 10th International Day of Yoga held



s the 10th International As the 10th international Day of Yoga was commemorated by the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) on Tuesday with a distinct focus on 'Ýoga for Women Empowerment', Sister BK Shivani, a motivational speaker underscored the significance of yoga in nurturing resilience and informed decision-making, especially among the younger generation. Likewise, in her inaugural

speech, AIIA Director Prof. (Dr.) Tanuja Nesari, appealed to everyone to celebrate this Yoga Day for women's empowerment, for guidance and to strengthen minds, spirits, and souls, to unite within ourselves, and to unite with the outside world by following Avurveda's way of living.

ity," she said.

'Ayurveda and yoga are two sides of the same coin. Ayurveda is the physical aspect of yoga, and yoga is the spiritual aspect of Ayurveda," she said and urged everyone not only to teach but also to pracinitiative. tice both yoga and Ayurveda. "Youth of today should understand the importance of per-severance and the significance of Yoga for bringing a change for the betterment of human-

## Indian Navy must remain combat ready: Navy chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy must times to safeguard national maritime interests, Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi has said. This assertion came amid China's increasing forays into the Indian Ocean and volatile situation in the Red Sea. In an address to officers posted at the naval headquarters here, the Navy chief he delved into the current security environment in the strategic waters and consequent actions

required by the Navy. He emphasised that as the primary manifestation of India's maritime power, the "raison d'etre of Indian Navy is to remain combat ready at all times to safeguard national maritime interests anytime, anywhere, anyhow".

In his remarks to the officers on Tuesday, the Navy chief reiterated the unwavering commitment of the Indian Navy towards the government's Aatma Nirbharta (self-reliance)

Admiral Tripathi laid emphasis on finding in-house solutions, innovation and embracing niche technologies to address the existing and emerging challenges in the maritime domain to remain a responsive



they must remain focused on being "the solution providers" and "prioritising outcomes" towards a combat ready, credible, cohesive, and future ready The admiral praised the dedi-

cation and professionalism demonstrated by the personnel in meeting all mandated tasks by the service, according to a Navy spokesperson.

In the last few months, the Indian Navy provided assistance to a number of cargo vessels after they came under attacks in strategic waters around the Red Sea.

The Houthi militants have been targeting the merchant ships in the Red Sea apparently to build pressure on Israel to stop its military offensive in

## **Shah: INDIA Bloc does not have** any leader who can become PM

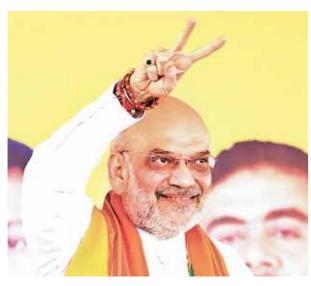
Home I Shah launched blistering attack on the "corrupt INDI alliance" and said the opposition bloc doesn't have any leader who can become Prime Minister. While addressing a rally at Ghatal, Shah said the INDIA bloc leaders just want their dynasty to move ahead and

lead the country nor have any intention for the development of the nation." Shah, while referring to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir said "PoK is part of India and

"neither have any leaders to

we will take it".
"The INDI alliance doesn't have any leaders. The INDI alliance wants five PMs in five years. The INDI alliances neither have leaders nor have intention for the development of the nation," he said.

The BJP leader said the ongoing parliamentary elections are about choosing between "leaders of dynastic politics or honest leader Narendra



considers the country as his

"Sharad Pawar wants his daughter to be the chief minister. Mamata Banerjee wants her nephew to succeed her as chief minister. Stalin (Tamil Nadu CM) wants to see his son succeed him. Sonia Gandhi wants Rahul Baba to become the Prime Minister of the country. On the other side, there is

Modi Ii who Narendra considers the entire country as his family," he said.

Hitting out at Congress leaders for not supporting the demand of taking over PoK, Shah said, "Congress leaders say it should not be done as they have an atom bomb. But let me say this Pakistanoccupied Kashmir is part of India, was part of India, and we will take it."

## Congress, SP Pakistan sympathisers: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday here called Congress and Samajwadi "sympathisers of Pakistan" and alleged that these parties are "scaring the country" with its nuclear power status.

Addressing a rally here, Modi alluded to the partnership in UP between Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav in 2017, when the two campaigned together for the Assembly elections — and failed. "I am surprised by the campaigned together the surprised for the surprised f by the repeated release of flop film of two 'shehzadas' of SP and Congress," Modi

The Congress this time is contesting from 17 of the 80 Lok Sabha in a seat-sharing agreement with the SP.

On Pakistan, Modi said, "This patron of terrorism which once used to dare us is in such a condition that its people are hard up even for food grain... Pakistan is finished sympathisers, SP and Congress, are busy scaring



"They say one needs to be INDIA bloc is winning 79 scared of Pakistan because seats in the state, Modi it has an atom bomb. Don't they know what is 56-inch (chest)? It's not the weak Congress government ... But the strong government of Modi," he said at a rally campaigning for BJP's Basti Lok Sabha candidate Harish

"India does not spare those who try to bully it. India today hits them in their own homes," he said. Referring to Akhilesh Yadav's claim that the

Dwivedi.

attend the Ram temple in Ayodhya, and alleged that Congress had designs to get Supreme Court to overturn its verdict on the temple. "These people talk of destroying Sanatan

Congress wants to change Court's Supreme judgement of Ram Temple. They dream of putting a Babri lock on the Ram temple and want to send Ram Lalla back to the tent," he said. Modi referred to the nearly two-year-long Emergency and said that talks Congress Constitution but it did not even follow the party's constitution. He claimed that former

Congress president Sitaram Kesri, who belonged to a backward community, was locked in a bathroom the day Sonia Gandhi was made the party's president. The PM also accused

Congress of trying to change the Constitution and end reservation for the Dalits and backwards.

"These people want to snatch the reservation of Dalit and Backwards and give it to those who do Vote Jihad. Congress wants to change the Constitution to give reservation to Muslims. Samajwadi Party is standing with Congress in its anti-Dalit and antibackward conspiracy," he said.

On the SP, Modi said it used

special protocol during its government.

Yogi Adityanath and his government had to make

efforts to bring UP from the ditch it was thrown in long back," Modi said.

Seeking the public's support, the PM said their votes will bury the "politics of appeasement in kabristan" and ensure the future of the country.

We have become the fifth largest economy. When India speaks, the world listens and tries to accompany India in the decisions made by it," he accompanied by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on the

Adityanath in his address expressed confidence of thumping victory for the BJP. "When we talk of crossing 400, SP and Congress start fainting because they are not even contesting on 400 seats

together." BJP's Harish Dwivedi is pitted against Ram Prasad Chaudhary of Samajwadi Party. Polling in Basti will be held in the sixth phase

#### AP police teams on hunt for YSRCP MLA who damaged EVM

PTI AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena on Wednesday said police teams have been formed to look for 'absconding' YSRCP MLA P Ramakrishna Reddy who vandalised an electronic voting machine (EVM) at a polling centre in Macharla constituency of Palnadu district.

The CEO said police raided residence this morning, but he was not found there.

"His (Reddy) house was raided in the morning. He was not found, so several teams are now moving around to arrest him," Meena

#### Mamata compromising national security for sake of vote bank politics, says Shah

PTI ■ KANTHI/GHATAL/PURULIA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday accused West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee compromising national security for the sake of vote national politics "committing a sin" by allowing infiltrators to change the demography of the state. Addressing back-to-back rallies in Kanthi, Ghatal, and Purulia Lok Sabha constituencies, Shah said the TMC will "disintegrate" and there will be a "farewell of Banerjee's government" after the BJP wins 30 Lok Sabha seats in the

"Bengal has become a safe haven for infiltrators. Due to infiltration, the state's demography is changing, impacting not only this state,



but the entire country. Banerjee is committing a sin by helping to change the demography of Bengal. She is compromising national security for sake of vote bank politics," he said. Alleging that 'infiltrators are the vote bank of the TMC," Shah said Banerjee is opposing the implementation of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) to appease her vote "TMC ko ghuspetiyo se pyar

aur CAA pe vaar' (TMC has a love for infiltrators and attacks the CAA). The infiltrators are the vote bank of the TMC," he said.Shah criticised Banerjee's recent comments against certain monks of Ramakrishna Mission and Sevashram Sangha, asserting that these socio-religious organisations are being threatened to appease the TMC's vote bank.

"Banerjee is attacking the Sangha, but she is not aware that had it not been there, Bengal would have been a part of Bangladesh," he said. Addressing an election rally in Goghat under Arambagh LS constituency on Saturday, Banerjee had claimed, "Some monks of Ramakrishna Mission and Sevashram Sangha working under the influence of BJP leaders in Delhi.

## JD(S) complains to police against Rahul for claiming MP Prajwal raped 400 women

The JD(S) on Wednesday complained to Karnataka DGP Alok Mohan against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for allegedly claiming that Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of sexual abuse, has "raped 400 women". In a complaint, H M Ramesh

Gowda, a former MLC and party's Bengaluru City president has sought registration of a criminal case against Gandhi under section 202 (Intentional omission to give information of an offence by a person legally bound to inform) of the Indian Penal Code for his alleged statement while addressing election rallies in the district headquarters of Minister, in front of the Shivamogga and Raichur on people of Karnataka, was



said, "People of UP on June

4 will wake the SP and

Congress up from their slumber. They will then

He lambasted the two

parties for their refusing to

accept the invitation to

blame EVM for defeat."

The JD(S) leader also cited the alleged statement by Gandhi in his complaint, 'Praiwal Revanna has raped 400 women and made videos. This is not a sex scandal but mass rape. And the Prime

supporting and seeking vote charges of multiple instances for this mass rapist. He is of sexually abusing women. saying that if you vote for this mass rapist, it would help him.

The complainant said in the interest of justice for the alleged victims, Gandhi being a public servant is duty bound to give information of

"In view of the fact that Gandhi has made a specific statement that Prajwal has raped 400 women, he is aware of the information and details of the 400 women raped and has intentionally failed to disclose the details," he stated in the complaint. The 33-year-old Prajwal, who

is the grandson of JD(S) patriarch and former PM H D Deve Gowda and is the NDA's candidate from Hassan Lok Sabha segment, is facing

The cases came to light after a number of explicit videos of sexual assault allegedly by Prajwal became public. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) is currently probing these cases.

"Till date, the SIT has also not issued any notice to Rahul Gandhi calling for such information for the statement made by Rahul the complaint However, no FIR has been

registered yet in this regard, reportedly left for Germany on April 27, a day after Hassan went to polls, and is still at large. Interpol has also issued a Blue Corner Notice seeking information on his whereabouts.

## BJP gains ground as TMC battles to retain foothold in Suvendu Adhikari's backyard

PTI ■ KANTHI (WB)

The future of the Kanthi Lok Sabha constituency in West Bengal appears to be volatile on account of the dual and opposing factors of the BJP sharply gaining political ground and the TMC desperate to retain its sway over voters.

BJP looks While the emboldened by its recent rural poll successes and the Adhikari family's defection to the saffron camp, the TMC seems to be counting on its grassroots connections and the state's welfare schemes which the party believes have attained last-mile with connectivity electorate.

Located in Purba Medinipur district, the Kanthi seat exemplifies dynasty politics through the influence of the state's Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, whose family members have held



key political positions in the past and continue to wield substantial power in the region, poll watchers believe. The poll results would, hence, serve as a litmus test for the endurance of political dynasty and durability of the Adhikari family legacy, revealing whether their support base has followed them across Political observers note that The initial transformation

The initial transformation

other constituencies of the Nandigram state, featuring a distinctly bipolar electoral landscape where voters face a clear choice between supporting the BJP and its national agenda or favouring the TMC government in Bengal and its welfare schemes.

"In Kanthi, the binary nature of the contest underscores the significance of the political stakes involved, as voters will weigh their preferences between national and regional priorities. It will be a vote of 'Yes-BJP or No BJP and Yes-TMC or No-TMC," political analyst Biswanath Chakraborty said.

Known for its fluctuating political affiliations, Kanthi has moved on from being an erstwhile CPI(M) stronghold to a TMC bastion and, more recently, to a key political

Kanthi presents a unique from the Left to the TMC was dynamic, as compared to spurred by the 2007

acquisition movement. The significant shift was driven by a grassroots uprising that followed strong disillusionment

CPI(M)'s land acquisition policies. Since then the Adhikaris, led by the family patriarch Sisir Adhikari and his sons

Suvendu, Dibyendu, and Soumendu, have held key political positions within the TMC in the region. A dramatic shift occurred in December 2020, months ahead of the state

assembly polls, when Suvendu defected from the TMC to the BJP. This move significantly altered the political balance of Kanthi and Purba Medinipur. Suvendu's departure from the TMC meant not just the loss of a key leader of Mamata Banerjee's party but also the transfer of a considerable support base to the BJP.

#### Latur admin urges LS poll candidates to adhere to EC guidelines during vote counting on June 4

**PTI** ■ LATUR

The Latur district administration has sought cooperation from candidates who contested the Lok Sabha polls from here and representatives of various political parties during the counting of votes on June 4. Latur Collector Varsha
Thakur-Ghuge held a meeting at her office on Tuesday and appealed to all the candidates and representatives of the political parties to adhere to guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India regarding the counting

Guideline handbooks for the election representatives were distributed on the occasion. The collector said the district administration here in Maharashtra has completed preparations for the counting of votes.

All candidates are requested to inform the collector's office



about names of their representatives for counting. The representatives should be imparted training on the counting process and mobile phone is not allowed at the counting venue, the collector said.

The Election Commission of India has appointed two observers for the counting process, she said.

eight candidates Twenty contested the election to the Latur Lok Sabha seat May 7. Among the major political parties, the BJP fielded sitting MP Sudhakar Shrangare, the

Congress nominated Shivaji Kalge, and the Prakash Ambedkar-led Vanchit

Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) gave

ticket to Narsingrao Nivritti

#### round of campaigning in Odisha **PTI** ■ BHUBANESWAR

undertake another

Modi, Shah to

**P**rime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit Odisha on May 29, aiming to provide a final boost to BJP's electioneering efforts in the state, party sources said. Modi's upcoming visit will include addresses at two election rallies in Balasore and

Kendrapada Parliamentary constituencies, BJP's election in-charge for Odisha, Vijay Pal Singh Tomar said. This will mark Modi's fourth visit to Odisha within a month, highlighting BJP's concerted

efforts strengthen its electoral prospects in the state. Previously, the PM visited Odisha on May 6, 10, and 19,

during which he addressed seven election rallies and held two road shows Bhubaneswar and Puri.

## Vikramaditya, Kangana trade charges over black flag protest against her

PTI MANDI/SHIMLA

Trading barbs over black flags I shown to the BJP's Lok Sabha candidate from Mandi Kangana Ranaut in Lahaul and Spiti's Kaza two days back, the Congress' Vikramaditya Singh targeted the actor Wednesday over her

remark against the Dalai Lama from April last year.

"People of the tribal area worship Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama as their God and if someone passes any remarks against their God, they will surely not like it and protest," Singh, who contesting the election against Ranaut, said in Mandi in response to a question. With the incident and Hitting back at Singh, Ranaut accused the BJP of alleged that the Congress was blaming the Congress as it behind the protest against her. The was losing the elections. Congress has stooped to They were referring to

hooliganism and the Kaza incident would prove to be the last nail in its coffin and contribute to her winning margin, the BJP candidate added.

"I feel sad to see such which hooliganism reflects the Congress' character... People have seen the true face of the Congress, which is indulging in violence and hooliganism," she told media persons in Lahaul and Spiti's Udaipur.

