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BATTLE TO SAVE
INDIA'S BIODIVERSITY

WORLD 8
UN TO VOTE ON RESOLUTION
FOR PALESTINE RIGHTS

MONEY 10
SENSEX, NIFTY REBOUND
AS ITC, RELIANCE GAIN

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Delhi ready for Game of Throne

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal walked out of Tihar Jail on Friday evening, hours after the Supreme Court granted him interim bail until June 1 so that he can campaign for the Lok Sabha elections. As he exited through gate number 4, Kejriwal was welcomed by a sea of AAP workers, as well as senior leaders like Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Atishi, and Saurabh Bhardwaj. His wife Sunita Kejriwal, his daughter Harshita and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak turned up outside the jail to give him a rousing welcome with workers chanting slogans and Kejriwal waving to his supporters. As Kejriwal left from Tihar in his convoy clad in yellow T-shirts, AAP supporters danced to dhol beats and fed each other sweets at the party office here on Friday.

In a major relief to embattled Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the SC on Friday granted him interim bail in a money laundering case at the peak of the election season but barred him from visiting his office or the Delhi Secretariat and signing official files unless absolutely necessary for obtaining the Lieutenant Governor's approval. He has been asked to surrender to the prison authorities by June 2. June 1 is the last day of the seven-phase elections. The votes will be counted on June 4.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addresses supporters after coming out of Tihar Jail as the Supreme Court (SC) granted him interim bail in a money laundering case, amid the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, in New Delhi, on Friday

Kejriwal's release from jail, however transient, is expected to give a boost to the AAP's Lok Sabha campaign in Delhi where polling is scheduled for May 25, with its foremost leader hitting the hustings. Setting him free for 21 days after 50 days of custody in the money laundering case, a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta in its eight pages order, said

will have to surrender and go back to jail on June 2. Kejriwal was arrested on March 21 by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with the excise policy case. In his first address, Delhi Chief Minister said, "Didn't I tell you I'd be back soon? I am back." He added, "I'm fighting against dictatorship with all I have, now 140 crore of us have to do that." He also thanked the Supreme Court judges who delivered the verdict.

"Tomorrow at 11 am, we will all go to the Hanuman Mandir in Connaught Place, then there will be a Press conference at the party office at 1 pm; I request all of you to come to the Hanuman Mandir," he said. Slogans like "Jail ke taale toot gaye, Kejriwal ji choot gaye," "Modi ji ja rahe hain, Kejriwal ji aa rahe hain," and "dekho dekho kon aaya, sher aaya sher aaya" rent the air at the AAP office on Friday. Many supporters carried posters with slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi

written on them. The bench also directed Kejriwal to furnish bail bonds in the sum of Rs 50,000 with one surety of the like amount to the satisfaction of the jail superintendent. A wave of jubilation swept across the INDIA Bloc parties as the news spread like wildfire, with his AAP terming it a "triumph of truth". "Hanuman ji ki jai. This is the victory of democracy. It is the result of the prayers and blessings of millions of people. Many thanks to everyone," Kejriwal's wife Sunita, who was filling in for her husband during his absence from the electoral battleground, said in a post on X in Hindi. Kejriwal is the first sitting Chief Minister in India to be put behind bars. Imposing bail conditions on the embattled AAP leader, a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said, "He shall not visit the Office of the Chief Minister and the Delhi Secretariat." It asked Kejriwal to not sign any official file unless absolutely necessary to obtain the Lieutenant Governor's sanction during the 21-day interim bail period. It asked Kejriwal to not sign any official file unless absolutely necessary to obtain the Lieutenant Governor's sanction during the 21-day interim bail period. "He shall be bound by the statement made on his behalf that he shall not sign official files unless it is required and necessary for obtaining clearance/ approval of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi," the top court said.

Storm lashes across Delhi

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A strong, gutsy storm hit the national Capital and its adjoining areas late Friday evening, enveloping the skyline with dust. Incidents of trees uprooting were also reported. As a result of the dust storm, temperatures apparently decreased, as predicted earlier in the day by the India Meteorological Department, indicating that the heatwave would soon fade. "Duststorm/ thunderstorm with rain (followed by rain) and gusty winds with speed of 50-70 km/hour occurred over and adjoining areas of entire Delhi and NCR (Loni Dehat, Hindon AF Station, Ghaziabad, Indirapuram, Chhapraula, Noida, Dadri, Greater Noida, Gurugram, Faridabad," IMD said in a statement. India's unbearable heatwave saga appears to be reaching its conclusion as the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a wet spell accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning, and winds across several States, including the national Capital over the next three days. The change in weather comes just a month after April's blistering heat, which earlier prompted the authorities to issue a string of health advisories and school closures in heatwave-hit areas like Bhubaneswar in Odisha. "Heatwave is about to end from the entire country. Only in West Rajasthan and Kerala a heatwave alert has been issued. Tomorrow, the heatwave will only be present in West Rajasthan," said IMD scientist Soma Sen. She said though they have issued a yellow alert for west Rajasthan and



Kerala, impact is unlikely. "From tomorrow the heatwave will end in the country. The alert will remain only for west Rajasthan." "Strong moisture flow is coming to the country from the Bay of Bengal, due to which thunderstorm activity is increasing in the country... There will be a possibility of cloud-to-ground lightning in these thunderstorms," she said as quoted by a news agency here. Former Director General of Meteorology at IMD Dr KJ Ramesh said heatwaves have been abated and thunderstorms will develop from Southern India. Almost all the States will witness thunderstorms and natural lightning with high intensity. He explained that strong moisture flow from the Bay of Bengal is increasing thunderstorm activity in the country. Giving out thunderstorms and heavy rain warnings for some hilly States and the northeast, the weather department said strong lightning is possible.

BJP leader on the mat in harassment case

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

A city court on Friday ordered the framing of charges against the BJP MP and former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) Chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, in a sexual harassment case lodged by six female wrestlers. The court said there is sufficient evidence against him to frame charges while discharging him in a complaint filed by one of the six women wrestlers. Brij Bhushan was denied the BJP ticket to contest from his home seat Kaiserganj for this Lok Sabha polls, however, he got a ticket for his son Karan Bhushan Singh from the same seat. The Opposition parties had

been demanding swift action against the senior Bhushan for the alleged cases. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) Priyanka Rajpoot ordered framing of charge for criminal intimidation against Brij Bhushan and will formally frame the charges on May 21. The court also ordered framing of charges against co-accused and former WFI assistant secretary Vinod Tomar in the case. The court said there is sufficient material to frame charges against Brij Bhushan in the offences of outraging the modesty of a woman and sexual harassment (sections 354 and 354A of the IPC) against five of the victims.



For accused number 2 Vinod Tomar, former WFI assistant secretary who is the second accused in the case, the court framed charges under Section 506 part 1 regarding victim number 1. For the remaining offences, the court said he

stands discharged. The lower court however discharged Brij Bhushan in the allegations levelled by victim number 6. The sixth victim's allegations dated back to 2012. The Delhi Police had filed a charge sheet in the case against Brij Bhushan, a six-time MP, on June 15 under sections 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 354A (sexual harassment), 354D (stalking) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code. Brij Bhushan's plea seeking further investigation in the case was rejected last month. It had earlier deferred the framing of charges against

Brij Bhushan since his advocate Rajeev Mohan sought further investigation in the case. They alleged through an application that he was not in Delhi when one of the six wrestlers was allegedly molested. The police, in its 1,500-page chargesheet, had mentioned statements of at least 22 witnesses from across four States, including wrestlers, a referee, a coach and a physiotherapist, who have corroborated the allegations made by the six women wrestlers against Brij Bhushan. Another Delhi court is likely to pronounce its order on May 20 on whether to accept a police report seeking

cancellation of a sexual harassment complaint filed by a minor wrestler against Brij Bhushan. During the in-chamber proceedings held on August 1 last year, the minor wrestler had told the court that she was satisfied with the Delhi Police's investigation in the case and not opposed to the closure report it had submitted. On June 15 last year, the police filed a report before the court seeking cancellation of the case involving the girl after her father made a startling claim midway through the probe that he levelled false allegations of sexual harassment against Brij Bhushan to get back at him for perceived injustice to his daughter.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Hyderabad, on Friday