Singh, however, said his party had nothing to do



black flags being shown to Ranaut by local people and Congress workers in Kaza on Monday. The Congress workers "Kangana, go back, Kangana Vangana nahi chalegi", apparently enraged over her remarks on the Tibetan spiritual leader.

Ranaut had in April last year tweeted a meme featuring the Dalai Lama that said, "The Dalai Lama receives a warm welcome at the White House". The photoshopped picture in the tweet showed the Dalai Lama sticking his tongue out with US President Joe Biden with a comment — Both of them have the same illness, definitely, they could be friends. Following this, a group of

Buddhists staged a dharna outside her office in Mumbai. Ranaut later apologised, saying she did not mean to hurt anyone and that it was a harmless joke about Biden being friends with the Dalai Lama. After Ranaut faced the protest in Kaza on Monday, the Himachal Pradesh BJP filed a complaint with the state

electoral officer. The party alleged that stones were pelted at Ranaut's carcade and party worker was injured.

It also demanded the transfer of election officials and an investigation into the incident as both the BJP and the Congress were given permission to hold rallies adjacent to each other.

However, Lahaul and Spiti SP Mayank Chowdhary told PTI that workers of both the BJP and the ruling Congress came face to face but there was no clash and no person was injured. However, one worker sprained his leg, he added. Bhishan Shashni, the Congress' election coordinator for Lahaul and Spiti, claimed that his party workers were peacefully protesting but a large number of local people joined the protest as they were hurt by Ranaut's remark.
Listing his priorities for the Mandi

parliamentary constituency, Vikramaditya Singh, the son of former chief minister Virbhadra Singh and Himachal Congress chief Pratibha Singh, said his focus would be on bringing the municipal corporation of Mandi under the Smart City project and the construction of the Bhubhu Jot and Jalori Jot tunnels and the Kullu Medical College.

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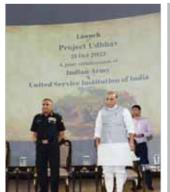
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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

## **Warcraft for all**

Project Udbhav celebrates India's rich heritage in military statecraft and makes it citizen-inclusive

The adage, "If you want peace, be prepared for war," reflects a longstanding philosophy in India. Historically, India has maintained peace while staying strong, refraining from warmongering unless provoked. This approach stems from ancient Indian wisdom, emphasising the importance of advancement in warfare to deter any potential threats. India's rich and ancient heritage in military statecraft, rooted in the Vedas, Puranas and the Mahabharata, forms a significant yet often overlooked aspect of its cultural legacy. The Army's Project Udbhav aims to bring this historical wealth into the public eye, engaging citizens in the defence domain and fostering a deeper understanding of India's strategic and military traditions. The Vedas, among the oldest sacred texts, provide early references to warfare, strategy and the ethical dimensions of combat. The Puranas, a genre of ancient Indian literature, elaborated on the principles of statecraft and warfare. Texts like the Vishnu Purana and Agni Purana offer insights into military



organisation, the roles and responsibilities of warriors and the strategic use of resources. The Mahabharata, one of the greatest epics in world literature, is a treasure trove of military wisdom. The epic not only narrates the Kurukshetra war but also delves into detailed discussions on strategy, the art of war and the moral dilemmas faced by warriors.

Other ancient Indian texts offer timeless wisdom adaptable to modern defence strategies, such as intelligence, psychological warfare and ethical conduct. Launched last year, Project Udbhav delves deep into these ancient texts and aims to promote indigenous discourse in the Army by integrating India's ancient strategic acumen

into contemporary military domain, ensuring that the force remains future-ready. It is also an endeavour to involve our citizens and educate them about warfare for any eventuality. Involving citizens in understanding warfare and being prepared is crucial for several reasons. It fosters national pride and identity by highlighting India's intellectual and strategic achievements, countering one-dimensional portrayals of its history. Under Project Udbhav, workshops, seminars and online courses will educate citizens about ancient Indian military texts and their modern relevance. Collaborations with universities and research institutions will ensure academic rigour and accessibility. Additionally, a series of books, documentaries and articles will highlight various aspects of Indian military statecraft, including translations and commentaries on key texts for a broader audience. Project Udbhav is laudable as it represents an endeavour to weave a strategic vocabulary and conceptual framework deeply embedded in India's philosophical and cultural heritage. This initiative underscores the importance of understanding and valuing the rich military heritage that has shaped India's strategic culture, offering invaluable lessons for contemporary and future defence strategies. It is indeed a praiseworthy effort to revive ancient wisdom lest it is lost.



## Epic election battle enters decisive phase SIDHARTH MISHRA



#### The ultimate battleground is UP, where Yogi Adityanath's unwavering leadership is crucial in the BJP's fight to maintain its stronghold

nother 10 days to go and the two-monthelection process would be over. These elections would be remembered for the spearhead of the ruling party, Narendra Modi and of the opposition, Rahul Gandhi battling the heat and dust of the famed Indian summer to spur their cadres to give the best performance.

In the national media, what's being discussed is the punishing schedule of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president JP Nadda trying to match him with almost equal vigour. From the opposition side, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has ensured to create the perspective that the campaign just did not rest on the shoulder's of the Gandhi family.

In any war, there always is a clinching battle that decides who won and who lost. In World War II, the Battle for Berlin proved to be the most crucial. It's the image of the Soviet soldiers putting the flag of the USSR on the Reichstag in Berlin in May 1945 which marked the defeat of Germany under Adolf Hitler.

Similarly, the general elections of 2024 will always be remembered and will be decided on who wins the battle of Uttar Pradesh. With 80 seats, Uttar Pradesh is the citadel of the BJP monolith, which has a dominant presence in the Hindi heartland States of Bihar, UP, Madhya Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Haryana.

Unlike MP, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Haryana, in Uttar Pradesh the BJP is not in a direct contest with the Congress but a strong regional outfit — Samajwadi Party. UP also cannot be compared to Bihar, where it's fighting another strong regional party - the Rashtriya Janata Dal but in the companionship of another strong regional outfit — the Janata Dal (United).

Thus in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP is completely on its own with paign has been faulted severnowhere else to look forward to but its cadres and leaders. Here concern among his supportthe role of Uttar Pradesh chief ers for allowing the achieve-

minister Yogi Adityanath becomes crucial. The Mahanth of the Goraknath Math has been in campaign mode ever since he retained power with a thumping majority in 2022.

He first delivered the Ram temple at Ayodhya. The consecration of the idol at Ramlalla temple in January this year has been the biggest-ever achievement of the right-wing schema in the country. This would not have been possible but for the determined, firm and passionate execution of the construction plan by the Uttar Pradesh Government of not just the temple complex but the whole of the city of Ayodhya.

The second has been to galvanise the cadres and keep them functioning for a full two months to ensure that the rivals are stopped and checked in their determined assault. He started the polls campaign with the Prabudh Jan Sammelan on March 27 and would continue it till May-end the last phase of polling.

Prime Minister Modi's cam al times and has also caused

ments of the past ten years to be pushed to the background in pursuing a very polarising agenda. The campaign has not aligned with Modi's espousal of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vishwas" (Collective Efforts, Inclusive Growth, Everyone's Trust) slogan, which encapsulates an inclusive approach aimed at fostering economic growth and social cohesion.

Prime Minister's initiatives, such as Make in India, Digital India and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission), which underscore his commitment to modernising India's economy and infrastructure, have seldom found space in his speeches. This has somewhere allowed the opposition to attack the Government. On the other hand, Yogi Adityanath, who in the past seven years has combined his vision with a strong emphasis on law and order and cultural nationalism (Hindutva), has continued to keep his campaign on the same track. His leadership in Uttar Pradesh is characterised by a drive to restore cultural heritage and end minority appeasement, as seen in initiatives like the grand celebration of Diwali in Ayodhya and the renaming of places to reflect their historical Hindu signifi-

The lynchpin of his gover-

nance has been the emphasis on strict law enforcement, aiming to improve safety and reduce crime, which resonates even with many of his non-Hindu constituents. His determined perusal of anti-crime drives has found a fan following that goes beyond the traditional Hindutva admirers. Coming back to the battle of Uttar Pradesh, it would take the collective strength of the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Uttar Pradesh chief minister to make the BJP bandwagon have a safe journey to the national Capital. Modi and Yogi are both distinct personalities and both have significantly impacted Indian politics and governance, albeit in different ways. On June 4, in the event of the BJP unfurling its flag, the contributions of the Uttar Pradesh chief minister would as much be

(The writer is the author and president of The Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views expressed are personal)

accounted for as that of the



WHO IN THE PAST SEVEN YEARS HAS **COMBINED HIS** VISION WITH A STRONG EMPHASIS ON LAW AND ORDER AND CULTURAL **NATIONALISM** (HINDUTVA), HAS CONTINUED TO KEEP HIS CAMPAIGN ON THE SAME TRACK

Prime Minister.

## THE EDITOR

## Fighting age fraud for Indian football's integrity ARYAN RAJVANSH



From local matches to the big leagues, age falsification distorts fair play and erodes the essence of sportsmanship

**⊣**he issue of age fraud has plagued Indian football for decades. This persistent dishonesty has not only undermined the integrity of the sport but has also stunted the growth of genuine talent, ultimately leading to India's poor performance at the senior team level.

For the last 50 years, age fraud has been an open secret within the football community. Players, coaches and officials are all aware of it, yet the problem persists unchecked. From local tournaments to State, district and national leagues, age fraud is rampant. Shockingly, it even extends to the national team, where overage players take the field under pretences. This systemic dishonesty is a national disgrace. The lack of genuineness and honesty in our footballing ecosystem is a national embarrass-

My personal experience highlights this issue vividly. When I was 14, I shared accommodation with much older players-some even 24-yet they possessed fake birth certificates claiming not only robs honest play-

they were my age. These older players competed alongside me in national leagues, creating an uneven playing

field and undermining the credibility of the competitions. This personal encounter opened my eyes to the widespread nature of

this fraud. The impact of age fraud is profound. Young, talented players who play by the rules find their careers destroyed by those who cheat the system. Genuine athletes are overshadowed by older players who dominate youth categories through sheer physical C cognitive advantage. This

ers of opportunities but also skews the development pathway, leaving India with a senior team that lacks the authentic experience and growth needed to compete

internationally. Cases of age fraud emerge regularly from all corners of the country, yet there is little action from authorities. Until the Government takes decisive measures to eradicate this issue, Indian football will remain stagnant. The current State of affairs ensures that we will never achieve success on the international stage. It is a profound shame and it undermines the spirit of the sport. The rigged system favours deceit over talent and honesty, leaving the sport in shambles. It is time for a rigorous overhaul, strict enforcement of age verification processes and a zero-tolerance policy towards fraud. Only through a genuine commitment to integrity can Indian football hope to reclaim its lost potential and earn respect on the global stage. Until then, we must

acknowledge this harsh reality: as long as we continue to cheat, we will never truly win. The future of Indian football depends on our ability to foster a culture of honesty and fairness, giving every player a fair chance to shine based on merit, not deception. The future of Indian football hinges on our commitment to integrity. We must give every player a fair chance to succeed based on their true abilities. Until we do, our dreams of footballing glory will remain just thatdreams. The time for change is now, for the sake of our sport and the generations of players to come.

(The writer is a football coach; views are personal)

#### **AMOEBA KILLS**

Madam — Strange are the ways of meeting death for a young soul. A five-yearold girl has died of brain-eating amoeba after taking a bath in a pond in Malappuram district of Kerala. She was undergoing treatment at the Kozhikode Medical College of Institute of Maternal and Child Health. She had taken a dip in the pond on May 1 and started showing symptoms of fever, headache and vomiting on May 10. The girl, afflicted by amoebic meningoencephalitis, a rare brain infection caused by a free-living amoeba found in contaminated waters, Still waters are dangerous. Don't let go.

This is not the first case reported. Amebiasis is an intestinal (bowel) illness caused by a microscopic (tiny) parasite called Entamoeba histolytica, which is spread through human feces (poop). Often there are no symptoms, but sometimes it causes diarrhoea (loose stool/poop), nausea (a feeling of sickness in the stomach) and weight loss. The main symptoms of the disease are fever, headache, vomiting and seizures. All infected patients have lost their lives due to the disease so far, as the mortality rate for this rare brain infection is 100 per-

Jayanthi Subramaniam | Mumbai

#### **DRONES IN AGRICULTURE**

Madam — Apropos the article, "Promise and challenges of drones in agriculture", published on May 20, this is my response. Drones, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) are becoming increasingly popular in India's agricultural sector. Drones offer a range of benefits to farmers, like improved efficiency and enhanced crop yields. However, some challenges may hinder the adoption of drone technology such as fear of job loss, lack of knowledge and training and regulatory barriers. Drones can capture high-resolution images and provide information on crop health, growth and

#### **Leadership vacuum in Iran**



propos to the front page article, "Iran Pres Adies in chopper crash after stinging Israel," published on May 21. The shocking death of the President in a helicopter crash had left Iran in the lurch and uncertainty from

This can help farmers to identify issues early and take corrective measures to optimise their inputs and outputs. But, drones are expensive and many farmers may not have the financial resources to invest in this technology. Hence, there is a need for more subsidies incentives and economical financing options to make drones more affordable and attractive to farmers. It requires a coordinated effort from the Government, the industry, farmers and the civil society to create a conducive and supportive environment for the use of drones in agriculture. There is little doubt that drones can be a powerful tool for transforming Indian agriculture and ensuring the country's food security and prosperity. Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

#### **MUSEUMS PRESERVE HISTORY**

Madam — Apropos of the article "Museums are pillars of culture and education," published on May 21. Museums

all sides. For the last three years; after he took the Presidential position in 2021, Mr Raisi has managed to frame Iran as a Shia Muslim leader block of the world with his conservative cler-

His sudden death had created a leadership vacuum in Iran in the devil's time. The US and Israel are among the direct culprits of Tehran's current situation, despite their denial on personal grounds respectively. Iran needs time to cope with all the big losses it has suffered recently, according to the according to the President, Foreign Minister and other key authorities. The recent death incident had scratched the old scars of Iran when it lost its Revolutionary Gaurd General Qasem Soleimani. Iran has been a victim of targeted killings especially for VVIPs, ever since its bitter relationship with the US over the last two decades. Time will heal everything itself, the domestic and international uncertainty will shed away for Iran with time and normalcy will be restored. Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

are an inevitable part of our lives as they depict culture, history and artefacts. They tell us about the evolution of man

and let us get familiar with the historical and scientific facts as well. But these days, people, especially children, hardly show interest in visiting museums as they find it boring. The educational institutions must include visits to museums in the curriculum to enable students to broaden their horizons and get valuable knowledge. Museums are a great source of under-

standing our civilisation, culture and heritage and help explore various branches of research work. The Government should take the initiative to help the masses visit museums as they are the storehouses for preserving our ancient history and heritage.

Abhilasha Gupta | Mohali

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## **FIRST COLUMN**

#### **DELETERIOUS EFFECTS OF WORKPLACE GASLIGHTING**

It is a menace that undermines individuals' perceptions, beliefs and reality



n the network of modern workplaces, emerges a shadowy spectre, threatening the very fabric of organisational culture and well-being -Gaslighting, a form of psychological manipulation in which one person seeks to undermine another person's perceptions, beliefs or reality often done regularly or subtly making the victim doubt their perception, memories or sanity by shifting blame or responsibility onto the vic-

Gaslighting can create a hostile work environment where employees feel anxious and confused and at times even question their competence causing a detrimental effect on themselves, their teams and organisational culture. It is a form of psychological manipulation that can have serious consequences for the well-being and productivity of those involved. When talked about the workplace, the term Gaslight can manifest in myriad forms, often subtle and insidious. It may begin with seemingly innoxious comments undermining an individual's contributions or abilities and may gradually lead to dealing with small instances of manipulation that escalate over time. Gaslighting tactics often target an individual's sense of self-worth, competence and confidence resulting in significant emotional distress, including feelings of anxiety, depression and confusion. It even isolates victims from their support networks by undermining their relationships with coworkers, friends and even fam-



It is often believed that toxic workplace gaslighting can stem from various causes that are often rooted in systemic issues, interpersonal dynamics or individual motivations such as power imbalances, insecure leadership, lack of accountability, interpersonal conflicts and many more. When communication breaks down, tensions escalate, egos clash and employees/individuals start resorting to gaslighting as a means of gaining leverage or inflicting harm.

Addressing the toxic workplace gaslighting requires a comprehensive approach that involves raising awareness, fostering a culture of respect and accountability and providing support for those impacted. Promoting transparency, accountability and psychological safety in organisations is crucial to recognise toxic gaslighting behaviour effectively.

Undoubtedly, workplace gaslighting thrives on power imbalances and psychological manipulation. Victims of gaslighting suffer immense stress, anxiety and identity erosion. Prolonged exposure leads to physical health issues like headaches, GI problems and sleep disturbances, weakening immunity and increasing illness risks.

It becomes crucial for the victims to first recognise and validate their experiences, refusing to internalise the gaslighter's manipulations. The use of assertive communication techniques, such as "I" Statements and boundary-setting, can help individuals confront gaslighting behaviour while preserving their self-esteem and dignity. Additionally, fostering a culture of accountability and transparency within organisations empowers employ-

ees to speak out against gaslighting tactics without fear of reprisal. Remember, when personal gain takes precede over ethical conduct, gaslighting may become a tempting strategy. The only way that may benefit the victims of gaslighting is by seeking support from trusted colleagues, mentors or mental health professionals. By creating a workplace culture that promotes open communication, respect and accountability can the organisation help prevent gaslighting and other forms of manipulation from taking hold as left unchecked, it can inflict lasting psychological harm, exacerbating issues of mental health and well-being in the workplace.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

## Do not withdraw capital support for oil PSUs



UTTAM GUPTA

The Government slashes equity infusions for three major oil sector CPSUs by 50 per cent, contradicting its 2023–24 budget commitments



n the Budget for the financial year 2023-24 (April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024) presented on February 1 last year, the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced an equity infusion of Rs 30,000 crore in three Central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) viz. Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), are majority-owned by the Government of India (GOI). She had also proposed Rs 5,000 crore for buying crude oil to bolster its strategic reserves (SRs) in underground storages at Mangalore in Karnataka and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

The equity infusions in IOCL/BPCL/HPCL were meant to support their capital investment plans for the transition to 'Green Energy' and achieve 'Net Zero' objectives. Net zero refers to a situation where the emissions of polluting gases such as carbon dioxide due to human activities and their removals are in balance over a given period. On the other hand, the allocation for SRs was meant to guard against the possiollity of any disruption in its su

Under the above, IOCL and BPCL had done necessary spade work including approval by their respective boards for coming up with 'rights issues' of requisite amounts to enable the Union Government to give effect to its capital contribution (albeit by way of equity) promised in the budget. In the case of HPCL, the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) having acquired majority equity shares from the GOI in FY 2017-18 was to come up with the issue of the preferential issue to give effect to the latter's budgetary intention. However, in a big climb down, in November 2023, the Government reduced the amount of equity infusion to the trio by 50 per cent to Rs 15,000 crore even while deferring implementation of the budgetary announcement on the SRs. Meanwhile, the Interim Budget for FY 2024-25 presented by Sitharaman on February 1, 2024, didn't show any allocation for equity infusion for FY 2023-24. The said amount has been earmarked for the FY 2024-25. This was confirmed by Finance Secretary T V



JUST BECAUSE **DURING** FY 2023-24, THEY HAVE **IMPROVED** THEIR PROFITS DUE TO

CONTINUING MODERATION IN THE PRICE OF CRUDE OIL, IT WON'T BE LOGICAL TO TRIM THE PROMISED **BUDGETARY SUPPORT** 

Somanathan at a post-budget press conference. As for SRs, the budget documents do not provide any funds either in the revised estimate for FY 2023-24 or during FY 2024-

Why did the Government climb

Even as the Ministry of Finance (MoF) hasn't given any reason, it seems the decision was prompted by a significant boost to their profitability during 2023-24. The IOCL posted a standalone net profit of close to Rs 40,000 crore as against a profit of a little over Rs 8000 crore during 2022-23. The BPCL posted a net profit of around Rs 26,500 crore in 2023-24, compared to about Rs 1,850 crore profit during 2022-23. The HPCL posted a profit of around Rs 14,500 crore during 2023-24 against a loss of about Rs 9,000 crore in 2022-23.

When the companies can generate good profits hence, a good investible surplus for meeting their investment commitments, why do they need the Government's budgetary support? But, there is much more than what meets the eye on a plain reading of the profit numbers. First, out of the net profit, a substantial amount is paid as dividends to the shareholders. For instance, in case IOCL @Rs 7 on a share of Rs 10 each, the payout during 2023-24 on a total of 1,412 crore outstanding shares would be around Rs 10,000

Second, these undertakings are engaged in the business of refining crude oil to produce a range of finished products such as petrol, diesel, LPG etc besides importing them to meet their demand. That makes their operations highly capitalintensive. Consequently, their investment requirements for expansion and growth are heavy. This is exacerbated by their commitments regarding the transition to 'Green Energy'. While IOCL has decided to

achieve 'Net Zero' by 2040, BPCL and HPCL intend to reach this goal Third, the most potent reason as to

why the Government shouldn't backtrack on the capital support once promised to oil PSUs has to do with the loss the latter had suffered during FY 2022-23, courtesy of directions given by the former regarding setting retail prices of petrol and diesel. To understand the full ramifications of such orders, let us look at some basics.

Petrol and diesel were deregulated long back in June 2010 and November 2014 respectively. As a result, oil PSUs got the freedom to fix their retail prices. The price is fixed as refinery-gate price or RGP (import parity price or IPP and export parity price or EPP of the fuel in the ratio of 80:20) plus freight, marketing costs, marketing margin, dealers' commission taxes and duties. Considering that over 85 per cent of India's crude oil needed for making refined products is imported (the balance 15 per cent is sourced from domestic companies such as ONGC, Oil India Limited or OIL) etc, an increase/decrease in its international price should lead to corresponding increase/decrease in the retail price of petrol and diesel but only if the marketing PSUs are allowed to fix the price strictly as per the formula. But, this is rarely done. The Government issues tacit instructions to IOCL/BPCL/HPCL (together, they account for around 90 per cent of the domestic fuel retail network in the country) to fix the retail price. This is driven by extraneous considerations. Ever since the start of the Ukraine war in February 2022, the international price of oil has been on the boil. The average of the basket of crude oil that India imports during April-September 2022 was \$ 103.7 per barrel against the \$90 per barrel that

these PSUs were told to keep the price of petrol and diesel unchanged for six months. This led to substantial under-recovery from the sale of these products.

For instance, in June 2022, the price of petrol in Delhi remained at Rs 97 per litre corresponding to the prewar crude price of US\$ 90 per barrel. This was despite the price of crude jumping to US\$ 116 per barrel of the price of th rel which would have required the price to be set at Rs 112 per litre. Consequently, on the sale of petrol during June 2022, the PSUs suffered under-recovery of Rs 15 per litre (112-97).

Cumulatively, the three PSUs incurred a loss of around Rs 40,000 crore during the first half of FY 2022-23. As the crude price started to decrease from October 2022 onward, their finances became a shade better during the second half. For the whole year, they posted a meagre profit of Rs 850 crore. The capital infusion of Rs 30,000 crore proposed in the budget ioi 2023-24 was meant to help them offset the losses incurred in the previous year.

Just because during FY 2023-24, they have improved their profits due to continuing moderation in the price of crude oil, it won't be logical to trim the promised budgetary support. Moreover, they need some cushion to guard against crude prices moving north yet again; that possibility is not ruled out considering the continuing tense geo-political situation. For the same reason, the Government shouldn't defer bolstering the strategic buffer of crude

In sync with its emphasis on 'predictability' and 'stability' of the policy, having deregulated petrol and diesel, the Government shouldn't interfere in the process of setting prices by the oil PSUs.

(The writer is a policy analyst;

## Is AI a game changer or a disruptor in the communication landscape?

Artificial Intelligence has introduced complex dilemmas, balancing data-driven insights with human ingenuity and profoundly impacting various sectors

¬he growing tentacles of AI have become a push factor for change, innovation and disruption in the borderless world that we live in today. AI tools, processes and its vast architecture have been billed as game changers, influencing a vast range of stakeholders including policymakers, Governments, multilateral bodies, agencies and institutions, which are responsible for carving out the road ahead. The debate today hovers around whether AI has become a disruptor or a transformative catalyst leading to a new normal, which is unpredictable, tech-driven and bereft of the necessary human connection. It has disrupted the new normal driving the communication engagement matrix to a terrain that at



times is daunting, unpredictable, spontaneous and instant.In the given context, it is important to understand that AI has truly created layers of dilemma, a tug-of-war related to ideas, content, data analysis and the conflict between human minds and data-driven mindsets. We are in a situation perhaps where and 15 per cent cost efficienwe over-depend on machines, their learning tools & pre-

ecosystem that is technology savvy, the behaviour of stakeholders being driven by data metrics and accompanying models and influenced by the power of prediction. The impact of AI has been profound in several areas, as the search for the unknown has grown bigger. A report on ndia's media and entertainment sector published by EY #Reinventin 2024 mentions that AI can provide an Rs 450 billion boost to the Indian M&E sector by 2027. The report also mentions AI and especially Gen AI - gives it the tools the sector has always dreamed of and can result in a 10 pr cent revenue growth cy. AI is now used for measuring the effectiveness of camdictability leading to an paigns, the growth of cus-

tomised solutions for addressing issues, analysing data for data-driven narratives and stakeholder engagement and changing equations in the context of the client-agency relationship. There is a need to balance human competence with tech tools and the fear of the unknown in the future. For AI to succeed its performance indicators must be based on open, transparent and inclusive. Its tools are reengineered to reflect the spirit of "Oneness", and "The World is One Family" and the social and economic impact is studied and analysed.

As far as outreach is concerned, the need is to balance the technology push that characterises AI outlining its operational efficiency and the creative quotient of human

AI supplements outreach with data-focused audience insights which provide practitioners with a feel of audience preferences and behaviours leading to focused and targeted communication strategies.

The data processing of the medium also leads to a better and more comprehensive understanding of stakeholder demographics, dynamics, strategy protocols and audience behaviour.

There is an urgent need to integrate the communication matrix with the broad themes to ensure a seamless operation of both verticals. AI being futuristic commands the means to create a positive perception of the AI architecture. Some of the themes to be dis-

beings. As a tool for outreach Learning in communication networks, AI-powered communication networks: Shaping a greener digital future and including other sectors such as health, environment and education.

In all such discussions, the process of communicating the theme will be critical for both policymakers and practitioners.It is also critical that in the era of change, the continuity of technology is weaved with access that is open and democratic. The benefits of positive change must be beneficial to all through the principle of open sourcing: tools, processes, opportunities and community participation.

There must be standard operating procedures and processes that ensure the standardiscussed are AI and Machine ation of algorithms, address mantras of outreach commu-

the frailties of human behaviour and integrate the machine human mind.

Technological advancement is only possible if the gap is bridged between the haves and have-nots. AI as a tool for policy formulation and information dissemination should be based on the strong foundations of adaptability, cohesiveness, inclusivity, access and a proper understanding of the complex and diverse social ecosystem of which we are its key constituents.

As the impact of AI grows across different terrains, the evolution has to be in sync with human abilities and the irreplaceable human trait that characterises outreach.. To ensure a sustainable process, AI needs to follow the five

nication: Being Receptive, Responsive, Responsible and Reciprocal and Reconcile to the needs and requirements of an ecosystem that believes in equity, equal participation, mutual recognition and col-laboration. The success of communication depends on the balance between perception, tools and trust i.e. positioned across different platforms and sectors. A model of this nature will certainly ensure a perfect symphony between AI and the communication landscape bringing forth an effective and lasting communication process.

(The writer is a former civil servant. Views are Personal. Inputs by Vaishnavie Srinivasan and Zoya Ahmad)

## **Norway, Ireland and Spain give** recognition to Palestinian state

Norway, Ireland and Spain said on Wednesday they are recognizing a Palestinian state, in a historic but largely symbolic move that deepens Israel's isolation more than seven months into its grinding war against Hamas in Gaza The announcements came as the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is seeking arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his defense minister and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is considering allegations of genocide that Israel has strenuously denied.

Palestinians welcomed the announcements as an affirmation of their decades-long quest for statehood in east Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — territories Israel seized in the 1967 Mideast war and still controls. Israel recalled its ambassadors to the three countries and summoned their envoys. accusing the Europeans of rewarding the militant Hamas group for its October 7 attack that triggered the war. Netanyahu's government, is opposed to Palestinian statehood, says the conflict can only be resolved through direct negotiations, which last collapsed over 15

As if to underline the point, Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir paid a provocative visit Wednesday to a flashpoint holy site in Jerusalem sacred to Jews and Muslims in a move that could escalate tensions across the region. Ben-Gvir said the visit was a

response to the move by the three European countries. "We will not even allow a statement about a Palestinian state," he

The Al-Aqsa mosque compound is the third holiest site in Islam, and the hilltop on which it stands is the holiest site for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount.

With their formal recognition, planned for May 28, the three countries will join some 140 — more than two-thirds of the United Nations - that



Demonstrators display Palestinian flags and chant slogans while marching Tuesday

"This recognition is not against

anyone, it is not against the

Israeli people," Sanchez said. "It

is an act in favor of peace, jus-

tice and moral consistency." He

said it was clear that

Netanyahu "does not have a

project for peace," while

acknowledging that "the fight

against the terrorist group

Israel's government harshly

condemned the decision taken

by the three countries. Foreign

Minister Israel Katz recalled

Israel's ambassadors and sum-

moned the three countries

envoys in Israel. He said they

would watch grisly video

"History will remember that

footage of the October 7 attack

Spain, Norway, and Ireland

decided to award a gold medal

to Hamas murderers and

rapists," he said. He also said

the announcement would

undermine talks aimed at a

cease-fire and hostage release

in Gaza that came to a stand-

President Mahmoud Abbas,

the leader of the Palestinian

Authority, which administers

parts of the Israeli-occupied

West Bank, welcomed the

moves toward recognition, say-

ing they would contribute to

efforts to bring about a two-

state solution. Hamas also wel-

comed the decisions and called

on other nations to "recognize

our legitimate rights and sup-

port the struggle of our people

for liberation and indepen-

dence, and ending the Zionist

still earlier this month.

Hamas is legitimate."

have recognized the state of Palestine over the years. The United States and Britain, among others, have backed the idea of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel but say it should come as part of a negotiated settlement. The announcements from Europe came in a swift cascade. Norway, which helped broker the Oslo accords that kicked off the peace process in the 1990s, was the first to announce its decision, with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store saying "there cannot be peace in the Middle East if there is no recognition. Irish Prime Minister Simon

Harris called it an "historic and important day for Ireland and for Palestine," saying the announcements had been coordinated and that other countries might join "in the weeks ahead.

The international community has long viewed the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel as the only realistic way to resolve the conflict, and in past weeks several European Union countries have indicated they plan to recognize a Palestinian state to further those efforts. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who announced his country's decision before parliament, has spent months touring European and Middle Eastern countries to garner support for recognition, as well as for a possible cease-fire in Gaza.