Cong plotting to kill Hindu faith: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ HYDERABAD/NANDURBAR (MAHARASHTRA)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who returned to campaigning on Friday after a day's break, hit out at the Congress while addressing a rally in Maharashtra, saying the party is "conspiring to eliminate the Hindu faith in India". Modi also accused the Congress of spreading lies regarding job reservations and the Constitution. Allying that the Congress "hatred" towards Hindus and their culture is being exposed daily, Modi said the leader who tutors 'shehzada' also said Ram temple should not have been built at Ayodhya. He has declared that construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya" and celebrating Ram Navami is against the idea of India, Modi claimed. "I go to the temple with great pride. He has given a certificate that even this is anti-national," he said. In another rally in Hyderabad, Modi said the national party is "anti-Hindu" and it knows religion-based reservations are unconstitutional. "The Congress wants to make Hindus second-class citizens in their own country. Are they talking about vote jihad because of this?" he questioned. Attacking the Congress Government in Telangana, Modi said he referred to

double (RR) tax in the State, without taking any names, but Chief Minister Revanath Reddy is giving explanations to the media indicating who is associated with it. Addressing an election rally in Mahabubnagar Lok Sabha constituency, Modi said the 'shehzade' of Congress (Rahul Gandhi) started off with 'mohabbat ki dukaan' before polls which lost steam as elections approached. "The 'shehzade' (prince) is now poisoning society by speaking of supporting 'tukde-tukde gang,'" he claimed. In a veiled reference to Congress leader Sam Pitroda's recent remarks, he said the 'shehzade's advisor' who lives in America described South Indian people as looking like Africans, which the PM claimed implied that Telangana people look like Africans. "You know why, because he doesn't like your skin colour. Now Congress will decide based on skin colour who is African and who is Indian," he said. "Do you perform puja on Ram Navami or not? Do you want to go to Ayodhya for darshan? Are you going to commit anti-national activity (with worship)?" he asked. He also said the Congress never bothered about welfare of Adivasis. Prime Minister Modi's ruling BJP has repeatedly accused the Congress of being "anti-Hindu" and "appeasing" Muslims.

Aiyar back to help BJP cause

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

An old video of another senior Congress leader, who has served in the Cabinet of several Prime Ministers, Mani Shankar Aiyar, has provided fresh ammunition to the BJP on Friday to attack the Congress, which, a few days ago, had worked hard to douse the flames ignited by its leader Sam Pitroda. In the midst of an aggressive Lok Sabha campaign, the BJP seized upon them, accusing the grand old party of being an apologist for Pakistan and the terrorism emanating from its soil. Meanwhile, the Congress again quickly distanced itself from Aiyar's comments. His remarks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the 2014 general elections left a scar on the Congress till now. In the video, which has gone viral on social media, Aiyar is heard saying that India should respect Pakistan as it is a sovereign nation and engage with it since it also possesses an atom bomb. Aiyar said the video is old and being resurfaced now as the BJP's election campaign is faltering. He indicated in the video that if a "mad person" comes to power there and uses the atom bomb, it will not be



good and will have its effect here too. As the remarks triggered a row, the Congress said it totally disagrees with the remarks made by Aiyar some months ago. Aiyar does not speak for the party in any capacity whatsoever, Congress media department chairperson Pawan Khera said. Home Minister Amit Shah slammed the Congress for "raising question mark" on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and asserted that every inch of it belonged to India and no force can snatch it. "Aiyar is telling us to respect Pakistan as it possesses an atomic bomb. A few days ago, INDIA Bloc leader Farooq Abdullah said do not talk about PoK as Pakistan has an atomic bomb. I want to tell the Congress and INDIA Bloc that PoK belongs to

India and no force can snatch it," Shah said at an election rally in Jharkhand's Khunti. Hitting back at BJP Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi said why is Pakistan being discussed when elections are taking place in India and the unemployment rate here is at a 45-year high. "I ask when was the statement made? ... If it is an old statement, then why are we discussing it today? Secondly, I want to ask, where are elections taking place, in India or in Pakistan? They are taking place in India. So why are we discussing Pakistan?" she said during her campaign trail in Amethi for the party's candidate Kishori Lal Sharma. BJP cited recent comments of more Congress leaders to make its point. The leader of Opposition in Maharashtra, Vijay Wadettiwar, had said IPS officer Hemant Karkare was killed by a cop affiliated to the RSS and not Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Kasab and former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi had dismissed a recent terror incident in Poonch in which an Air Force official died as a poll stunt, noted Union Minister Rajeev Chandrashekar.

EC lashes out at Kharge's 'biased' turnout narrative

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid concerns expressed by various Opposition parties over the voter turnout data, leaders of the INDIA Bloc from Congress, TMC, DMK, Left, met the Election Commission at Nirvachan Sadan on Friday, submitting alleged violations of the model code of conduct by the BJP leaders during the ongoing Lok Sabha polls campaign. Though the EC is yet to respond on the meeting with Opposition members, it however in a strongly worded letter replied to the Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge who a day earlier had written to the leaders of various Opposition parties on the issue of alleged "discrepancies" in the voting data released by the EC. The EC rejected Kharge's allegations that it had delayed the release of the final voter turnout numbers for the first two phases of the Lok Sabha elections and told him the utterances from president of a national political party is attacking the very credibility of the electoral steps and processes, and can have a negative impact on voter participation. Following which Congress



Photo: The Pioneer

chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh responded by defending the concerns raised by the Congress president. "The response of the EC to the issues raised by the Congress president in his letter to the INDIA parties is simply beyond description. The EC is a Constitutional body entrusted with the responsibility of being an impartial body that ensures, and is seen to ensure, a level-playing field to all political parties. Both the content and intent of the letter will be a permanent blot on the reputation of an institution that can boast of luminaries like Sukumar Sen, TN Seshan, JM Lyngdoh and others," Ramesh said in a statement. EC dubbed as "aggression on

vitals of live election operations" through Kharge's recent statements concerning the ongoing Lok Sabha elections 2024. The poll body termed Kharge's letter as his attempt to push a "biased narrative." In a five-page response with annexures, the poll panel rejected charges of mismanagement and delay in the release of voter turnout data and termed Kharge's allegations "unwarranted," "without facts" and "reflective of a biased and deliberate attempt to spread confusion." The commission condemned Kharge's statement in which he wondered whether the delay in releasing voter turnout data was an attempt to doctor the final results."

PM Modi will ensure not a single poor in India: Rajnath Singh

Defence Minister attends public rally in Support of BJP candidate Sita Soren

PNS : RANCHI

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addressed a public meeting at Yagya Maidan in Dumka on Friday. On this occasion, State BJP President and former Chief Minister Babul Marandi also addressed the gathering. A large number of people were present on the occasion.

Singh said that if Sita Soren becomes an MP from Dumka, she will raise your voice effectively in the Parliament. Prime Minister Modi has not discriminated against anyone. He has done a lot of work in the last 10 years to make India a rich country. Whenever the Congress government was formed, it said that we want to eradicate poverty from the country. India's poverty did not go



Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh alongwith BJP Jharkhand President Babul Marandi, party candidate Sita Soren and other leaders during a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Dumka on Friday. PNS

away while these people were there. Modi ji said that we will eradicate poverty. Although no Prime Minister can do a

big miracle in 10 years, but Modi ji has done that miracle. In the last 10 years, 25 crore people have been brought out

of the poverty line.

He said that mothers and sisters used to cook food on wood earlier. There were tears in their eyes. PM Modi took care of them. Everyone got gas cylinders. People were given free vaccines during the Corona period. PM Modi did the work of delivering free ration to every poor person's house. Not a single person will be allowed to remain poor in India. This is the decision of the Prime Minister and the Bharatiya Janata Party.

The Union Minister said that the opposition parties have always done politics by throwing dust in the eyes of the people. The BJP does not do politics just to form the government. It does politics to build the country and the society. Whenever there has been a Congress government, there have been allegations of



Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addresses a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Dumka on Friday. PNS

corruption. While the Congress government was in power at the Center, its ministers had to go to jail. This happened for the first time in the history of India. Congress,

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and opposition parties could not level a single corruption charge against the Modi government in the last 10 years. If even a single minister in the

Modi government is found doing corruption, then his place will be jail. The Jharkhand government is sucking the blood of the poor. Bundles of notes are being found from the house of the servant of the minister's PA. Rs 350 crores were found at an MP's house. Where did this come from? These people have drunk the blood of the public. People should be punished for this. This is a betrayal and deception of the poor of Jharkhand. People should take revenge for this through votes.