#### 'Israel addresses Biden's concerns over Rafah op'

Cairo (AP): Israel has addressed many of President Joe Biden's concerns over its long-simmering plan to carry out a widescale military operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah aimed at rooting ou Hamas, a senior Biden administration official said Tuesday

The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and requested anonymity said that in talks over the weekend with White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan, Israeli officials incorporated many changes into their planning that seem to meet concerns about deepening an operation in an area that has been flooded with Palestinian refugees during the seven-month war.

Biden had previously said he opposed a widescale operation in Rafah that did not prioritize the safety of innocen-Palestinian civilians.

The official said the administration stopped short of green-lighting the Israeli plan but said Israeli officials' altered planning suggested they were taking the American administration's concerns seriously

About 900,000 Palestinians have fled Rafah in recent weeks after the population swelled to about 1.5 million.

occupation of our land." Hamas, which Western countries and Israel view as a terrorist group, does not recognize Israel's existence but has indicated it might agree to a state on the 1967 lines, at least on an interim basis.

The announcements are unlikely to have any impact on the ground. Israel annexed east Jerusalem and considers it part of its capital, and in the occupied West Bank it has build scores of Jewish settlements that are now home to over 5,00,000 Israelis. The settlers have Israeli citizenship, while the 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under seemingly open-ended Israeli

## Singapore Airlines cooperating in severe turbulence probe

Singapore Airlines on Wednesday said it is fully cooperating with relevant authorities in the investigation into the London to Singapore flight which encountered severe turbulence, leading to the death of one passenger and injuring nearly 60 others. Geoffrey Kitchen, a 73year-old British passenger, died likely due to a ĥeart attack on the Singapore Airlines (SIA) flight SQ321, operating from London (Heathrow) to Singapore on Tuesday, said Kittipong Kittikachorn, Manager General Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, to where the flight was diverted under emergency. Nearly 60 passengers were injured after the flight on May 21 encountered "sudden extreme turbulence over the Irrawaddy Basin at 37,000 feet about 10 hours after departure". The carrier said the remaining

passengers aboard the Boeing 777-300ER aircraft carrying 229 people were examined and treated at the airport.

The SIA is fully cooperating with the relevant authorities in probing this incident, the flag carrier's Chief Executive Officer, Goh Choon Phong, As many as 58 people are still

receiving medical treatment in three hospitals in Bangkok, Channel News Asia reported, citing officials at the Samitivej Srinakarin Hospital. At least 20 injured passengers

are being treated in intensive care units, while 38 passengers are receiving in-patient care, the report said. The Samitivej Srinakarin

Hospital has 41 patients, while 15 patients are in the Samitive Sukhumvit Hospital, and two are in Bangkok Hospital, it said. Of the patients in Samitivej Srinakarin Hospital, nine successfully underwent surgery on Tuesday and five more are

Wednesday, it added.
As many as 131 passengers and 12 crew members, who earlier arrived in Singapore via a relief flight on May 22, were received at Changi Airport by Goh. The SIA, in its latest update,

confirmed an additional five passengers and one crew member on board the SQ321 flight will return to Singapore on Wednesday.

Another 74 passengers and six crew members, including those receiving medical care and their family members and loved ones who were on the flight, were still in Bangkok. "For passengers with onward connections, we have rebooked them on alternative flights. We have also arranged hotel accommodation or lounge access for them to rest until their next flight," Singapore's flag carrier said. "On behalf of

the Singapore Airlines Board,

I extend my deepest condo-lences to the family and loved

ones of our passenger who passed away on May 21, 2024, in the SQ321 incident. I assure all passengers and crew members who were on board the aircraft that we are committed to supporting them during this difficult time," said Peter Seah, Chairman of Singapore Airlines.

"I also wish to express my gratitude to everyone in Singapore, Thailand, and around the world who are assisting those affected by this incident," Seah said. The nationalities of the passengers are as follows: 56 from Australia, three Indians, two from Canada, one from Germany, two Indonesians, one from Iceland, four from Ireland, one from Israel, 16 from Malaysia, two from Myanmar, 23 from New Zealand, five from the Philippines, 41 Singaporeans, one South Korean, two from Spain, 47 from the United Kingdom, and four from the

## UK hails drop in visas as stranded Indian workers appeal for help

The UK government on Wednesday hailed a significant drop in healthcare visa applications following its restrictions on family dependants, even as hundreds of Indian care workers who find themselves unfairly stranded in the country appeal for help. Latest Home Office statistics

reveal a 76 per cent drop in overseas workers applying for jobs in the UK's care sector and a 58 per cent fall in family dependents in the Health and Care visa category in the first full month since restrictions were in place, compared with April 2023. Indian nationals topped the Health and Care visa grants last year. The number of dependents, or spouses and children, in the student visa category, also registered a significant drop of 79 per cent over the same period since those new rules came into force earlier this year. "This monthly data is the most

up-to-date picture of visa levels, showing that on current trajectories legal migration continues to fall across key routes," said UK Home Secretary James Cleverly.

The British people deserve an immigration system that puts their interests first. Our approach is about control and fairness; to the highly skilled coming here who deserve a decent wage, to taxpayers who shouldn't be relied on to support them, and to British work ers who shouldn't be undercut," he said.

The monthly data was released to reflect the impact of changes by the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak-led government, which is keen to show falling immigration numbers ahead of a general election later this year. Since March, previously unmonitored care providers in England acting as sponsors for migrants are required to register with industry regulator Care Quality Commission (CQC) – a move the government said will address worker exploitation and abuse within the sector. Indian nationals have topped

the Health and Care visa grants, with 38,866 given out last year. and are now facing the brunt of these previously lax rules governing dubious recruitment agencies. "Some of these victims had borrowed thousands of pounds to get the visas and now face deportation for no fault of theirs," said the National Council of Gujarati Organisations (NCGO) UK, which is lobbying on behalf of these workers, many of whom are from Gujarat.

"Some of these agencies are bogus and operate from a hired desk at serviced offices. The majority of them were not checked for their genuineness by the Home Office and were issued with quotas like confetti," said Kanti Nagda of the NCGO UK, which is now seeking a meeting with the Home Secretary to appeal on behalf of

#### Four accused of killing Nijjar appear before Canada court

Ottawa(PTI): Four Indian nationals accused of killing Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar last year in Surrey were ordered by a Canadian court to have no contact with several people in the community, as they made their first joint appearance before it in the case that has severely strained ties between India and Canada.

Three of the four suspects – Karan Brar (22), Kamalpreet Singh (22) and 28-year-old Karanpreet Singh — appeared in person for the first time in B.C. Provincial Court in Surrey. The fourth suspect — Amandeep Singh, 22, appeared by video link. Amandeep Singh remains in custody in Ontario where he was facing unrelated weapons offences before being arrested on May 10 for Nijjar's killing. Judge Mark Jette spoke to the men through an interpreter as he placed them under a nocontact order, before adjourning until the suspects' next appearance on June 25, CBC

the time until the next hearing will allow the Crown to fulfil its evidentiary disclosure obligations to the suspects' lawyers. wore red prison sweatsuits as they entered the courtroom. Richard Fowler, the lawyer representing Karan Brar, told the Vancouver Sun," it's completely understandable given the context why there is an enormous amount of community interest in this case. That level of community interest makes me...to ensure that those charged with these offences have a fair trial."

Prosecutor Marcel Daigle said

News reported.

Attendees at the latest hearing for the men were searched held a protest outside.

with the judge warning observers that recording audio and taking pictures was prohibited, the report added. Nijjar, 45, was killed outside Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in

Surrey, British Columbia on June 18, 2023.



Moon day of "Kasone," known as Buddha's Birthday, at Botataung pagoda

## Iran's supreme leader prays for late president, others

Tran's supreme leader prayed Wednesday over the coffins of eign minister and other officials who were killed in a helicopter crash earlier this week. Later, hundreds of thousands of people followed a procession hon-ouring the dead down Tehran's main boulevard. Iran's Shiite theocracy views

mass demonstrations as crucial evidence of its legitimacy and the people's support. Still, Wednesday's funeral service for President Ebrahim Raisi and others saw a turnout that onlookers described as noticeably lower than the 2020 procession honouring Revolutionary Guard general Qassem Soleimani, who was killed in a US drone strike in Baghdad. Many of the participants said they came to Tehran for the ceremony from other cities and towns across the Islamic Republic, an indication of how those in Iran's capital viewed Raisi, who won the presidency in a record low turnout and later oversaw repeated crackidowns on all dissent — including in the



Iranians follow a truck carrying coffins of the late President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions who were killed in a helicopter crash on Sunday in a mountainous region of the country's northwest, during a funeral ceremony for them in Tehran, Iran,

wake of the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini that sparked street protests over Iran's mandatory hijab, or headscarf Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who openly wept for Soleimani, also remained composed while reciting the stan-

 $D_{\text{money trial moved into a}}^{\text{onald Trump's hush}}$ 

new phase Tuesday, drawing

closer to the moment when the

jury will begin deciding his fate

after testimony concluded

without the former president

taking the stand in his own

"Your honor, the defense rests,"

Trump lawyer Todd Blanche

told the judge. Trump's team

ended with a former federal

prosecutor who was called to

attack the credibility of the

prosecution's key witness, one

of two people summoned to

the stand by the defense. The

Manhattan district attorney's

office called 20 witnesses over

15 days of testimony before

The jury was sent home for a

week, until May 28, when clos-

resting its case Monday.

**AP** ■ NEW YORK

defense.

dard prayer for the dead. "Oh Allah, we didn't see anything but good from him," Khamenei said in Arabic, the language of Islam's holy book, the Quran. He soon left and the crowd inside rushed to the front, reaching out to touch the

Mohammad Mokhber, stood nearby and openly cried.

Amirabdollahian and six others in the crash on Sunday comes at a politically sensitive moment for Iran, both at home and abroad. Raisi, who was 63, had been dis-

cussed as a possible successor to Iran's supreme leader, the 85year-old Khamenei. None of Iran's living past presidents other than Khamenei, who was president from 1981 until 1989 could be seen in state television footage of Wednesday's prayers. The authorities gave no explanation for their apparent Following the deadly helicopter

crash, Iran set June 28 as the next presidential election. For now, there's no clear favourite for the position among Iran's political elite — particularly no one who is a Shiite cleric, like Raisi. During Raisi's term in office, Iran launched an unprecedented attack on Israel last month as its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip rages on. Iran has supported Hamas through-

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh The death of Raisi, Foreign attended the prayers Wednesday International Criminal Court's prosecutor said he'd seek an arrest warrant for him and others over the October 7 attack that sparked the latest Israel-Hamas war. In the unprecedented assault on southern Israel. Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people and seized 250 hostage. The ICC prosecutor is also seeking arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for their conduct in the war, which has seen more than 35,000 Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip and also hundreds in the

out the war and provided

weaponry to the militants.

Haniyeh recounted meeting Raisi earlier this year in Tehran during Ramadan, the holy Muslim fasting month, and heard the president say the Palestinian issue remains the key one for the Muslim world. Hé also described Raisi calling the October 7 attack an "earthquake in the heart of the Zionist

West Bank.

before entering the courthouse, while the supporters of Nijjar Sheriffs at the hearing placed peoples' phones in plastic zipper bags and kept them outside the courtroom in plastic bins,

#### Nepalese climber Kami Rita climbs Everest for 30th time

**PTI** ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's veteran summiteer Kami Rita Sherpa made history on Wednesday by scaling Mt Everest for the 30th time, breaking his own record that he made 10 days ago for the highest number of ascents on the world's highest peak.

The 54-year-old legendary mountaineer reached the 8,849-metre peak at 7:49 am local time, according to Tashi Lakpa Sherpa, Chief Executive Officer at the 14 Peaks Expedition high-altitude sports

company. Kami summited the peak for the 29th time only 10 days ago. "He has scaled Everest on May 12 for the 29th time," The Himalayan Times newspaper quoted Tashi Lakpa as saying.



at the 14 Peaks Expedition and Seven Summit Treks, climbed Mt Everest for the first time in May 1994, the report said. He was born on January 17, 1970, and his mountaineering journey began in 1992 when he

joined an expedition to the highest peak as a supporting staff. Kami developed a deep passion for climbing from a

young age and has been scal-

ing mountains for over two decades, Tashi Lakpa said. Besides Mt Everest, he has also conquered Mt K2, Cho Oyu, Lhotse, and Manaslu.

Last year, he successfully scaled Mt Everest for the 27th and 28th times in the same sea-

His closest rival, 46-year-old Pasand Dawa Sherpa of Solukhumbu, also completed his 27th summit of Everest last year. Altogether, 414 climbers from 41 expeditions have acquired permission to scale Everest this season.

Official data from 2023 showed that since 1953's Hillary-Norgay summit, around 7,000 mountaineers have successfully scaled Mt Everest while over 300 have lost their lives.

ing arguments are expected, credibility of the prosecution but the attorneys returned to witnesses. That's a routine the courtroom to debate how the judge will instruct jurors on deliberations, a sort of road map meant to help them apply the law to the evidence and tes-timony. The two sides haggled over word choices, legal phrases and how to describe various

campaign-related issues. Trump, the first former American president to be tried criminally, did not answer questions about why he did not

Trump had previously said he wanted to take the witness stand in his own defense, but there was no requirement or even expectation that he do so. Defendants routinely decline to testify. His attorneys, instead of mounting an effort to demonstrate Trump's innocence to jurors, focused on attacking the defense strategy; the burden of proof in a criminal case lies with the prosecution. The defense doesn't have to prove a thing.

Trump hush money trial concludes without his testimony

Yet even as Trump denounces the trial as a politically motivated travesty of justice, he has been working to turn the proceedings into an offshoot of his presidential campaign. He's capitalized on the trial as a fundraising pitch, used his time in front of the cameras to criticize President Joe Biden and showcased a parade of his own political supporters.

Prosecutors have accused the presumptive Republican presidential nominee of a scheme to scoop up and bury negative stories in an illegal effort to influence the 2016 presidential election. Trump has pleaded not guilty to falsifying business records to conceal the alleged scheme and denied any wrongdoing. It's the first of Trump's four criminal cases to go to trial, and quite possibly the only one before the 2024 presidential election.

"They have no case," Trump said outside court. "There's no crime."

He also again attacked the prosecutor, despite repeated warnings from Judge Juan M. Merchan not to violate a gag order that bars him from publicly commenting on witnesses, prosecutors, court staff or the judge's family.

Jurors have been given a lesson on the underbelly of the tabloid business world, where Trump allies at the National Enquirer launched a plan to keep seamy, sometimes outrageous stories about Trump out of the public

eye by paying tens of thousands of dollars to "catch and kill" them. They watched as a porn actress, Stormy Daniels, recounted in discomfiting detail an alleged sexual encounter with Trump in a hotel room. Trump says nothing sexual happened between And they sat intently in the jury

box as Trump's former-lawyerturned-foe Michel Cohen placed Trump in the middle of the scheme to buy Daniels' story to keep it from going public in the waning weeks before the 2016 presidential election. During that time, Republicans were wringing their hands in distress over the potential political fallout from the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape, where Trump bragged about grabbing women sexually without asking permission.

## Russian attacks on Ukraine power grid hit Kyiv with blackouts

Sustained Russian attacks on Ukraine's power grid in recent weeks have forced leaders of the war-ravaged country to institute nationwide rolling blackouts. Without adequate air defences to counter assaults and allow for repairs, though, the shortages could still worsen as need spikes in late summer and the bitter-cold winter.

The Russian airstrikes targeting the grid since March have meant blackouts have even returned to the capital, Kyiv, which hadn't experienced them since the first year of the war. Among the strikes were an April barrage that damaged Kyiv's largest thermal power plant and a massive attack on May 8 that targeted power generation and transmission facilities in several regions.

In all, half of Ukraine's energy system was damaged, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said. Entire apartment blocks in the capital went dark. The city's

military administration said at least 10 per cent of consumers were disconnected.

For many, it is a taste of what might be in store if Ukraine doesn't find other electricity sources before winter. With no end in sight to the attacks on the power grid and without a way to adequately defend against them, there are no quick fixes to the electricity shortages, Energy Minister Herman Halushchenko explained. Ukraine is appealing to Western allies for more air defence systems and spare parts to fix its Soviet-era plants

"With each attack we lose additional power generation, so it just goes minus, minus, minus," Halushchenko said on Tuesday while standing outside a coalfired plant in central Ukraine that was destroyed in an April 11 attack

Any efforts to repair the plant would be futile until the military can defend it from another attack. "Should we repair (power stations) just for them

while we are unable to defend ourselves?" the minister asked. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock's joined him on the plant visit, under-scoring Ukraine's desperation to close the power gap as quickly as possible.

The first major test of the grid will come in July and August, when consumption can mirror levels in the sub-freezing winter months, the minister said. By mid-May, Kyiv's residents began to feel the consequences of Russia's attacks. A cold snap drove up consumption, forcing Ukrenergo, the main transmission system operator, to intro-duce controlled blackouts throughout the country Ukraine can't generate enough power to cover evening peaks, and the shortage is greater than the country's ability to import electricity from Poland,

Slovakia and Romania. The April 11 attack on the plant destroyed generators, transformers and turbines — every necessary part to generate electricity, said Yevhen Harkavyi the technical director of Centerenergo, which operates the plant.

Five missiles hit the facility that day, and workers were still clearing away rubble on Tuesday as snow-like tufts of poplar cotton fell through a hole in the roof.

The plan for winter is to restore power generation as much as possible, said Harkavyi. How that will happen isn't clear, he conceded: "The situation is already too difficult.

Ukraine is hoping to acquire

parts from long-decommissioned German plants. Harkavyi said Ukrainian teams recently went to Germany to evaluate the equipment, which was taken offline because it doesn't meet European Union environmental standards. It remains to be seen how willing European allies will be to invest in Ukraine's coal-fuelled energy sector given their own green-

### Pak court rejects plea to disqualify Imran for concealing alleged daughter's name in 2018 nomination papers

Pakistani court has reject-Aed a petition seeking the disqualification of former prime minister Imran Khan for concealing his alleged daughter Tyrian White while submitting his nomination papers for the 2018 general elections. The Islamabad High Court

(IHC) took up the petition on Tuesday after a gap of almost a year, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The petition alleged that the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreeke-Insaf (PTI) party founder had not disclosed his alleged daughter — Tyrian White — in his nomination papers for contesting the 2018 general elec-Khan's PTI party won the 2018

general elections, and the former cricketer-turned-politician served as the prime minister of Pakistan from August 2018 to April 2022. The IHC rejected the petition after noting that a three-judge bench had previously dismissed it, the



eport said.Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri read the opinion of the two judges given last year and ruled that the case has already been dis-

On May 10, 2023, a three-member bench of the court

hearing the case was dissolved by IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq after the opinion of two of the three judges — supporting the petitions dismissal was uploaded on the court's

The majority judgement was

deleted from the website minutes after it was uploaded, and the IHC chief justice dissolved the bench.

Khan's party welcomed the judgement, saying that the two judges had already decided the case, but the IHC chief jus-tice "tried to keep it alive on

technicalities". Senior lawyers questioned the constitution of a fresh bench when the case had been decided earlier, according to the

The petition said that even though Khan had three chil-dren, he had mentioned only two in the papers and con-

cealed the existence of his third child. It also alleged that Khan did not marry his alleged girl-friend Sita White, mother of Tvrian, because her father told Khan that he would not get a

"penny" from his wealth if he married Sita. The PTI founder initially joined the proceedings but later backtracked after he was asked to undergo a blood test,

## Vietnam's top security official confirmed as pres

**AP** BANGKOK

Tietnam's top security official To Lam was confirmed on Wednesday as the nation's new president. He oversaw police and intelligence operations over a period when rights groups say basic liberties have been systematically suppressed, and its secret service was accused of violating international law. Lam was confirmed by

Vietnam's National Assembly after his predecessor resigned amid an ongoing anti-corrup tion campaign that has shaken the country's political establishment and business elites and has resulted in multiple toplevel changes in government. Vietnam's presidency is largely ceremonial, but his new role as head of state puts the 66year-old in a "very strong position" to become the next Communist Party general secretary, the most important political position in the country, said Nguyen Khac Giang, an analyst at Singapore's ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute. Communist Party General

Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong



was elected to a third term in 2021, but at age 80, he may not seek another term after 2026. Trong is an an ideologue who views corruption as the gravest threat facing the party. As Vietnam's top security official, Lam has led Trong's sweeping anti-graft campaign. Lam spent more than four decades in the Ministry of Public Security before becoming the minister in 2016. His rise took place while Vietnam's politburo lost of six of its 18 members amid the expanding anti-graft campaign, including two former presidents and Vietnam's par-

liamentary head Lam was behind many of the investigations into high-profile politicians, said Giang. Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh is seen as the other major contender to possibly succeed Trong, Giang said.

The current vice-speaker of Vietnam's parliament was confirmed on Monday as the National Assembly speaker after his predecessor, Vuong Dinh Hue, resigned amid the anti-graft campaign. Until his resignation, Hue was also widely seen as a potential successor

to Trong. This unprecedented instability in Vietnam's political system has spooked investors as the country tries to position itself as an alternative for companies looking to shift their supply chains away from China.

A flood of foreign investment, especially in manufacturing of high-tech products like smartphones and computers, raised expectations it could join the "Four Asian Tigers" — Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, whose economies underwent rapid industrialization and posted high growth

But the scandals and uncertainty — including the death sentence for a real estate tycoon accused of embezzling nearly 3 per cent of the country's 2022 GDP — have brought with them uncertainty and bureaucratic reticence to make decisions. Economic growth slipped to 5.1 per cent last year from 8 per cent in 2022 as exports slowed.

During Lam's years heading the Public Security Ministry, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and other watchdog organisations have strongly criticised Vietnam for its harassment and intimidation of critics. In 2021, courts convicted at least 32 people for posting critical opinions about the govern-ment and sentenced them to multiple years in prison, while police arrested at least 26 others on fabricated charges, according to Human Rights

Under Tam's watch as Vietnam's top security boss, civil society faced further curbs, foreign aid restrictions introduced in 2021 were tightened in 2023, the country jailed climate activists, and laws were introduced to censor social media, said Ben Swanton of The 88 Project, a group that advocates for freedom of expression in Vietnam. "With To Lam's ascent to the presidency, Vietnam is now a literal police state," said Swanton, adding that the Vietnamese ruling Politburo was now dominated by current and former security officials. He said he expected further intensification of repression and censorship.

of repression and censorship. While Vietnam was under a COVID-19 lockdown in 2021, a video surfaced showing Turkish chef Nusret Gokce, popularly known as Salt Bae, feeding Tam a gold-encrusted steak in London. Despite efforts to censor it, the video went to censor it, the video went viral, stoking widespread anger from people enduring virus lockdowns that exacerbated deprivations. economic Meantime, a Vietnamese noodle vendor named Bui Tuan Lam, who followed the video with a parody of Salt Bae, was arrested on charges of spreading anti-state propaganda and sentenced to five years in

Ît was also under Lam's tenure as public security minister, in 2017, when German authorities say Vietnamese businessperson and former politician Trinh Xuan Thanh and a companion were abducted and dragged into a van in downtown Berlin, in what officials there called "an unprecedented and flagrant violation of German and inter national law".

## India, China agree to cooperate in paying in local currency for imports: Maldives

**PTI** ■ MALE

The Maldives on Wednesday said both India and China have agreed to cooperate in efforts to pay for imports in their respective countries' currency instead of the US dollar, which is likely to help Male save almost 50 per cent of the annual USD 1.5 million imports bill from the two countries.

Maldives' Economic Development Minister Mohamed Saeed said he met with the Indian High Munu Commissioner Mahawar two weeks ago, who in turn, said that New Delhi would support and cooperate in arranging for the settlement of import payments in Indian Rupee. Similarly, Saeed said, he received a letter from China's Commerce Ministry, two days ago, in which Beijing provided assurance it will cooperate in allowing the option to settle Chinese currency, as requested by President Mohamed Muizzu.

Annually, Maldives imports goods worth USD 780 million and USD 720 million from India and China respectively, the minister had said in April when he had first announced that the Maldives was discussing with India and China if the island nation can make payments for its imports from the country in Maldivian Rufivaa.

International trade between two countries in local currency is a mutually beneficial mechanism as it helps in saving each other's foreign exchange reserves. Moreover, the move will mark a significant shift away from the dominant use of the US dollar in international transac-

In July 2023, the Government of India declared that Maldives was among the 22 countries that were permitted by the Reserve Bank of India to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs) as part of efforts to promote bilateral trade in local currencies. News portal Sun.mv on

Wednesday quoted Saeed as speaking with state-run PSM Media: "Maldives imports between USD 600-700 million in commodities from both India and China, each year. Therefore, we import around USD 1.4 billion to USD 1.5 billion in commodities annually, from both markets combined."

'We are negotiating with both sides to make arrangements for us so that, for example, for imports from China, the shipping company can bring the invoice and the payment can be settled by converting Maldivian Rufiyaa to their local currency through the banks, instead of US dollar," Saeed said, adding, it will save up to 50 per cent from the annual USD 1.5 million in imports from the two coun-

"If we can arrange up to USD

300 million from each country, that means USD 700 mil-

lion. This means we can elimlars by that amount in the future. That will reduce the demand for dollars. And the future demand for dollars will continue to fall," Saeed was quoted as saying by Sun.mv. Saeed blamed the poor state of finances on the former administration and agreed that challenges persist as foreign countries are still skeptical about the Maldives but "it is slowly improving." The new Maldivian administration has said that the country's economic situation was "alarming", but that the government was implementing strong fiscal reforms to rectify the issue, including stop-

ping printing money. Earlier in April, during campaigning ahead of the parlia-mentary polls, Saeed had said that if the ruling party was able to secure a majority in Parliament, they would be able to bring "the dollar rate back down to official market values within approximately two years."

President Muizzu-led People's National Congress (PNC) secured a clear majority in the 87-member People's

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### 'Lanka's presidential election first, parliamentary polls later'

PTI ■ COLOMBO

 $P^{\rm resident}_{\rm Wick remesinghe}$ Ranil Wednesday reiterated his intention to hold the next presidential election this year ahead of the parliamentary election Sources confirmed that he told the Cabinet meeting earlier in the day that financial allocations have only been reserved so far for the conduct of the presidential poll. Despite speculation that a

General Election will precede a Presidential election, Wickremesinghe informed the Cabinet that the Presidential election will be held first this According to the Election Act, the presidential election should

happen first. The next parliamentary election is not due before August 2025. The Elections Commission

earlier this month said the presidential election would be conducted at a date between September 17 and October 16. The ruling Sri Lanka People's Front, commonly known by its Sinhalese name Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP),



which has the current parliamentary majority, had pressed Wickremesinghe to hold the parliamentary election ahead of the presidential poll. Wickremesinghe, 75, is yet to announce his candidacy despite

declarations by two other main opposition leaders: Sajith Premadasa the main opposition leader, and the Marxist JVP leader Anura Kumara

Dissanayake. Wickremesinghe, from the arch-rival party United National Party (UNP), succeeded SLPP-elected president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to become president for the rest of Rajapaksa's term when the lat-

ter was ousted, after the island nation declared first international default, during street protests which lasted between April and July of 2022.

Rajapaksa gave in to calls for his resignation due to his inability to handle the unprecedented economic crisis. The Rajapaksa administration

announced Sri Lanka's firstever sovereign default as forex shortages caused long queues

for essentials and fuel. Wickremesinghe since taking over has steered the economy to safety by securing an IMF bailout. Analysts, however, feel that Sri Lanka is not completely out of the woods yet.

#### Pak govt forms committee to probe attack on PTI leader

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday said an inquiry committee has been formed to investigate an attack on a senior leader of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party a day earlier. Terming the attack as "regrettable and sad", the law minister while speaking in a Senate session today said such attacks should not happen. "The government is seriously investigating the attack on Raoof Hasan," Tarar said, according to Geo News. An FIR on charges of murder and attempted murder concerning the attack on Imran Khan's party's Information Secretary Raoof Hasan has been registered at Islamabad's Abpara police station, the Express Tribune newspaper reported. Hasan was allegedly attacked by a group of around four apparently transgender persons in the capital. It drew strong condemnation from his party, however, it remains unclear why the politician was attacked

## UK lawmaker returns to work as 'bionic MP' after losing his hands and feet to sepsis

London (AP): Britain's fractious politicians shared a rare moment of unity on Wednesday, when lawmaker Conservative returned to work six months after sepsis put him in a coma and forced the amputation of his hands and feet. As Conservative legislator Craig Mackinlay walked unaided into the House of Commons before the weekly Prime Minister's Questions session, government and opposition lawmakers alike rose in a standing ovation. "As you know, we don't allow clapping," Speaker Lindsay Hoyle said as Mackinlay's wife and 4year-old daughter watching from the public gallery. "But this is an exception." Mackinlay, 57, said he wants to be known as "the bionic MP." He plans to campaign for greater awareness of the signs of sepsis, and for Britain's state-funded National

Health Service, which treated him and saved his life, to offer better treatment and prosthetics to people who have lost more than one limb.

Addressing his fellow lawmakers in the Commons chamber, Mackinlay thanked Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Hoyle for visiting him while he was in hospital. Referring to the speaker's formal black tailcoat, he joked that "the rest of the hospital thought I must be dreadfully ill, because they said that guy's got the funeral director in already.

He asked Sunak to ensure the health service would "embed recognition of early signs of sepsis." If we can stop somebody ending up like this, I would say that is a job well done," Mackinlay said.

He also called on health ministers to ensure the "provision of appropriate prosthetics."

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#### Chinese journalist released from prison after 4 years who could often only speak to **AP** BANGKOK ment that Zhang still has limitduring the outbreak. Fang was ed freedom.

Thang Zhan was released Lfrom prison after serving four years for charges related to reporting on the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, according to a video statement she released Tuesday, eight days after her sentence ended.

Zhang was sentenced to four years in prison on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," a vaguely defined charge often used in political cases, and served her full term. Yet, on the day of her release, her former lawyers could not reach her or her family. Shanghai police had paid visits to activists and her former lawyers in the



"I want to thank everyone for their help and concern," she said in a soft voice, standing in what

appeared to be a hallway of an apartment building.

The video was posted by Jane Wang, an overseas activist who launched the Free Zhang Zhan campaign in the United Kingdom and is in contact with one of Zhang's former lawyers. However, Wang said in a stateThey became concerned that Zhang would be kept under further control by police even if she

was no longer in prison. The United States Department of State also issued a statement of concern over Zhang's status in the days after she was due to be released.

Ren Quanniu represented Zhang before being stripped of his license in February 2021. He said he confirmed the video was true by speaking with Zhang's family. During her detention at Shanghai's Women Prison, Zhang staged a hunger strike and was hospitalised at one point in 2021. Zhang's family, her by phone, faced police pressure during her incarceration, and her parents refused to speak to news outlets. Zhang was among a handful of

citizen journalists who travelled to the central Chinese city of Wuhan after the government put it under total lockdown in February 2020, in the early days of the pandemic.