He said that earlier when any minister of India used to go abroad, it was said that India is a country of poor people. It is a weak country. India's words were not taken seriously. Today India's power has increased so much that if India says something on the

world forums, then the whole world listens carefully to what India is saying. Today this is India's power.

NDA candidate Sita Soren said that the Jharkhand government is looting. To loot people's sympathy, it is saying that the tribal has been put in jail. Today the Indi alliance government has not done anything for the development of Jharkhand. Development work is being done by the Prime Minister. Not even a single Abua housing has been built on the ground. When the Indi alliance candidate comes to seek votes, definitely ask him this thing. The state government has completely cheated the youth. Development work is coming on the ground only through Prime Minister Modi. Modi will punish those who try to change the Constitution.

JMM's Nalin Soren and Vijay Hansda file nomination



Former MP Hemlal Murmu, Podajyahaat MLA, Pradeep Yadav, Littipara MLA, Dinesh Marandi and others participated in the nomination procession of Vijay Hansda. A large number of supporters and workers also participated.

Hansda has won the Rajmahal parliamentary seat twice in a row in 2014 and 2019. The party has given him a chance for the third time. He is son of Thomas Hansda, a prominent Congress leader in Santal Pargana. Before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Hansda had joined JMM. The last phase of voting for Rajmahal parliamentary seat is to be held on June 1.

Meanwhile, the fourth phase of the election campaign in Jharkhand will end on Saturday, May 11. For this phase, Rahul Gandhi himself has held election rallies in two out of four Lok Sabha elections. Now there is no program of any other star campaigner of Congress to come to Jharkhand. Tejashwi Yadav has held two election meetings in Palamu and Garhwa on May 8. Tejashwi Yadav will hold three more election meetings for this phase on May 10. But after the completion of voting for four seats on May 13, the star campaigners of India Alliance will use their full strength in the elections for three seats Chatra, Koderma and Hazaribagh in the fifth phase and four seats Giridih, Dhanbad, Ranchi and Jamshepur in the sixth phase.

JMM candidate for Dumka Lok Sabha candidate Nalin Soren files his nomination papers, in Dumka on Friday. PNS



JMM leader Kalpana Soren along with party candidate Vijay Hansad after the latter filed nomination for Lok Sabha elections, in Dumka on Friday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) candidate Nalin Soren and Vijay Hansda filed their nomination from Dumka and Rajmahal respectively on Friday.

On this occasion, Chief Minister Champai Soren, Kalpana Soren, the State

Congress Chief, Rajesh Thakur, Agriculture Minister Badal, Health Minister Banna Gupta and leaders of INDI Alliance participated. There will be an election meeting in support of the candidates, one in Dumka and the other in Sahibganj. In which all the leaders of the INDI alliance will participate.

Cash, assets worth Rs 114.40 Cr seized in State

18 nominations filed on 4th day for seventh phase

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Electoral Officer, Jharkhand, K Ravi Kumar today said that till the fourth day of nomination in the seventh phase of elections, a total of 18 candidates have filed nominations. In that, a total of three candidates have filed nomination papers from Dumka (reserved for Scheduled Tribes) parliamentary constituency. So far, 5 people have filed nomination papers from Rajmahal (reserved for Scheduled Tribes) parliamentary constituency. So far, 10 people

have filed nomination papers from Godda parliamentary constituency. He informed that for the first time in Jharkhand, a third gender candidate Sunaina Kinnar has filed nomination papers from Dhanbad in the parliamentary election. The Chief Electoral Officer was addressing a press conference at Nirvachan Sadan, Dhurwa on Friday. The Chief Electoral Officer informed that nomination work will not be done on 11 May as it is the third Saturday of the month, whereas, nomination work remains closed on every

Sunday. He informed that the election campaign for the fourth phase will stop from the evening of 11 May. Candidates will be able to do door to door campaigns on 12 May. He said that the process of deployment of security forces at the booths has started. In response to a question, he said that EVMs are available in sufficient numbers for the polling work. He said that since the notification of the election was issued, the seizure of illegal material and cash in Jharkhand has reached Rs 1 billion, 14 crore 40 lakh.

Lok Sabha: Surprise inspection to ensure transparent elections

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a bid to ensure the smooth and transparent conduct of elections, District Election Officer Ananya Mittal recently conducted surprise inspections at various key election-related facilities. Accompanied by Deputy Development Commissioner Manish Kumar, Mittal meticulously assessed the arrangements at the postal ballot polling center located at the SDO office Dhalbhum and ITDA office.

During the inspection, Mittal scrutinized the facilities available at the polling center and interacted with officials and staff to gather insights into the ongoing processes.

Noting the crowd dynamics, he directed the implementation of measures such as segregating lines for men and women and providing guidance to voters through dedicated help desks. This move aimed to streamline the voting process and enhance efficiency. Additionally, Mittal and senior officials inspected the postal ballot strong room situated at Udyog Kendra, assessing the maintenance of postal ballots post-voting. Ensuring the integrity and security of ballots is paramount in upholding the democratic process.

In a proactive approach to combat misinformation and undue influence, Mittal also visited the Media and MCMC

Cell and Material Cell. He emphasized the importance of vigilance against social media manipulation, paid news, and political advertisements. Personnel were instructed to closely monitor various channels and collaborate with the Expenditure Cell to track election-related expenses rigorously.

Furthermore, Mittal reviewed approvals pertaining to campaign activities, advertisements, and media content for political parties and candidates contesting the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Stressing compliance, he underscored the necessity for parties and candidates to obtain approval for their promotional materials.

NML commemorates National Technology Day 2024



PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

CSIR-National Metallurgical Laboratory (NML) celebrated National Technology Day 2024 with great fervor, honoring the successful nuclear test at Pokhran in 1998 and acknowledging significant achievements in science and technology. The event featured an invited lecture by Dr. Debashish Bhattacharjee, VP Technology & R & R&D, Tata Steel Ltd, who delivered a thought-provoking address on igniting young minds to innovate, under the theme "From Schools to Start-ups."

The event commenced with a warm welcome address by Dr. Sandip Ghosh Chowdhury, Director of CSIR-NML, who underscored the pivotal role of science and technology in national development and reiterated the importance of commemorating National Technology Day. Dr. SK Pal, Chief Scientist & Head-RPBD Division, CSIR-NML, presented insights into ongoing technology development programs and highlighted the laboratory's contributions towards societal benefits.

Dr. Debashish Bhattacharjee, as the Chief Guest, captivated the audience with his lecture on innovation-powered strategies for sustainable development. He emphasized the journey from

idea inception to enterprise establishment and its paramount role in national progress. Drawing from past business models and sustainable ventures, Dr. Bhattacharjee shed light on the entrepreneurial approach of Idea-Innovation-Enterprise, inspiring the audience with examples from various industry sectors.

The occasion also saw the release of the Annual Report for the financial year 2023-24 by Dr. Bhattacharjee, adding to the significance of the event. Shri Abhijit Nanoti, MD, ISWP, Jamshedpur, graced the occasion as a distinguished guest, further enhancing the celebratory atmosphere.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 120 students and faculty members representing various colleges and universities, including Jamshedpur Women's College, Srinath University, Arka Jain University, Al-Kabir Polytechnic, and Aditya Institute of Technology.

Aditya Mainak, Administrative Officer, CSIR-NML, extended a vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to all participants and organizers for their contributions. The program concluded on a patriotic note with the rendition of the National Anthem, symbolizing unity and pride in technological advancements.

Celebrating Excellence: SAIL hosts 160th steel plants sports board meeting

R SHARMA : BOKARO

The 160th Meeting of the #SteelPlantsSportsBoard illuminated the corridors of SAIL Corporate Office with a celebration of excellence and sportsmanship today. Led by the esteemed Chairman of SAIL and Chief Patron of SPSB, Amarendu Prakash, the event showcased a vibrant gathering of industry leaders and sports enthusiasts alike.

In a ceremony graced by Director (Personnel) of SAIL, K.K. Singh, the coveted SPSB Excellence Trophy found its deserving recipient in Tata Steel, highlighting their outstanding contribution to the realm of sports within the steel industry.

The event served as a melting pot of collaborative spirit, with the presence of esteemed member companies such as NMDC Limited, RINL,



Tata Steel, alongside representatives from various SAIL plants and units. This convergence underscored the collective commitment towards fostering a culture of athleticism and camaraderie within the steel fraternity.

The Ministry of Steel, Government of India, lent its steadfast support to this initiative, reaffirming the signifi-

cance of sports in promoting holistic development and synergy within the steel sector. As the heartbeat of India's industrial landscape, Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) continues to champion initiatives that not only excel in production but also nurture the spirit of sportsmanship and unity among its stakeholders.

BSL organizes embarking on a new journey program for Retirees

PNS : BOKARO

In a bid to equip retiring employees from the Bokaro Steel Plant, who are set to retire in May 2024, with the necessary knowledge and management skills to navigate post-retirement life, the Human Resource Development Center organized the "Embarking on a New Journey" program on May 10. The program commenced with a warm welcome from Manager (Personnel-Final Settlement), Kalpana, who briefed the audience about the purpose of the event along with insights into the new medical claim scheme. Dr. Jaya Lakshmi, Medical Officer (Medical and Health Services), and yoga specialist Krishna Bandhu Mishra enlightened the steel



workers about health management. Deputy Manager (Finance and Accounts) Deepshikha provided detailed information on financial management to the attendees. Chief Manager Mukesh Kumar, Manager Shikha Singh, and Kundan Kumar from Bank of Baroda advised the gathering on investment

options and banking facilities. Sangita Kumari, ACT (Personnel-Final Settlement), shared details about the concluding activities of the program. The program concluded with a vote of thanks from Manager (Personnel-Final Settlement) Kalpana, expressing gratitude to all partici-

Excise Dept cracks whip on overpricing, stops over Rs 100Cr monthly illegal collection in liquor business in Jharkhand

Tightens noose around fake liquor factories, continuous raids being conducted

PNS : RANCHI

The State Excise and Prohibition department has started cracking whip on the syndicate involved in the overpricing of liquor and taking strict action against illegal liquor manufacturing in the State. Overpricing was rampant in the State, which resulted in an illegal collection of about Rs 100 Crore every month. The employees of the placement agency in the liquor shops openly took overrate and if not paid, they even resorted to violence.

However, in the leadership of Excise Secretary Mukesh Kumar, the department has curbed overrating in almost all the districts of Jharkhand. Now liquor is being sold at the printed



Excise and Prohibition Secretary Mukesh Kumar. PNS

rate. The department has also issued helpline numbers to assist consumers if they find any liquor shop selling

liquor more than its printed rate. The illegal business of overrating was flourishing in all the districts. In some

districts, illegal collection of twenty rupees per bottle and ten rupees per bottle was common. The sellers used to demand more than the printed rate for any kind of liquor and also threatened the consumers if they protested. Customers were forced to pay ten to thirty rupees extra.

According to an estimate about 10 per cent people of the State consume foreign liquor daily, which means about 30 lakh people consume liquor daily. If the oversight is calculated from all the thirty lakh customers, then about three and a half crore rupees were illegally collected daily and about 100 crores monthly, which was distrib-

uted from top to bottom.

After the department swung into action several people have been arrested and cases were registered against them for overpricing. In Bokaro district 96 cases have been filed in just 53 days. Also, 42 people have been arrested by the Bokaro excise department for selling fake liquor and overselling. And about 2.90 lakh rupees have been recovered by the department.

According to officials eight people have been sent to jail. The search for 47 people is going on and 34 people have been fined. The District Assistant Commissioner of Bokaro has also released some helpline numbers.

Govt suspends Minister's PS Sanjeev Lal

PNS : RANCHI

Rural Development Minister Alamgir Alam's Personal Secretary and Jharkhand Administrative Service officer, Sanjeev Lal have been suspended. After getting consent from Chief Minister, Champai Soren, the Personnel

Department has issued an order in this regard.

On May 6, ED has seized Rs 35 crore from Sanjeev Lal's servant Jahangir. Also, ED officials have recovered Rs 2 lakh in cash from his chamber located at Project Bhawan. In this regard, Sanjeev Lal's wife was also

called for questioning by ED on Thursday. The ED has interrogated both the husband and wife by making them sit face to face. Sanjeev Lal's wife said that she has no information about where Rs 35 crore came from. ED has made many revelations after finding more than

Rs 35 crore from the house of Minister Alamgir Alam's OSD servant Jahangir on May 6. It is being told that Jahangir's salary was in thousands but his expenses were in crores. Many important revelations have also come to light in the investigation of Jahangir's bank account details.

Jahangir Alam has gathered crores of rupees from Sanjeev Lal's black money. Lakhs of rupees are also deposited in Jahangir's account whereas Jahangir got only a few thousand rupees as salary. But he has spent crores in purchasing flats and vehicles.

Snatching rights of tribals, dalits and underprivileged is grave corruption: Kalpana Soren

Nation will not forgive BJP for cheating people with their lies, says new face of the Opposition

PRANAV PRATYUSH : RANCHI

In just a few weeks after the Enforcement Directorate apprehended her husband Hemant Soren, former Chief Minister of Jharkhand, in an alleged case of money laundering, she has surfaced as one of the most prominent faces in national politics. Her presence and speeches in INDIA block's humongous rallies at the national platforms is being admired by political veterans.

Popularly being seen as the next chief Minister Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Kalpana Murmu Soren, is an army officer's daughter, an engineering graduate, an MBA, a housewife, a mother of two kids and politician due to compulsion. Being seen in the present times as one of the most promising women politicians of the country, Kalpana is on a mission to "save the Constitution and democracy."

In a candid interview with the Pioneer, Kalpana Soren poured out her heart on her entry into politics, internal and external challenges before her as a budding politician, burning issues of the State and the nation as well as her vision to bring about a change in the country after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Excerpts:
What compelled you to enter politics? Was it due to prevailing situations, or you were read for it beforehand?

It was January 31, 2024, when my life took a sudden turn after Hemant Soren ji was arrested. My life has completely changed since then. The whirlwind of events caught me off guard, leaving me unprepared for the challenges that lay ahead. Amidst the tumultuous ups and downs within both the party and our family, I have emerged with a clear vision: to advocate for the people of Jharkhand and all those charged by the nation who have been denied their rights.

As we enter the election season, our focus is unwavering. We are gearing up to contest every Lok Sabha seat in the state, driven by a fierce determination to safeguard the identity and rights of every individual belonging to Jharkhand. Our mission is to fight for the very existence of every Jharkhandi.

Did it ever come to your mind to enter politics? As the ED investigation was going on, were you being prepared for this?

There was absolutely no prior preparation for this. As the case unfolded, I stood by Hemant ji during his legal challenges. However, when



everything unfolded unexpectedly, I found myself in a situation where my in-laws' health was deteriorating, my brother-in-law took on new responsibilities in the State Cabinet, and party workers began approaching me, urging me to step forward and support them. They expressed their longing for Hemant Ji and implored me to step in and help fill the void, emphasizing the urgency of saving Jharkhand.

Who do you think is responsible for Hemant Soren's arrest?

It's widely understood that the case against Hemant ji lacks merit, given the unique nature of the land in question—it's unsellable. Authorities should have verified any connection between him and the land before making an arrest. Surprisingly, not a single document bears Hemant Soren's name. Even more intriguingly, the landowners themselves have been implicated in the case. This raises serious questions about the motives behind Hemant ji's arrest. The forces behind the arrest are known to one and all.

With Jharkhand gaining notoriety for corruption, do you think corruption is the biggest challenge in Jharkhand's development?

Corruption knows no borders—it is there in various forms across the world. In Jharkhand, corruption is evident in the Centre's failure to allocate over Rs 1,36,000 Crore in royalties owed to the state. Additionally, the disregard for our plea for a separate Sarna Religious Code and the denial of 27 per cent reservation for OBCs further exemplify corruption.

Further exacerbating the situation, the authorities have unjustly snatched PMAY houses from 8 lakh families in Jharkhand, reallocating them to States with their double engine governments. Moreover, they have invalidated 12 lakh ration cards, yet expect unwavering loyalty in return. This exploitation of our resources without reciprocity has left the peo-

ple feeling deceived—a form of grand corruption.