She walked around the city to document public life as fears grew about the novel coron-

Others spent time in jail for documenting the early days of the pandemic, including Fang Bin, who published videos of overgrouded hornitals and hodies. crowded hospitals and bodies

sentenced to three years in prison and released in April 2023. Chen Qiushi, another citizen journalist, disappeared in February 2020 while filming in Wuhan. Chen resurfaced in September

2021 on a friend's live video feed on YouTube, saying he had suffered from depression. He did not provide details about his disappearance. The coronavirus remains a sen-

sitive topic in China. In the first week of May, the Chinese scientist who first published a sequence of the COVID-19 virus protested authorities barring him from his lab, after years of demotions and setbacks.

## Markets climb on buying in Reliance, Infosys



PTI MUMBA

 $E_{ended\ with\ gains\ on}$  Wednesday amid buying in blue-chips Reliance Industries and Infosys amid mixed cues from global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 267.75 points or 0.36 per cent to settle at 74,221.06. During the day, it jumped 354.48 points or 0.47 per cent to 74,307.79. Similarly, the NSE Nifty advanced 68.75 points or 0.31 per cent to finish at 22,597.80.

"Despite mixed global market sentiments ahead of the US Fed minutes, Indian markets exhibited a subtle positive trend. Investors are optimistic about stable Q4 earnings and easing election jitters that had increased

"Interest in the FMCG sector has risen due to the potential for an early onset of monsoon. Nevertheless, markets may underperform in the short term as they wait for the election outcome, with FIIs staying on the sidelines,"

Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. Among the Sensex firms, Hindustan Unilever, Reliance Industries, Infosys, Asian Paints, ITC and UltraTech Cement were the

major gainers.
State Bank of India, JSW Steel,
Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Tata Steel and Tata Motors were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Shanghai settled in the positive territory while Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading lower. Wall Street ended in the green on Tuesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.84 per cent to USD 82.18 a barrel.

Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,874.54 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark declined 52.63 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 73,953.31 on Tuesday. The Nifty, however, ended higher by 27.05 points or 0.12 per cent to 22,529.05.

## Rupee rises 3 paise to close at 83.28 against US dollar

**PTI** MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated by 3 paise to settle at 83.28 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday amid softening crude oil prices. Forex traders said the local unit consolidated in a narrow range weighed down by

foreign fund outflows. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 83.29 and moved in the range of 83.22 and 83.29 against the greenback during the session.

The local unit finally settled at 83.28 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a rise of 3

paise from its previous close. The Indian rupee gained on positive domestic markets and a decline in crude oil prices. However, mixed to positive US Dollar and FII outflows capped sharp gains, said Anuj Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias as the US Dollar may recover from lower levels if the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting minutes are Choudhary said.

FII outflows may also weigh on the rupee. However, a



positive tone in the domestic markets and weakness in crude oil prices may support the rupee at lower levels, Choudhary added.

Investors may cautious ahead of PMI data from the US this week. USDINR spot price

added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.09 per cent to 104.75, as most Fed officials warned of cutting interest rates too early and need more data to cut rates. Brent crude futures, the

global oil benchmark, slipped 0.69 per cent to USD 82.31 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex market front, advanced 267.75 points, or 0.36 per cent, to settle at 74,221.06 points, and Nifty

expected to trade in a range of Rs 83 to Rs 83.55, Choudhary cent, to close at 22,597.80 points.

Institutional Foreign Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Tuesday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 1,874.54 crore, according to exchange

On the macroeconomic front, according to an article in the RBI's May Bulletin released on Tuesday, India is likely to grow by 7.5 per cent in the first quarter of the current financial year, driven by rising aggregate demand and nonfood spending in the rural

FY24 from Rs 6,140 crore in

These investments are now

initiative

FY21, the body said.

#### **Mahindra Finance** gets IRDAI nod to sell insurance products as corporate agent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services on Wednesday said it has received corporate agency licence from insurance regulator IRDAI, which will enable it to sell life and general insurance policies offered by various insurers. The registration shall be valid from May 21, 2024 to May 20, 2027, Mahindra Finance said

in a regulatory filing. The registration as 'Corporate Agent (Composite)' will enable the company to undertake supplemental business activity of soliciting and procuring insurance business in the areas of life, health and general insurance — both group and individual,

it said. The process would augment company's existing sources of revenue and profits as it would deploy its common infrastructure of

branch network and feet on Mahindra Finance Managing Director & CEO Raul Rebello said, "This diversification will open new revenue models for while delivering personalized services to

customers across Mahindra Finance's 1360+ branches, thereby enhancing their experience." The corporate agency licence will enable Mahindra Finance to solicit, procure and carry on the business of advertising, distribution, marketing of all kinds of insurance products/ services, including life insurance, health insurance, and general insurance, on behalf of various insurance companies

#### Suzlon bags new orders of 402 MW wind energy from Juniper Green Energy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $R^{\text{enewable energy solutions}}_{\text{provider Suzlon Group on}}$ Wednesday said it has bagged new orders for the development of 402 MW wind energy projects from Juniper Green Energy.

Suzlon will install a total of 134 turbine generators (WTGs) with a Hybrid Lattice Tubular (HLT) tower and a rated capacity of 3 MW for both projects at the Suzlon proposed site at Fatehgarh in Rajasthan, company statement said.

As part of the agreement, Suzlon will supply the wind turbines and execute the project including foundation, erection, and commissioning. Suzlon will also undertake comprehensive operations and maintenance services postcommissioning.

"Juniper Green Energy has been a long-term, repeat



customer for us, and we are delighted to partner with them again. This order helps us expand our footprint in Rajasthan," Girish Tanti, Vice Chairman, Suzlon Group, said in the statement.

The electricity generated from these projects will help realise the vision of the Rajasthan government to serve the people of the state with green energy, he added.

The generated power will be provided under FDRE (Firm and Dispatchable Renewable Energy) Hybrid and Merchant projects. Projects of this size can provide electricity to 3.31 lakh households and curb 13.07 lakh tonnes of

## Paper, paperboard imports up 34 per cent in FY24: IPMA

Imports of paper and paperboard in the country rose by 34 per cent to 19.3 lakh tonnes in 2023-24, driven by higher shipments from ASEAN countries, an industry association said on Wednesday Indian Paper

Manufacturers Association (IPMA) in a statement said that the increasing imports of these products are hurting the domestic industry.

paperboard Paper and imports, as per the commerce ministry data, were 14.3 lakh tonnes in the financial year ended on March 31, 2023, the IPMA said.

"ASEAN has come to account for the largest chunk in the paper import pie in the country accounting for 27 per cent share. Paper imports from ASEAN, which enter the country at zero import duty under the ASEAN-India free In value terms, paper imports

after lifting ban



5.1 lakh tonnes during the year from 2.7 lakh tonnes in



paperboard.

IPMA said that this surge comes despite substantial investments by the domestic

FY23," the association said

Laos

at risk due to the influx of duty-free imports," it claimed. IPMA has urged the government to increase the basic customs duty (BCD) on the import of paper and paperboard from 10 per cent to 25 per cent. as a corporate agent as permitted by IRDAI, it said. Paytm net loss widens to ₹550

crore in Q4

## Housing prices near peak level, nominal growth seen in coming years, says C&W India head

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

rowth in housing prices is Gexpected to be nominal in short to medium term after rising sharply over the last two years due to surge in demand post the COVID pandemic, according to Cushman & Wakefield India head Anshul Jain.

Jain, the Chief Executive India & South East Asia and APAC Tenant Representation, Cushman & Wakefield, said the housing demand would continue to be strong in view of high economic growth and a growing desire to own homes among consumers especially, young population. "Housing demand in India

 $N^{\mathrm{HPC}}$  organised a Shramdaan programme for cleanliness campaign under 'Swachhata

Pakhwada 2024' on 21st May 2024. RP Goyal,

CMD, NHPC, Shri Uttam Lal, Director

(Personnel), NHPC and RK Chaudhary,

Director (Technical & Projects), NHPC, senior

NHPC officers and employees performed

Budhia Wala Nala (a monument), in Faridabad.

Shramdaan by running a cleanliness drive in Mughal Bridge over

During the Shramdaan programme local people also took part

PNS NEW DELHI

NTPC secures

New Delhi:

Management),

achieved

third rank at ATD

BEST Award 2024

an

milestone by securing the 3rd

rank globally at the ATD BEST

Award 2024, the highest ranking among all Indian companies. Notably, NTPC is the only PSU to have received

this prestigious award seven

times in the past eight years.

The accolade was accepted by

Rachana Singh Bhal, CGM (Strategic HR & Talent

NTPC

impressive



NHPC organises Shramdaan programme under Swachhata Pakhwada 2024

was quite muted from 2013-2014, all the way to 2019. The prices were stagnant. There was a wave at that point in where people, particularly youngsters did not want to own anything. We talking about Uberisation of the residential sector where people wanted to

said. However, he noted that the COVID pandemic changed that mindset. "People realised the stability of having their own house. Plus people wanted larger houses, and combining that with one of the lowest interest rate rent and did not want to sort of regimes India had seen for a

while really spurred the demand for housing," he said. Jain noted that housing sales and prices went up driven by end-user demand.

Seeing the prices going up the investors came into the market. So, a combination of that became a perfect cocktail for a very strong demand post COVID from a housing Going forward, he said there would be nominal growth in

been

enthusiastically along with the NHPC employees. NHPC is observing 'Swachhta Pakhwada 2024' at

its Corporate Office and all its Regional Offices,

Projects and Power Stations across the country

from 16th May to 31st May 2024 as per

guidelines issued by the Government of India.

During this Pakhwada, NHPC is organising

various activities as cleanliness awareness

programmes, tree/ sapling plantation, skit

presentation, cleaning kit/ sanitary pad distribution, awareness

programmes on hygiene, drawing and painting competitions etc.

very significant price rise in the last two years. But if you normalize that, over about 10 odd years, 2013- 2014 to now, I think the price rise has still strong,

. Clearly there has been a

India has exported more Lthan 45,000 tonnes of onion since the ban on outbound shipments was lifted early this month, a top government

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

official said on Wednesday. These exports provided relief to farmers after curbs were imposed to keep domestic supplies steady ahead of general elections.

The world's biggest vegetable exporter banned exports of the bulb last December and then extended it in March, after a rise in prices triggered by sluggish production.

"Since the ban was lifted, more than 45,000 tonnes of onions have been exported, mostly to the Middle East and Bangladesh," Nidhi Khare, Secretary of the Consumer Affairs Ministry, told PTI.

keep onion prices affordable during the election

period, the government on May 4 lifted the ban but imposed a minimum export price (MEP) of USD 550 per

tonne. Khare said the forecast of a good monsoon this year will ensure better sowing of kharif (summer) crops, including onion from June onwards.

State-owned agencies have started procuring onions from the recent rabi (winter) harvest to build a targeted 5,00,000-tonne buffer stock for the current year, she added.

country's The onion production is expected to fall 16 per cent from a year earlier to 25.47 million tonnes in the 2023-24 crop year due to lower output in key growing regions like Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, according to the Agriculture Ministry's first estimates.

POWERGRID wins

prestigious award

Gurugram: Power Grid

Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna

CPSE under Ministry of

Power, Government of India,

for third time

"Our fourth quarter FY24 results were impacted by temporary disruption on account of UPI transition etc. And permanent disruption because of the PPBL embargo. Paytm reported a revenue of Rs 2,267 crore, a modest

decline of 3 per cent Y-o-Y (year-on-year). contribution margin was 57 per cent including UPI incentives, and 51 per cent excluding UPI incentives," Paytm said in a statement.

Paytm wallet and FASTag were distributed by Paytm. Due to the current embargo on these products, we anticipate the steady state annualised direct impact on EBITDA to be around Rs 500 crore, as previously disclosed. Most of this impact will be in the first quarter as these products were operational during most part of the fourth quarter of FY24," statement said.

The company during the reported quarter wrote off Rs 227 crore investment for a 39 per cent stake in PPBL following future uncertainties associated with the bank's business operations including the uncertainty of any other regulatory development etc.

company's investment in PPBL is impaired and,



impairment provision of Rs 2,271 crore, representing the carrying value investment in PPBL and disclosed the same as impairment of investment in associate," the company said in an audit note.

Paytm Founder and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma holds 51 per cent in PPBL.

The company for the first time posted operational profit before Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) cost for the full year.

'FY24 has been a landmark

year for the company as we achieved our first full year of EBITDA before profitability (since IPO) of Rs 559 crore. We demonstrated strong revenue momentum (up 25 per cent) and continued our disciplined focus on profitability (EBITDA before ESOP margin up by 8 per cent), in spite of regulatory action on our associate entity, Paytm Payment Bank Ltd," Sharma said in a letter to

The revenue from operations of Paytm declined by 2.8 per cent to Rs 2,267.1 crore during the reported quarter from Rs 2,464.6 crore in the corresponding quarter of the financial year (FY) 2023. Paytm said that there were temporary disruptions in operating metrics like operating metrics like Monthly Transacting Users (MTU), merchant base, and

shareholders.

Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) during February and March. "This is expected to have an incremental EBITDA impact of Rs 100-150 crore, in the first quarter of FY25 and should start recovering from the second quarter as we are seeing stabilisation or growth in consumer and merchant

base metrics from April/May,

the statement said.

## Government needs to further expand scheme to make India global drone hub, says report

PTI NEW DELHI

The government needs to expand the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme and develop an ecosystem to realise the goal of making India a global drone hub, a report

An incentive of Rs 120 crore spread over three financial years was provided for Indian manufacturers of drone and drone components under the PLI Scheme notified on September 30, 2021.

As per the Ministry of Civil Aviation projections, the Indian drone manufacturing industry is expected to reach Rs 900 crore by 2025 from just Rs 60 crore in 2020-21, according to a study conducted by Nexgen Exhibitions. It also noted that the Indian

distinguished ceremony held drone market is expected to The application of drones is grow at 22.15 per cent CAGR already proven in the fields of in New Orleans, USA, on May



(compounded annual growth rate) during the 2024-30

innovation expansion of its application portfolio, India has the potential of becoming the global drone hub by 2030, it stated.

The study highlighted that the key to realising India's vision lies in boosting the domestic drone ecosystem. Other major factors are the expansion of the PLI scheme, government procurement, and pushing the Make in India initiative, it

The application of drones is

Border Surveillance, Rescue Disaster Management, and COVID management etc. The drone services industry's

operations in logistics, data processing, and traffic management etc are far bigger in scale and will outshine the other related sectors very soon, the report highlighted on Tuesday.

Around drones and unmanned systems manufacturers, anti-drone radar, guns and jammers innovators, component, wires, CCTV sensors, suppliers, software developers for drones and unmanned systems, drones as service providing companies, GPS and Geospatial solutions providers participated in the survey. Institutes developing drones, defence research

and simulator control, developers were also part of the survey. The survey was conducted

across 10 states Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The survey also reached out to

foreign companies from the Middle East, Europe, the UK, the US and Australia. Drone International Expo 2024, which will be held on

July 4-5, is a premium expo for drones unmanned systems (land and water), counter drones, LiDAR geospatial artificial intelligence and air taxi. It is one of Asia's biggest drone sector platforms for buyers, industry representatives

manufacturing drones, and stakeholders from across the aerospace companies like flight board to connect.



## India exports over 45,000 tonnes onion

intech firm PCommunications, which owns the Paytm brand, on Wednesday said its loss in the fourth quarter of the financial year 2023-24 has widened to ban imposed by the RBI on transactions related to its payments bank.

The company had posted a loss of Rs 167.5 crore in the same period a year ago, the company said in a regulatory filing.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) barred Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL) from accepting deposits, credit transactions or top-ups in any customer accounts, wallets, and FASTags, keeping in view the interest of customers, including merchants from March 15 onwards.
"PPBL products like the

'PPBL, the management, on a prudent basis, has determined

# that the value of the

#### has been conferred the prestigious ATD BEST Award 2024 for strategic approach to talent development driving business results. The award was conferred by the world's leading Learning Development (L&Ď) body, Talent Association Development (ATD), USA. PNS | accordingly, has recorded an

# Sindhu sails to Malaysia Masters second round

Returning from a break, two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu progressed to the women's singles second round with a straight-game win over Scotland's Kirsty Gilmour at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

World No. 15 Sindhu, who had skipped the Uber Cup and Thailand Open, notched up a 21-17 21-16 win over Gilmour, who is ranked 22nd, in the opening-round match that lasted 46 minutes.

The fifth-seeded Indian, who last won a title in 2022 Singapore Open, will next face Korea's Sim Yu Jin.

In mixed doubles, B Sumeeth Reddy and N Sikki Reddy, world No. 53, also advanced to the second round after outlasting Hong Kong qualifiers Lui Chun Wai and Fu Chi Yan 21-15 12-21 21-17 Kong in 47 minutes

The husband-wife duo will have the task of taming the top



seeds Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei of Malaysia next. For Sindhu, it was her third win over Gilmour, a two-time medallist Commonwealth Games.

The 28-year-old Sindhu was quick to open up a 7-1 lead but Gilmour managed to claw back at 14-14 and 15-15. The Indian, however, dashed her hopes of a challenge as she grabbed six of the next eight points to take the first game. After the change of sides, Sindhu was more ruthless as she didn't allow her opponent to make any comeback after once again gaining an early 3-0 lead. Sindhu was 11-6 at the break and kept moving ahead to grab eight match points. To her credit, Gilmour saved four match points before Sindhu sealed the match comfortably. Sindhu, a former world champion, has endured a series of narrow losses ever since returning from a knee injury early this year. She is eyeing a good show here to boost her confidence ahead of the Paris



#### **Archery World Cup Stage 2**

#### **Compound women** team in final, men miss bronze medal

PTI YECHEON (SOUTH

World number one Indian women's **VV** Indian women's compound team stormed into the final of the archery World Cup Stage II but the men's team will return empty-handed from the tournament after losing the bronze medal clash to Australia here Wednesday. The trio of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Parneet Kaur and Aditi Swami, that had clinched gold medal in World Cup Stage 1 in Shanghai leg last month, knocked out world number four USA 233-229 in the semi-final

India will now clash with world number seven Turkey in the gold medal clash on Saturday. Turkey had stunned top-seed and local favourites South Korea 234-233 in the other semi-final.

It was an overall easy sailing for the Indian women's team, which got a bye into the quarters after finishing second in the qualifying round. They eliminated Italy 236-234 in the last-eight.
The world number one

men's team of Priyansh, Prathamesh Fuge and veteran Abhishek Verma, who had slipped to fourth in the qualifying round on Tuesday, lost to lowly-ranked Australia 133-133  $(10-10^*)$  in a shoot-off.

The Aussies, who are world ranked 21st, took the Indian trio by surprise starting with a 59, dropping just one point. The Aussies team of Bailey

Wildman, Brandon Hawes Jonathon Milne continued its fine run and overcame a one-point deficit after the second round to make it 233-all after the regulation four ended.

The two teams were 30-all in the ensuing shoot-off but the Aussies edged out the inconsistent Indians by

shooting two Xs (arrows closer to centre) to secure the bronze medal. started Having

campaign with an easy 235-212 win over lowly-ranked Vietnam, India overcame tough competition from Denmark and top seed USA, winning both the matches in shoot-off. Meanwhile, the veteran

duo of Tarundeep Rai and Deepika Kumari finished fourth and sixth in their respective qualifiers as recurve competition got underway.

The 2010 Asian Games silver medalist Rai shot 681 points for a sixth spot in rankings, while Dhiraj Bommadevara narrowly missed a top-10 finish on X (closer to centre) count after five archers shot 678 with the Indian finishing 11th.

The Army duo's solid finish ensured Indian recurve men's team No 2 seeding in their title defence. India and top-seeded South Korea will begin their campaign at the opposite ends of the draw.

Indian men's team shocked the world champions South Korea for the first time in a World Cup to take the gold in Stage 1 of the event in Shanghai last month.

Deepika missed the topthree finish in the rankings by just one point, shooting 677 as the Korean duo of Lim Sihyeon (685), Jeon Hunyoung (680) and Li Jiaman (678) took the 1-2-3 seedings.

fell way short with Bhajan Kaur (653 points) and Ankita Bhakat (646) were the next best Indians at lowly 34th and 49th places respectively. As a result, the women's team seedings could not be better than six Rai and Deepika combined to get a cumulative 1358 points for the second spot behind South Korea in the

mixed team recurve category.



#### **Concussion replacements** added for Copa America under the pink substitution pass system

**AP** ■ LUQUE (PARAGUAY)

Coaches at next month's Copa America will be able to make a 6th and extra substitution in cases of suspected head trauma or concussion.

South American soccer's governing body CONMEBOL announced the decision Tuesday, making it valid for all America starts in the United States on June 20.

CONMEBOL issued statement saying coaches will need to notify the referee or the 4th match official of the replacement concussion through a pink substitution pass. A similar method was implemented in Major League Soccer in 2021 as part of a

FIFA pilot program.

The player who leaves the pitch under those conditions will have to go to the locker rooms or a hospital for assessment.

"The

substitution concussion will take place regardless of the number of substitutions until the moment happens," CONMEBOL said. "When the concussion substitution takes place, the opposing team will automatically be allowed to additional substitution."

suspected concussion or head trauma on the pitch will have up to 24 hours to send a medical report CONMEBOL, the medical South American body said.

Team doctors who detect a

#### Brazil's Vasco da Gama and 777 Partners in legal battle for control of soccer club

Brazil's Vasco da Gama and embattled investment investment way group 777 Partners are intensifying their legal battle after the American company went to court Tuesday to reclaim its rights over the topflight soccer club. Last week, a Rio de Janeiro

judge preemptively removed 777 Partners from Vasco's department's administration after a series of complaints from the club. Brazilian law allows foreign entities to buy the rights to soccer sections of multi-sport clubs, in an operation known

as SAF. The preliminary ruling is yet to be confirmed, but the American group stepped up the fight in court and accused the club of not making image rights payments to its players on Monday, as scheduled.

was the first time th wages or image rights payments have been delayed since we took over 18 months ago," 777 said in a statement Tuesday. "The injunction that momentarily pushes us out of the command of Vasco's SAF stopped us from making a bridge payment, as we did last year in the same period of the year, when soccer revenues are lower.'

Image rights are part of the payment for footballers.



Vasco executives have said the payment of wages is up to date for all players.

The tug of war in Brazil adds to the pressure on the Miamibased company, which has recently faced setbacks in court over its ownership of Belgium's Standard Liège plus other financial problems.

A court in Liege last week ruled in favor of Standard's former owner Bruno Venanzi and shareholders of the company holding the cli stadium. They claimed 777 had defaulted on a payment. The legal woes for the 777 add to its period of financial turmoil. The Miami-based investment company has also seen its airline in Australia grounded in recent weeks. It also faces a fraud lawsuit in New York.

777's other clubs include Genoa in Italy's top tier and Hertha Berlin in Germany's second division.

## Playing Carlsen in his home turf not a challenge for me: Praggnanandhaa

PTI ■ STAVANGER (NORWAY)

Having beaten Magnus Carlsen several times in the last couple of years, young Indian Grandmaster Praggnanandhaa feels he will be under no pressure when he takes on the multiple-time world champion in his home turf during the Norway Chess tournament, which gets underway here on May 27. Praggnanandhaa last beat the 33-year-old Carlsen in the Superbet rapid and blitz

tournament, a part of the Grand Chess Tour, in Warsaw earlier this month. "I don't think playing Magnus

in his home turf is a challenge for me. Usually, it matters to the player playing in his home but it won't matter so much me," Praggnanandhaa, who will

also have his sister R. Vaishali playing the Norway Chess Women's Tournament for the The 11-day tournament will

see a very strong field including the likes of world champion Ding Liren and Hikaru Nakamura besides home favourite Carlsen. Reflecting on his contest with

Carlsen at last year's FIDE World Cup where Praggnanandhaa gave the Norwegian a tough challenge, the Indian GM said the experience here would help him in future competitions.



"I am very happy and excited to play in Norway Chess. The field is extremely strong. This is perhaps the strongest field I opportunity and challenge to give my best. "I am also looking forward to

play in this time control which I have not played anywhere else," added the 18-year-old. The tournament will be played in a double roundrobin format with a time control of 120 minutes.

The teenaged Indian GM also expressed happiness with the growth of chess worldwide.
"It is a busy schedule this year.

Thousands of fans come to see Nadal

After the Norway Chess, we move to Budapest for the Chess Olympiad and I will also be playing the Global Chess League later this year. It is really good to have such an exciting league which I think will definitely help grow the game. "As a chess fan, I'm happy to see this league grow. For now, my focus is on Norway Chess and I am physically and mentally wellprepared to do my best there. With sister Vaishal Vaishali competing in th Praggnanandhaa category, said he will also be tracking her progress tournament

"I am happy to see an exclusive women's tournament being introduced in Norway Chess. It is a very good initiative because there are not many tournaments for women. This will encourage other organizations to come up with women's tournaments

#### **AP** PARIS

Vanessa Peltier got up at dawn and traveled 500 kilometers (310 miles) to Paris from the Creuse region of central France just so she could watch Rafael Nadal practice on Tuesday.

Along with thousands of other fans, she lined up outside the main court to catch a glimpse of the Spanish champion at what's expected to be his final appearance at the French Open, a tournament he's won a record 14 times.

"I woke up at 6 a.M. And drove from the middle of France to be here," said Peltier, 50. "Nadal has

#### practice ahead of the French Open always had my support, and the support of France." opportunity. He is almost bigger than the tournament itself," he said. for the clav-court tournament.

The line stretched for 200 meters

(yards) as fans queued up for Nadal's second day of practice at Roland Garros. Morgan Chevallier said he waited for 45 minutes to get inside the tennis stadium. "I could not pass on this

The 37-year-old Nadal was sidelined with injuries for nearly all of last year and much of this season. His loss in the third round of the Italian Open two weeks ago left questions about his fitness. He hasn't yet said whether he's ready

The fans know this may be their last chance to see him at Roland Garros

"I skipped work for Nadal," said Sergiu Popa, 26. Nadal started with low-intensity

ball exchanges before playing two sets against his sparring partner for

the day, Sebastian Korda of the United States. The crowd erupted in cheers and chants of "Rafa, Rafa' after the Spaniard hit a winning

Outside the court, fans took photos in front of the Nadal statue at the entry gate and lined up to pose with a life-size cardboard cutout of him, with a hole where they could put their own faces. This way I can imagine what it's

like to have the same biceps as him," joked Philippe Charvet as his friend took his picture.

In the Roland Garros gift shop, an artise section is dedicated to Nodel. entire section is dedicated to Nadal merchandise. Frédéric Caubert and his son Gaspar elbowed their way

to buy a hat with Nadal's signature for 28 euros (\$30). "It's not cheap, but it will be a nice

memory once Nadal leaves us," Caubert said. "It's like he is part of our family. When he's gone, family dinners won't feel the same," he said with a smile.

### Emma Hayes' first roster as coach of the US women team includes two first time call ups

**AP** ■ NEW YORK

∼oach Emma Hayes has selected her first roster for the United States ahead of a pair of friendlies as she prepares to lead the women's national team at the Paris Olympics

Hayes, named U.S. Coach last November, finished her final season as coach of Chelsea on Saturday, winning the team's fifth straight Women's Super League Title with a 6-0 rout of Manchester United.

Her first U.S. Roster announced Tuesday includes two National Women's Soccer League players called up to the national team for the first time, Chicago Red Stars defender Sam Staab and Washington Spirit midfielder Hal

Hershfelt. A notable omission from the roster is veteran goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher, who injured her left thigh while playing in a match for the Chicago Red Stars on May 12. The team will play South Korea on

June 1 in Commerce City, Colorado, before a rematch on June 4 in St. Paul, Minnesota. The 23-player roster is Hayes' last

chance to look at players before she names an 18-player roster for the Olympics. The United States will play a pair of sendoff matches in July.

"I expect complete commitment from everyone to absorb very quickly the things that I value as the most important so that we can compete this summer. I know they are a highly coachable group and



I'm looking forward to challenging them," Hayes said in a statement. "It's time to go to work. I can't wait to meet the fans and it's really time to get behind the team as we get

closer to putting a roster together for the Olympics

Former coach Vlatko Andonovski

Hayes is expected to announce her Olympic roster in late June.

Twila Kilgore led the team in the interim while Hayes finished the season with Chelsea. Kilgore, who went 10-1 with the team, will now serve as an assistant coach under Captain Lindsey Horan, among five players from European teams

resigned from the U.S. Team following last year's disappointing finish in the Women's World Cup.

on the roster, will join training camp after her club, Lyon, faces Barcelona for the Champions League title on Saturday.

Alex Morgan and Jaedyn Shaw were included on the squad despite missing recent matches with the San Diego Wave because of injuries. Lynn Williams, who

was left off the team that played in

the SheBelieves Cup, was not on

the latest roster.

Crystal Dunn, who has played mostly at outside back for the national team in recent years, was listed by Hayes as a forward.

Hayes also added three training players to the roster: Olivia Moultrie of the Portland Thorns and Croix Bethune and Kate Wiesner, who both play for the Washington Spirit.

The players are due to report to camp in Colorado on Monday. The U.S. Roster by position with

club affiliation: GOALKEEPERS: Jane Campbell (Houston Dash), Aubrey Kingsbury (Washington Spirit), Casey Murphy (North Carolina

Courage) **DEFENDERS:** Tierna Davidson (NJ/NY Gotham), Emily Fox (Washington Spirit), Jenna Nighswonger (NJ/NY Gotham), Emily Sonnett (NJ/NY Gotham), Sam Staab (Chicago Red Stars). MIDFIELDER: Korbin Albert (Paris Saint-Germain), Sam Coffey (Portland Thorns), Hal Hershfelt (Washington Spirit), Lindsey Horan (Lyon), Rose Lavelle (NJ/NY Gotham), Lily Yohannes (Ajax).

(Arsenal), Naomi Girma (San Diego Wave), Casey Krueger

FORWARDS: Crystal Dunn (NJ/NY Gotham), Catarina Macario (Chelsea), Alex Morgan (San Diego Wave), Trinity Rodman (Washington Spirit), Jaedyn Shaw (San Diego Wave), Sophia Smith (Portland Thorns), Mallory Swanson (Chicago Red

# 

## It's hard to leave ailing mother in hospital but KKR is family too, says Gurbaz

fghanistan wicketkeeperbatter Rahmanullah Gurbaz has revealed that he made the difficult choice of leaving his ailing mother in hospital when his IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders sought his services ahead of the playoff clash against Sunrisers Hyderabad here as the team is also his "family"

Gurbaz, in his maiden game of the season, played a vital role in KKR's win over SRH by taking two vital catches and giving his side a blazing start with a 14-ball 23 on Tuesday. He replaced Englishman Phil Salt at the top and hit the ground running to help the two-time champions enter the IPL final with their comfortable with the champions and the state of their comfortable eight-wicket victory here on Tuesday.

"As a cricketer, you (should) know, what to do. (In) League cricket, only a fewer players can play. If there is opportunity for you, you should do best. If there's no opportunity for you, you should be prepared, well prepared for the opportunity," Gurbaz told the media here after the match.