While the Jharkhand government is actively combating corruption within its jurisdiction, the Centre's neglectful treatment only fuels public discontent. Hemant ji's vocal opposition to these injustices speaks volumes, as evidenced by the current state of affairs.

What caused such a dispute in JMM's first family? How do you see Sita Soren's departure from the party?

The news of my elder sister-in-law's departure from the party to join the BJP came as a complete surprise to us all, especially since we learned about it through the media. Initially, I was deeply affected by the developments surrounding Hemant ji, and it took some time for us to process everything. However, after speaking with senior party leaders, we realized that her decision was a personal one, and it was important for us to respect it. Despite the differences, I hold great admiration and respect for her, viewing her as an elder sister-in-law. I simply want to extend my best wishes to her as she embarks on this new journey.

How are you being received in Jharkhand's development?

The outpouring of support has been heartening from every corner. From Rahul Gandhi's Nyay Yatra to the Ugulan Nyay Rally in Jharkhand, blessings have poured in from small party workers to senior members alike. Each member of the JMM sees me as carrying forward Hemant Ji's thoughts, urging me to persist in the fight for the people of Jharkhand. The overwhelming love and blessings from the party workers have left me deeply moved and grateful.

How do you plan to stand against BJP's might?

The deceptive tactics of the BJP government have become evident to everyone now. Since 2014, the BJP has been spreading numerous falsehoods, promising employment, depositing 15



lakh rupees in bank accounts, and doubling farmers' income. Over the past decade, it has become increasingly clear to the people of India that the BJP's promises were nothing but empty rhetoric. Despite these assurances, the reality remains unchanged—people continue to struggle to make ends meet.

In places like Manipur, where suffering has been palpable, many have remained silent witnesses to the BJP's failures. The BJP's deceit and falsehoods will not be easily forgotten or forgiven by the people. After a decade of broken promises and unfulfilled commitments, it's evident that the BJP's words cannot be trusted.

Do you think more women should enter politics and empower others?

Absolutely! Women's representation in politics remains significantly low in our country, especially in states like Jharkhand. If I can serve as an inspiration for women to step forward, seize power, and become influential decision-makers at both the state and national levels, I would consider myself incredibly fortunate.

Are you ready for the responsibility for the next Chief Minister of Jharkhand?

As of now, I am just a simple Sepoy of the JMM, just beginning to grasp the ideals and aspirations of my father-in-law, Shibu Soren, my husband Hemant ji, and my fellow party members. When I interact with party members, they share their experiences with Guruji, which fills me with pride for both them and my family.

Being referred to as a warrior resonates with me because I see myself as someone who perseveres through challenges and is prepared to tackle whatever comes my way. I eagerly await my husband's return and continue to fight in his absence. Once he resumes leadership of the party, I'll steadfastly support him while remaining active in politics under his guidance.

Every inch of POK belongs to India: Amit Shah

Union Home Minister attacks INDI Alliance on Corruption



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses an election rally in support of BJP candidate Arjun Munda ahead of Lok Sabha elections, in Khunti on Friday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah today attacked the INDI Alliance and reiterated that the area in the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir belongs to India. "I want to tell the Congress and the INDI Alliance that POK belongs to India, nobody can snatch it. Instead of bringing POK back from Pakistan, the Congress is scaring the people of India by talking about the atom bomb. I don't know what has happened to the Congress. The BJP's stand is clear that every inch of POK belongs to India and should remain in India," he said. The Union Home Minister was addressing the Maha Vijay Sankalp Sabha of BJP candidate and Union Minister Arjun Munda in Khunti on Friday. He slammed the Congress, JMM and INDI alliance in the state. Addressing a huge public gathering, he said that

a few days ago, Rs 350 crore cash was seized from the house of a Congress MP. All this money is yours, of my tribal brothers, which Rahul Baba's party has looted. He said that just two days ago, Rs 35 crore and jewellery were recovered from the house of a Congress minister in Jharkhand. All this money belongs to the tribal brothers of Jharkhand and the people of the backward society. I want to tell the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha that the Congress you are sitting with to gain power, that Congress stopped the creation of Jharkhand for years. During the rule of the Congress, the tribals of the country were not taken care of at all. The Ministry of Tribal Welfare was also with a Joint Secretary of the Home Department. But the work of forming the Tribal Commission and the Ministry of Tribal Welfare was done

by Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji.

Shah said that today I say with confidence that Narendra Modi has done the work of freeing Jharkhand and Bihar from Naxalism. Our Prime Minister has done the work of declaring the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda on 15th November as "Tribal Pride Day" and building special Tribal Freedom Fighter Museums across the country for all tribal freedom fighters.

He said that PFI used to spread terrorism in the whole country, it got the biggest support from the Congress and JMM government here. Narendra Modi raided more than 100 places in one night and put the entire cadre of PFI in jail and

banned it.

The 150th birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda will come in 2025. Modi ji has decided to celebrate 2025 as "Tribal Pride Year". This is a matter of pride for all of us. Mr Shah said that when Atal Bihari Vajpayee became the Prime Minister of the country, he worked to create and develop Jharkhand. Atal Ji created Jharkhand.

and Modi Ji is working to improve Jharkhand. Today this Manishanker Ayyar is threatening the country to give respect to Pakistan, they have the atom bomb. A few days ago, the leader of the same INDI Alliance, Farooq Abdullah had said that don't talk about POK, Pakistan has the atom bomb.

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Bank of India, Bokaro Zonal Office
E-17, First Floor, City Centre, Sector-4, Bokaro -827004 (Jharkhand)

It is hereby informed to all the general public that the Original Copy of registered Sale deed (Kevala) No. 3134 dated 05/05/2006 of the land parcel of Shri Vrindavandham Project under construction by "La Elixir Aashiyaa Estate Developers Pvt. Ltd.", is missing since 18/08/2023. The missing information of the Sale deed has been made at Sector VI, Police Station vide S.D.E. No. 13/23 dated 21.08.2023. This project is located at Khata No. 172, Plot No. 736 & 737, Area 44 Decimel, Mouza -Chas. The project is under consideration for Housing Loan Tie-Up by Bank of India for granting Home Loan facility for the purchase of residential flats constructed/to be constructed in this project.

If any person/firm/company has a claim on the above mentioned land of this project, then they can submit their claim within 15 days of this notice before the competent authority at the following address:- Chief Manager (Credit), Bank of India, Bokaro Zonal Office, E-17, First Floor, City Centre, Sector-4, Bokaro -827004. In case no Claim is submitted or claim is submitted after lapse of 15 days from this notice, then Bank of India will be completely free to take further action related to project approval and will not be obliged to pay any kind of compensation.

Sd./ Authorised Officer Bank of India

Format C-7
for political parties to publish in The newspapers. Social media platform & website of the party)

Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases who have been selected as candidates. Along with the reasons for such selection as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates

As per the commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble supreme Court in contempt petition© no. 2192 of 2018 in WP(c) NO. 536 OF 2011)

Name of Political Party : **JHARKHAND MUKTI MORCHA**
Name of the Election : **PARLIAMENTARY GENERAL ELECTION 2024**
Name of State/UT : **JHARKHAND**

(1) Name of the Constituency - **09, Jamshedpur Parliamentary Constituency**
Name of candidate **Samir Kumar Mohanty**

1.	Criminal antecedents		
Case I	a. Nature of the offences	Protest on road & damaging Govt. Property	
	b. Case no.	GR867/2021	
	c. Name of the Court	SDJM, Ghatsila	
	d. Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	Yes	
	e. Date of conviction, if any	N/A	
	f. Details of punishment undergone, if any	N/A	
	g. Any other information required to be given	Charged framed on 05/01/2008	
	Case II	a. Nature of the offences	Disturbance in Govt. Work & loss of Govt. Revenue.
		b. Case no	GR 23/2020
c. Name of the Court		SDJM, Sadar at Spl. Court for MP/MLA, Chaibasa	
d. Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)		No	
e. Date of conviction, if any		N/A	
f. Details of punishment undergone, if any		N/A	
g. Any other information required to be given			
2.		The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection Shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)	Devoted to Party & recommendation of party leaders and workers .
3.		Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal Antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more Than 100 words)	No any one applied for Candidature.

(2) Name of the Constituency - **02, Dumka Parliamentary Constituency**
Name of candidate - **NALIN SOREN**

1.	Criminal antecedents		
Case I	a. Nature of the offences	Privention of Corruption	
	b. Case no.	Special Case No 15A of 2009	
	c. Name of the Court	Learned Special Judge, Vigilance-cum-A.C.B., Ranchi	
	d. Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)	No	
	e. Date of conviction, if any	N/A	
	f. Details of punishment undergone, if any	N/A	
	g. Any other information required to be given	-	
	Case II	a. Nature of the offences	Privention of Corruption
		b. Case no	Special Case No. 13 of 2013
c. Name of the Court		Learned Special Judge, Vigilance-cum-A.C.B., Ranchi	
d. Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No)		No	
e. Date of conviction, if any		N/A	
f. Details of punishment undergone, if any		N/A	
g. Any other information required to be given			
2.		The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection Shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)	Devoted to Party & recommendation of party leaders and workers .
3.		Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal Antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more Than 100 words)	No any one applied for Candidature.

• the case of election to Council of States or States or election to legislative Council by
• MLAs, Mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.

Signature of officer bearer of the political party

(VINOD KUMAR PANDEY)
General Secretary,
Jharkhand Mukti Morcha

Opposition welcomes SC order granting interim bail to Kejriwal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders on Friday welcomed the interim bail given to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the Supreme Court, saying the "fight to save democracy" will now be with more intensity. Congress leader Pawan Khara hoped former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren also gets due justice. "We welcome the intervention by the Supreme Court in granting bail to Arvind Kejriwal... We also hope that the prime minister gets enough time after June 4, when he becomes the former prime minister of India, to introspect sitting in Sabarmati Ashram the kind of politics he has indulged in," he said.

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee also welcomed the Supreme Court order, saying "I am very happy to see that Shri Arvind Kejriwal has got interim bail. It will be very helpful in the context of the current elections." Sharad Pawar, who heads the NCP (SP), said the country remains steadfast in the pursuit of democracy. "I welcome the interim bail order granted to the chief minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal by the SC. India remains steadfast in the pursuit of democracy," Pawar wrote on X. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Priyanka Chaturvedi called it a "big win" for Kejriwal. "And big win for Arvind Kejriwal as SC steps in to grant him interim bail. The bid to silence the



opposition by BJP is backfiring on them. We Won't be silenced, won't bend, won't give in come what may. Bharat is watching, India is winning! Jai Hind!" she wrote on X. Another Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray said justice and relief to Kejriwal against the "dictatorial regime" in the country was a huge sign of winds of change. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said they will now fight the battle to save democracy with more intensity. "In a post on X, he said, 'Thanks to the Supreme Court... Now we will fight the battle to save democracy with more intensity... Arvind Kejriwal is not a person but a thought... And now will take this thought forward with greater momentum.'"

The AAP leaders in Punjab also hailed the Supreme Court decision to grant interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, saying truth always triumphs. Punjab Cabinet Minister Chetan Singh Jauramajra thanked the apex court for granting interim bail to the AAP supremo. "Truth always triumphs," said Jauramajra. Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said he was grateful to the top court for upholding justice. "Today's interim bail order for Arvind Kejriwal by Hon'ble Supreme Court reaffirms the honesty and integrity of the AAP. Grateful to the judiciary for upholding justice. Arvind Ji's presence among us will give all of us energy and vigour to fight

and win," said Cheema in a post on X. Another minister Balbir Singh said with Kejriwal getting interim bail, a wave of happiness has spread among party workers. "Millions of prayers have been answered. I thank the Supreme Court," said Singh as he accused the BJP of trying to suppress the truth. "But the truth has won," the health minister said. Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court granted interim bail to Kejriwal till June 1 to campaign in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. The Delhi chief minister was arrested in a case relating to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's now-scrapped excise policy for 2021-22.

Jaishankar slams Canada for backing Khalistanis

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

By allowing political space to Khalistani separatist elements, the Canadian government is sending a message that its vote bank is "more powerful" than its rule of law, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said. In an exclusive interview to PTI late Thursday, Jaishankar said India respects and practices freedom of speech, but that does not equate with freedom to threaten foreign diplomats, extend support to separatism or allow political space to elements advocating violence. The external affairs minister also wondered how people with dubious backgrounds are being allowed to enter and live in Canada, referring to Khalistani supporters among the Sikh migrants from Punjab. "In any rules-based society, you would imagine that you would check people's background, how they came, what passport they carried etc," he said. "If you have people whose presence there is itself on very dubious documents, what does it say about you? It actually says that your vote bank is more



powerful than your rule of law," the minister said. The Indian diaspora in Canada is about 1.8 million strong and there are another one million Non Resident Indians residing in the country. The Indian diaspora, mostly of Sikh ethnicity, is considered an influential bloc in Canada's politics. Ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar. New Delhi rejected Trudeau's

charges as "absurd". India has been maintaining that the main issue has been that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistani elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity. "It is not so much a question of running out of options. What we have seen to our regret has been the direction of Canadian politics where separatists and extremist forces, many of whom openly advocate violence, have been given political space in that country," Jaishankar said. "And there are people in positions of prominence today in Canadian politics who actual-

ly espouse that kind of separatism and extremism," he said. His remarks came in response to a question on how India plans to deal with challenges emanating from Canada and whether the options for New Delhi are running out. "We cannot for the good relations overlook that," he said during the freewheeling interview at PTI's headquarters. Jaishankar said Canada's response to India's concerns has been that it has freedom of speech. "Whenever we have taken this up with the Canadians... It is not a new issue... It has been going on almost for 10 years and they keep saying, oh 'we have freedom of speech.'" "We also have freedom of speech in our country. But freedom of speech does not mean freedom to threaten foreign diplomats, freedom of speech does not mean the kind of positions and the kind of activities which people in Canada are doing which does harm to our country because of its support for separatism," Jaishankar said. "And freedom of speech does not mean this kind of space which is also given to people of

Sanjay Bhalla assumes charge as CoP of Indian Navy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla on Friday here assumed charge as Chief of Personnel (CoP) of Indian Navy. He was commissioned in the Indian Navy in 1989. In a career spanning 35 years, he has held a number of specialist, staff and operational appointments, both afloat and ashore, navy said. After completing his Specialisation Course in Communication and Electronic Warfare, Bhalla served as a specialist onboard several frontline warships. He subsequently had the privilege of holding challenging, fulfilling and eventful Commands at sea, which include, INS Nishank, INS Taragiri, INS Beas and the coveted appointment of Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet (FOCEF). During his tenure as FOCEF, he was the Officer in Tactical Command for the prestigious President's Fleet Review (PFR - 22) and the Sea Phase of



Indian Navy's flagship multinational exercise MILAN - 22, that witnessed an unprecedented participation from friendly foreign countries. Ashore, he has held important staff appointments at the Naval Headquarters including Assistant Chief of Personnel (Human Resource Development); headed Officers training at Naval Academy, and has held a diplomatic assignment overseas. Prior to assuming charge as the COP, he was the Chief

of Staff of the Western Naval Command. An alumnus of Royal College of Defence Studies, London, Naval War College and Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, his educational accomplishments include M Phil (Defence & Strategic Studies), Masters in International Security and Strategic Studies from the Kings College, London, M.Sc (Defence & Strategic Studies), Madras University and M.Sc (Telecom) from CUSAT.

Nearly 12 per cent Indian kids have not received double dose vaccination for measles: Research

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 12 per cent of eligible children in India have not received any recommended double-dose vaccination for measles, highlighting a significant gap in measles vaccination coverage among the beneficiaries. This deficiency is particularly pronounced in northeastern states like Nagaland, where the share of zero-dose cases is as high as 26 per cent. In contrast, Tamil Nadu was found to report the lowest at 4.6 per cent. Researchers from the Union Health Ministry and Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in Varanasi investigated previously overlooked critical aspects of measles vaccination, focusing on zero-doses, partially vaccinated, and those fully immunised. They analysed data of over 43,000 children aged 2-3 years, collected through the National Family Health Survey 2019-21 (NFHS-5). The team found that close to 30 per cent of the eligible children have received only one measles-containing vaccine (MCV1), while about 60 per cent have been fully immunised (MCV2). The findings are published in the journal Vaccine. In 2017, India adopted the National Strategic Plan for Achieving and Sustaining Measles and Rubella Elimination. The researchers acknowledged that disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the risk of measles in vulnerable populations. While immunisation programmes were eventually resumed in a phased manner, measles zero-dose children pose a significant obstacle to achieving goals of eliminating the acute and highly contagious viral disease, the researchers said. Occurring primarily in children, symptoms can include high fever, cough, runny nose and a rash all over the body.