"My mom is still sick. I went (back) there and the call from here was (that) Phil Salt was leaving. They called and they messaged me that 'Gurbaz, we need you, and what is your feedback for us?," he revealed. 'I said, 'yes, I will come'. My mom is

still in hospital, and I'm always talking to her, but this is also my family. I should manage both of that, my mom and my KKR family. It's hard, it's tough, but still, I need to manage it," he added.

SRH skipper Pat Cummins' decision to bat first backfired.

Gurbaz said KKR had planned to

bowl first had they won the toss. "We all (had) decided that we

should go and we should bowl first, because in this kind of moment, and team likes Sunrisers that have a strong batting side and you should know what (is) the total and then you go for it," he said.



'We bowled really well, actually. (To get a) team likes Sunrisers all out on 160, that was bowling effort. And then once we come to the batting end, we also not just try to, we should win the circle (powerplay).

"(In) my mind was (the) only (thought) that I should win the circle, because sometime in low

circle, because sometime in low total like this, you need to have a good circle, otherwise, match can be difficult in the end."
Gurbaz said it was the best he had seen KKR pacer Mitchell Starc bowl after the left-arm pacer took three wickets in the powerplay to set up the game for his side.
"He was just unbelievable. The way he bowled today, he's one of the best. he has a lot of experience, he

best, he has a lot of experience, he knows how to manage the big games. I saw him today totally different than other games," he

Gurbaz said Afghanistan players are preparing well for the T20 World Cup next month. He said

franchise cricket is something that comes second and doing well for their country is always their

It's all about hard work. It doesn't mean that you come from Afghanistan, you come from India, you come from Australia, whatever. It's all about hard work, I think. If you work hard, if you know what to do, and it's help you in every

situation.

"Afghanistan is not the same Afghanistan. We know what to do and how can we represent our country. Everything is good for cricket there, and we played really well, the last World Cup, and from the last six-seven years, Afghanistan is doing great," he said.

"Our mindset (is) not (just) to play for league cricket, our mindset is always to do something better for our country, and then come the leagues. If you do good for your country, all leagues will pick you, and that's the point that we play all the leagues," he added.



#### Till I play Tests, I will limit franchise appearances to only two events a year: Travis Head

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Travis Head might have this year's IPL by storm but Test cricket remains his top priority and till the time he is playing the format, the Australian big-hitter would like to limit his participation in T20 leagues to just two events

per year. Head, who has enjoyed an incredible last 10 months, has been a nemesis for India with centuries in both the World Test Championship and the ODI World Cup finals. Currently, He has blazed to 533 forging a fabulous opening partnership with uncapped İndian Abhishek Sharma.

Needless to say he is sought after and asked how he plans to manage the lucrative T20 offers with his commitment for the 'Baggy Green', Head said it's a no brainer.

"This has been the first year in IPL for me in quite a while (since 2017). I would put all my eggs in Test basket for the moment, I will continue to do that," Head told PTI during an exclusive interview organised by Prime Video ahead of their upcoming docu-series, 'The Test Season 3', featuring the Australian team's tour of

England last year. "After Tests, I will pick formats, and see in which different ways I am available for selection."

T20 events have mushroomed across the world with some like West Indies' Andre Russell and Sunil Narine appearing in multiple events, adding up to more than five a year.

Having had a great run for the 'Orange Army' this season, Head is keen on coming back to IPL next year too.

"At this stage, I would like to be back here in IPL next year. Like I will play Major League Cricket (MLC in USA) this year right after the World T20 but next year might just look a lot different.

"Each year, you prioritise what you can and can't do. Next year, Test cricket is around, we tour the West Indies and probably I will not feature in many other franchises," the 30-year-old

was categorical. "Look, in few years when I am finished with Test cricket, then probably there will be few more opportunities to play a bit more franchise cricket. But at this time, I would try to limit it to a couple of franchise may be, and (focus on) Test cricket. The last 10 months have been very hectic for Head starting with the WTC final, followed by the Ashes and then the World Cup where he came in during the second half after

recovering from a hand injury.

Right now, more than two months of IPL will be followed by World T20 in the Americas. But the southpaw doesn't want to make a big deal about workload management.
"I will be home in a couple of

days' time once we are done with IPL. Be home for twothree days and make the trip to the West Indies with family and start all over again.

"Look, we are very fortunate to do what we do and I am not going to do it forever. So try and make the most of it as we can, we are lucky that we are well looked after."

perspective.
"I know in a few years, I can

retire and do nothing, I will have plenty of time to look back and wish I was back on tour, I would like to be in the moment, keep batting through and stay in the moment,

enjoying the moment."
CRACKING THE 'INDIA **CODE**': The performance that Head has delivered over the past few months, he believes that the seeds of it were sown early in 2023 when he came with the Test team, a hardfought series that Australia lost

"I think a lot of of that has come from the Test tour last year, spending time here and working on things and also being understanding my game and its blueprint and how you want to go about it and being content and my family being around, all those things," he explained.

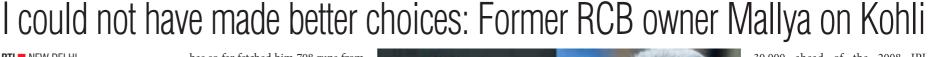
"In IPL, I have evolved continuously while getting better but I still have some work to do," he seemed confident. His national team skipper Pat Cummins has been his SRH skipper and he says they have developed a chemistry where both know what to expect of each other.

"We are just close friends and just enjoy each other's company. Not too much game stuff and over time when you build relationships, he now knows how I will go about it (my job)...," he said.

...If I need anything, I talk to him but he lets me do what I need to in order to perform. He backs me.

SRH lost the first qualifier on Tuesday to Kolkata Knight Riders but will have another shot at qualifying for finals in the second qualifier in

Chennai on May 24. Asked if a documentary like the 'The Test Season 3' can be intrusive and possibly catch players when they are at their most vulnerable and want to privately get over a low phase,



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Challengers  $F_{\text{Bengaluru owner Vijay Mallya on}}^{\text{ormer Royal Challengers}}$ Wednesday said he couldn't have made a better choice when he bid for Virat Kohli in the inaugural IPL auction as he lauded the superstar batter for his brilliant run in the ongoing season.

RCB have made a tremendous comeback after losing seven out of their first eight games to qualify for the playoffs with six straight victories, riding on Kohli's sublime form which has so far fetched him 708 runs from

14 innings. RCB will face Rajasthan Royals in the Eliminator on Wednesday night.
"When I bid for the RCB franchise

and I bid for Virat, my inner instinct told me that I could not have made better choices," Mallya, who currently lives in the United Kingdom and is trying to avoid extradition to India, wrote on 'X'. "My inner instinct tells me that RCB have the best chance to go for the IPL Trophy. Onward and Upward. Best of luck."

Kohli was bought by RCB for USD



30,000 ahead of the 2008 IPL following his title-winning run with India's U19 World Cup.
RCB, however, hasn't been able to lift

the trophy despite reaching the final thrice — in 2009, 2011 and 2016. Mallya is accused in a bank loan default matter of over Rs 9,000 crore

involving his defunct Kingfisher Airlines.

He has been living in the United Kingdom since March 2016. The same year he had to forego his ownership of RCB due to the legal proceedings against him.

## Sunrisers Hyderabad batting approach was puzzling: Gavaskar



**PTI** ■ AHMEDABAD

egendary Sunil Gavaskar Lhas questioned the "puzzling" batting approach of Sunrisers Hyderabad during the powerplay in the first IPL Qualifier, suggesting their reckless strategy may have cost them the match against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Having cleaned up his fellow Australian Travis Head with a peach of a delivery with his second ball, Mitchell Starc blew away the SRH top-order in his opening spell of 3-0-22-

SRH lost four wickets inside the powerplay to be dismissed for a paltry 159, a target KKR shot down in 13.4 overs to storm into the Sunday's summit clash in Chennai.

"It was a terrific performance, no question. Such an impressive display with both the bat and the ball. They took four wickets in the power play, and that's where the Sunrisers were pushed onto the back foot, really on the ropes. They

Star Sports Cricket Live. first six overs was puzzling." Vaibhav dismissing the in-form Abhishek Sharma in the next

couldn't recover from that," the former Indian captain told "There was a partnership of

sorts, but to me, the approach of the SRH batters in those

over, SRH's explosive opening pair were out for 13 runs.

Gavaskar said after losing two key wickets, SRH's batters should have played more cautiously. Instead, they continued to play aggressively, which led to further losses and ultimately cost them the match.

"When you've lost two wickets and the two who have been scoring runs for you, a certain amount of caution is required. Sure, don't miss out on scoring opportunities, but don't look to throw your bat at everything. That's what we

saw. "They lost those four wickets, and losing four top batters

means you can't really expect he hasn't bowled much numbers five, six, seven, eight, recently. and nine to get you to 200. So, Venkatesh struck a 28-ball 51 that is where they may have lost it. But full credit to

that pitch as well," Gavaskar The former India opener was all praise for Venkatesh Iyer and emphasised his value as a

versatile player, a top left-

Kolkata for the way they attacked and took advantage of

not out in an unbroken partnership with his skipper Shreyas Iyer (58 not out; 24b) to seal their eight-wicket win with 38 balls to spare. "He's been a very good player

for such a long time. His first season, a couple of seasons ago, was outstanding. Then, as it happens to everybody, the second season is harder because opponents have a handed batter and a capable medium-pace bowler, even if

better idea of how to bowl to you," Gavaskar said.

But Venkatesh is the kind of cricketer you want in your team. He's a top batter, a lefthanded batter, and he can bowl medium pace. We haven't seen him bowl much recently, but he's a very good medium-paced bowler. He might not always pick up wickets, but he can bowl those few overs that can make a significant difference," he added.

Ranch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, Landmark Building, 4th Floor, 228A, AJC Bose Road, Kolkata-700020 CIN No: L65190GJ1994PLC021012, www.icicibank.com

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.		Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	
1.	Dilip Kumar Vishwakarma/ Vijeta Vishwakarma/ Flat No 304, 3rd Floor, Milestone Apartment In Front of Jiwnani School Devpuri Chhattisgarh Raipur- 492001/ LBRPR00006130131	Flat No. 302, Third Floor, Apartment "Mile Stone", Near Jiwnani Public School, Khata No. 2778, Part 3, Khasra No. 204/26, Ward No. 46, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Ward, Village Amlidih, P.H. No. 114/45, R.N.M. Raipur, Tahsil and District Raipur (C.G.) (Admeasuring an area of Flat Measuring Super Built Up Area 870 Sq.Ft. I.E. 80.85 Sq. Mtr.)/ Date of Symbolic 17.05.2024	December 26, 2023 Rs. 8,05,545/-	Raipur

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. Date: May 23, 2024

#### **OTHER SPORTS**

## Hina, Kanika strike as India juniors beat Dutch hockey club 2-0

PTI ■ BREDA (NETHERLANDS)

 $H^{ina}$  Bano and Kanika Siwach scored a goal each as the Indian junior women's hockey team began their tour of Europe with a 2-0 win against Netherlands club Bredase Hockey Vereniging Push here.

After a goalless first half on Tuesday, which saw both sides testing each others' strengths, India broke the deadlock with Hina scoring off a penalty corner after three failed attempts with the set-pieces in the second quarter.

in the fourth quarter following

Bredase Hockey Vereniging pushed aggressively for the equaliser but success eluded them despite the hosts earning few minutes three PCs in the third quarter. Kanika Siwach found the back play their next match against of the net to double India's lead Belgium in Breda, Netherlands



which the defenders did well to

later on Wednesday.

ward off several spirited attacks from the opponents in the last The Indian junior team will

#### AU SMALL FINANCE BANK LIMITED (A SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL BANK) Regd. Office: 19-A, Dhuleshwar Garden, Ajmer Road, Jaipur - 302001, Rajasthan, (India). (CIN:L36911RJ1996PLC011381)

APPENDIX-IV-A- [See proviso to rule 8(6)] Sale notice for sale of immovable properties

E-auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s)/ Co-Borrower (s)/Mortgagor (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below describe immovable properties mortgaged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of AU Small Finance Bank Limited (A Scheduled Commercial Bank), the same shall be referred herein after as AUSFB. The Secured Assets will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is". and "Whatever there is" basis through E-Auction for recovery of amount mentioned in the table below along with further interest, cost, charges and

icis nereby informed you that we are going to conduct public 2-Auction through website <b>https://sariaesi.auctiontiger.net</b>												
Borrowers/Co Borrowers/	Date & Amount of 13(2) Demand Notice	Date Of	Description of Property	Reserve Price For Property	Earnest Money For Property	Date & Time Of E-Auction	Date of Bid Submission	Place of Tender	Contact Person and Property Visit Date			
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060117795190, Manoj Kumar Chandra S/O Gore Lal Chandra (Borrower & Mortgagor), Gore Lal Chandra S/O Jagat Ram Chandra (Co-Borrower), Raj Kumar Chandra S/O Gore Lal Chandra (Co-Borrower & Mortgagor)	19-Dec-19 Rs. 16,63,376/- Rs. Sixteen Lac Sixty Three Thousand Three Hundred Seventy Six only as on 18-Dec-19	27-Mar-24	Survey No. Kh 913/2 915/1 916/1, Ph No 14, Rnm Jaijaipur, VillSalni, Th Jaijaipur, Dist Janigir Champa, Chattisgarh Admeasuring 360 Sq. Mtr.	Rs. 19,60,000/- Rs. Nineteen Lakh Sixty Thousand Only.	Rs. 1,96,000/- Rs. One Lakh Ninety Six Thousand Only.	03-Jul 24 2.00 PM to 4.00 PM with unlimited extension of 5 minutes	On or Before <b>01-Jul-24</b>	AU Small Finance Bank Ltd., Branch Address: - TP Nagar, Korba, Transport Nagar, Chhattisgarh Indira Commercial & Residential Complex, Plot No 82 TP Nagar Korba, Chhattisgarh - 495677	Gopal Das Bairagi & Deepak Jain, 7610210556 9773358234 auctions@ aubank.in <b>28-Jun-24</b>			

The terms and conditions of e-auction sale:-

(1). The E-Auction sale of Secured Asset is on "as is where is", "as is what is", "whatever there is" and "no recourse" basis for and on behalf of the Secured Credito

viz. AUSFB and there is no known encumbrance which exists on the said property (2). For participating in online e-auction sale, Bid document, copies of PAN Card, Board Resolution in case of Company and photo ID, address proof are required to be submitted along with EMD, which is payable by way of RTGS/NEFT/DD in the name of MSME AUCTION POOL ACCOUNT OF AU Small Finance Bank Limited, Current account No.1921201121711599 AU SMALL FINANCE BANK LIMITED Fifth and Sixth Floor Sunny Big Junction STC Khasra No. 64 to 67, Gram Sukhaipura New Atish Market Jaipur 302020, IFSC Code: AUBL0002011, Once an Online Bid is submitted, same cannot be withdrawn. Further any EMD submitted by bidder will be required to send the UTR/Ref no./DD no. of the RTGS/NEFT/DD with a copy of cancelled cheque on the following email IDs i.e. auctions@aubank.in

(3). All Interested participants / bidders are requested to visit the website https://sarfaesi.auctiontiger.net & https://www.aubank.in/bank-auction for furthe details including Terms & Conditions, to take part in e-auction sale proceeding and are also advised to contact Mr. Bhanu Pratap Singh, Contact Numbe 9358002663 and e-mail of auctions@aubank.i Please Note: This is also a 30 days notice Under Rule 8(6) read with Rule 9(1) to the Borrowers/Co Borrowers/Mortgagors of the above said loan account about sale

through tender / inter se bidding on the above-men ned date. The property will be sold, if their outstanding dues are not repaid in full by the borrower in the Date : 22/05/2024

AU Small Finance Bank Limited