Being vaccinated is the best way to avoid getting sick and spreading the disease, according to the World Health Organization. The analysis also revealed huge inter-district variations, according to the researchers. They found that in Uttar Pradesh, while Prayagraj and Banda districts were found to have about 34 per cent and 32 per cent of these cases, respectively, Hapur and Etawah have 2.6 per cent and 2.1 per cent of zero-dose cases. The researchers said Arunachal Pradesh was another such example, where the West Siang district had the greatest share with almost 50 per cent of eligible children receiving no dose of the vaccination, while the Lower Dibang Valley district had only 2.8 per cent of such cases. Socio-demographic factors were analysed to influence the measles vaccination status of children, with those born later in the family being less likely to have received no dose. Low levels of wealth and mother's education too were found to increase the odds of children not receiving any dose of the vaccination. "Socioeconomic factors play a significant role in measles transmission, with individuals from lower socioeconomic classes experiencing higher attack rates resulting in outbreaks," the authors wrote. The findings underscored the need for tailored strategies, especially within districts displaying close to 10 per cent variability in zero-dose cases, the researchers said. "The identification of a notable percentage (11.5 per cent) of children receiving zero-doses signals a concerning gap in immunisation coverage," the authors wrote and pointed out that, this "highlights the importance of last mile effort and application of big push theory in terms of more frequent rounds of campaigns mode vaccine delivery for the target of 95 per cent vaccine coverage for population-level immunity."

ICMAI seeks inclusion of Cost Accountants as auditors within Cooperative Societies Act

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICMAI) has sought inclusion of Cost Accountants as auditors within specific sections of the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002. The proposal aims at enhancing the effectiveness of cooperative societies in India. In response to this proposal, Dr Ashish Kumar Bhutani, Secretary Cooperation, assured the ICMAI delegation of giving thorough consideration to their proposal. Additionally, he also expressed his willingness to explore collaborative initiatives between



the Ministry and the Institute, indicating openness to cooperation and partnership in this endeavor.

This assurance from Dr Bhutani came during an event where he unveiled the inaugural edition of the Quarterly

Journal of the Cooperative Development Board (CDB) of the ICMAI. The event, organized by ICMAI in col-

laboration with the National Council for Cooperative Training (NCCT), also saw the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two entities. Dr Bhutani commended the collaborative efforts of ICMAI and NCCT, recognizing them as proactive think tanks and valuable knowledge repositories. He, along with Mohan Kumar Mishra, Secretary of NCCT, signed the first copy of the journal, highlighting the commitment of both organizations to the growth and development of the cooperative sector in India. During the event, ICMAI and NCCT officials briefed Dr. Bhutani on their strategic roadmap, which encompassed

four key pillars aimed at supporting the government's efforts in advancing the cooperative sector. According to the ICMAI officials, it is advocating for Cost Accountants to be recognized as auditors under two specific sections of the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002. These are Section 72(1) under which Cost Accountants could potentially be appointed as auditors for such societies, allowing them to conduct audits and assess the financial performance and compliance of these organizations while Section 77(1) may relate to the appointment of special auditors for specific purposes or circumstances, such as investigations or special reports.

NGO moves SC asking EC to upload LS voter turnout data on website

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

An NGO has moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Election Commission (ECI) to upload polling station-wise voter turnout data in "absolute figures" on its website within 48 hours of conclusion of polling for each phase of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) has filed an interim application in its 2019 PIL seeking directions to the poll panel that "scanned legible copies of Form 17C Part-I (Account of Votes Recorded)" of all polling stations be uploaded immediately after the polls. "Direct the Election Commission to provide tabulated polling station-wise data in absolute figures of the number of votes polled as recorded in Form 17C Part-I after each phase of polling in the on-going 2024 Lok Sabha elections and also a tabulation of constituency-wise figures of voter turnout in absolute numbers in the on-going 2024 Lok Sabha elections," the NGO said. It said the plea was filed to ensure that the democratic process is not subverted by electoral irregu-



larities. "The voter turnout data for the first two phases of the ongoing 2024 Lok Sabha elections published by ECI on April 30 has been published after 11 days of the first phase of polling held on April 19 and 4 days after second phase of polling held on April 26. "The data as published by the ECI in its press release dated April 30, 2024 shows a sharp increase (by about 5-6%) as compared to the initial percentages announced by ECI as of 7 pm on the day of polling," the plea said. The petition said the "inordinate" delay in the release of final voter turnout data, coupled with the unusually high revision of over 5 per cent in the poll panel's press note of April 30, 2024 has raised con-

cerns and public suspicion regarding the correctness of the said data. The non-release of absolute number of votes polled, coupled with the "unreasonable delay" in release of votes polled data, has led to apprehensions in the mind of the electorate about the sharp increase between initial data and data released on April 30, it said. "These apprehensions must be addressed and put to rest. That in order to uphold the voter's confidence it is necessary that the ECI be directed to disclose on its website scanned legible copies of Form 17C Part-I (Account of Votes Recorded) of all polling stations which contains the authenticated figures for votes polled, within 48 hours of the close of polling," it said.

Inter Services Organisations Act notified through gazette notification: Defence Ministry



The Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Act has been notified through a gazette notification to be enforced with effect from Friday, defence ministry said. In order to bolster effective command, control and efficient functioning of Inter-Services Organisations (ISOs), the bill was passed by both the Houses of Parliament during the Monsoon Session of 2023. The Bill received the assent of the President on August 15, 2023, officials said. The Act empowers Commanders-in-Chief and Officers-in-Command of ISOs to exercise control over Service personnel, serving under them, for effective maintenance of discipline and administration, without disturbing the unique service conditions of each individual Service. With the notification, the Act will empower the Heads of ISOs and pave the way for expeditious disposal of cases, avoid multiple proceedings and will be a step towards greater integration and jointness among the Armed Forces personnel.

Coast Guard inks MoU with Hindalco

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Hindalco Industries has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) here for the manufacturing and supply of indigenous marine-grade aluminium to Indian public and private shipyards for the construction of ships. Giving details here on Friday, defence ministry officials said the MOU inked on Thursday will also provide benefits such as quarterly pricing, priority in supplies and turnover discount. The ICG fleet is presently operating 67 ships with aluminium hull with capability of operating in shallow waters. To further boost coastal security, it has planned to induct more such vessels where the indigenously manufactured marine-grade aluminium will be utilised. The MoU was signed by Deputy Director General (Material & Maintenance), ICG IG HK Sharma and CEO, Downstream Aluminium Business, Hindalco Niles Koul in the presence of senior officials of the ICG.

Opposition wants to bury me alive, but people are my security shield: Modi

PIT ■ NANDURBAR (MAHARASHTRA)
 Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said some in the opposition want to bury him alive, but people of the country are his security shield and they won't let any harm come to him. Lashing out at the opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) headed by former Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray, the BJP stalwart asserted the "nakli (fake) Shiv Sena" abuses him in such a way that it pleases its "favourite vote-bank". "The nakli Shiv Sena wants to bury me alive. They abuse me in such a way that it is liked by their favourite vote-bank. They also take a bomb blast accused for election campaigning," Modi said while addressing a campaign rally in north Maharashtra's Nandurbar in support of BJP



candidate Hina Gavit. The BJP on Thursday claimed 1993 serial bomb blasts accused Iqbal Musa alias Baba Chauhan was seen in a Lok Sabha campaign rally of Shiv Sena (UBT) Mumbai North West candidate Amol Kirtikar. The allegations were denied by Musa as well as Kirtikar, both of whom claimed they did not know each other. He maintained the opposition

has lost people's support and trust, and that is why their political space is shrinking. "People of India are my security cover. They can't bury me alive or dead," the PM told the crowd. He was apparently referring to Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut's alleged comments about "burying him (Modi) in Maharashtra just like Mughal emperor Aurangzeb". "The Congress says 'Modi teri kabar khudegi' (Modi, your grave will be dug). While abusing me they keep in mind voter appeasement. (Shiv Sena founder) Balasaheb Thackeray must be very sad," averred the BJP's star campaigner. The Congress is an ally of the Shiv Sena (UBT) in Maharashtra. Nandurbar is among 11 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra that will go to polls in the fourth phase on May 13.

INDIA Bloc seeped in corruption: Nadda

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH
 BJP chief J P Nadda on Friday lashed out at the opposition INDIA alliance, dubbing it an "assembly of corrupt" and asking the people to vote for the saffron outfit so that the country's march on the path of progress continues. At a roadshow in Haryana's Panchkula, Nadda also accused the opposition parties of promoting dynastic politics. "Modi says remove corruption, they (opposition) say save the corrupt and make them flourish," he said at the roadshow in favour of BJP's Ambala candidate Banto Kataria. "Is the Congress a party of scams or not. Is Lalu's (Yadav's) party a party which indulged in scam. Did Mamata (Banerjee) indulge in scams or not? Did DMK Stalin's family indulge in scams or not? Did K Kavitha indulge in scam or not? Toh 'sare bhrashtachariyon ka



jamavda hai' (assembly of the corrupt)," Nadda said. He also noted that many opposition leaders are either in jail or on bail. "Where is Arvind Kejriwal today. Where is Manish Sisodia. Where is (AAP's) Satyendra Jain. Where is (SP leader) Azam Khan...Rahul is on bail, Sonia is on bail, (B S) Hooda is on bail. Lalu is on bail. So, either these leaders are on jail or out on bail," the BJP leader said. Accusing the opposition parties of promoting dynastic politics, he claimed they have no concern for the people. "Farooq Abdullah wants his

son Omar to become chief minister. When (former Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh) Badal sahab was there (alive) he was busy making efforts for his son Sukhbir (Badal). Chautala family also tried the same. "Everywhere you see the same thing. After Mulayam (Singh Yadav), Akhilesh has come... (in Bihar) it is Tejashwi now, Mamata (Banerjee) sees (her nephew) Abhishek, KCR sees Kavitha, Sharad Pawar sees Supriya Sule, Uddhav sees Aaditya Thackeray... They are all dynastic parties," he said. He said India has to be made a developed nation and for this we have to strengthen the hands of the prime minister. Nadda also spoke at length about the various development programmes and schemes of the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre. Polling for all the 10 seats in Haryana will be held in the sixth phase of elections on May 25.

Congress seeks Pakistan support to get votes, says Anurag

PTI ■ SHIMLA
 Congress leaders live in India but speak the language of Pakistan, Union Minister Anurag Thakur said on Friday and alleged that the grand old party seeks Pakistan's support to get votes. "Leaders of opposition parties, especially the Congress, repeatedly make statements supporting Pakistan, crushing Sanatam Dharma and insulting the Hindu community, besides pleading for more resources for people with more wives and children," Thakur told reporters in Sujanpur.



The Congress indulges in politics of appeasement and seeks Pakistan's support to get votes, he alleged.

Sometimes, Congress leaders speak the language of China and vice-versa and it shows that the "hand of foreign powers" is with the Congress, Thakur claimed. "These people want to weaken the Army and destroy nuclear weapons," he said. Thakur questioned the Congress on "reducing" the quota for Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and "giving" it to Muslims and asked if it was a prelude to more such actions. He also asked why the Congress talks about "destroying" India's nuclear

weapons and why its language is in favour of Pakistan and vice-versa. Without naming National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah and Congress veteran Mani Shankar Aiyar for their comments on Pakistan "not wearing bangles" and having atom bombs, Thakur said, "I want to tell them that we are a nuclear power and our Army has the potential to conduct surgical strikes and kill enemies in their homes." "Our sisters who wear bangles and carry AK-47 rifles have the guts to kill infiltrators," he said. Thakur was in Sujanpur to

campaign for Rajinder Rana, the BJP candidate in the Assembly bypoll. Rana had defeated Thakur's father and former Himachal Pradesh chief minister PK Dhumal in the 2017 assembly elections from Sujanpur. He was among the six Congress MLAs who voted for the BJP in the Rajya Sabha elections and later joined the saffron party. Rana, who is contesting the assembly bypoll from Sujanpur on a BJP ticket, filed his nomination on Friday. "I have appealed to he people to vote for the BJP and a make double-engine Government," Thakur said.

Paras blames nephew Chirag for his non participation in poll campaign in Hajipur



PTI ■ PATNA
 Former Union Minister Pashupati Kumar Paras on Friday squarely blamed nephew Chirag Paswan for his non-participation in the poll campaign in Hajipur, the seat he currently represents but is now being contested by the latter. Paras also said Chirag, the son of late Ram Vilas Paswan, has "never bothered to come and seek blessings" from his uncle. "I have never been invited", was the curt reply of Paras, when he was asked about his absence in Hajipur from where Chirag has filed his nomination. The seat had earlier been represented by late Paswan nine times. Chirag's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) has got five seats in Bihar as per the seat-sharing formula decided by the BJP-led coalition. The formula has left Paras high and dry and he has reacted by resigning from the Union cabinet but chosen to remain with the BJP-led NDA. "I stay just a few hundred metres away from the Patna airport where Chirag goes almost every day to catch his helicopter. He has never bothered to come and seek my blessings even though I am older than him. My party leaders have been campaigning for NDA candidates in Bihar", said Paras who leads the Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party (RLJP). Chirag was the national president of Lok Janshakti Party, founded by late Paswan, until it was split in 2021. Paras had claimed that the split was a consequence of the "Chirag model", which had caused the NDA partner JD(U)'s tally to crash in the assembly polls held the year before. Chirag had earlier told PTI that he was "not sure whether even time will be able to heal the wounds" inflicted upon him by his uncle, while profusely thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "always standing" by him to the extent it was possible. Commenting on PM Modi's roadshow in Patna on May 12, Paras said, "It will be a grand roadshow by the PM in Patna. The NDA will win 400 plus seats in the country and all 40 seats in Bihar".

Visakhapatnam as capital: Will YSRCP proposal cut ice with voters?

PTI ■ VISAKHAPATNAM
 Known as the city of destiny, Visakhapatnam holds significant importance as a Lok Sabha constituency, especially with the incumbent YSR Congress Government proposing to designate it as the state's "executive capital" in the context of the "three capitals" concept. Presently, Amaravati is the capital of Andhra Pradesh. The ruling YSRCP wants to make Visakhapatnam as "executive capital", Amaravati the "legislative capital" and Kurnool as "judicial capital." The upcoming Parliament elections will see the YSRCP striving to retain the seat, while the opposition TDP, narrowly missing victory in 2019, is set to challenge its rival. MVV Satyanarayana of YSR Congress defeated his nearest TDP rival M Sribharat by a margin of over 4000 votes in the Parliament Elections in 2019. This time, Sribharat has been fielded again while the YSRCP chose to pit Botcha Jhansi Lakshmi, wife of minister Satyanarayana to take on the TDP pick. As the lone cosmopolitan city in the state, Vizag boasts of major infra and industries like a sea port, the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited and the HPCL refinery, contributing to its multicultural character. With nearly 20 lakh voters, the port city has seven assembly segments with TDP winning four in the 2019 assembly polls. However, one of them defected to the ruling party which also holds the mayoral position of the city. KSRRK Raju, president of the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) Visakhapatnam says, though the proposal to make the city as the executive capital is welcome, the government should have begun rolling out necessary infrastructure to sustain the growth. "We welcome the decision to make Visakhapatnam as capital. But before that, the government needs to study what kind of population growth is expected in the coming ten years and the kind of vehicular movement that will be witnessed in future and accordingly improve

infrastructure," Raju told PTI. According to him, in the absence of proper infra facilities, Vizag will also suffer like any other cities with drinking water problems and clogged roads. He further said there is still no major road connectivity to the upcoming international airport at Bhogapuram, about 40 KM from here. Welcoming the state government's proposal, AP Mechanised Fishing Boat Operators Association president Vasupalli Janakiram said once the city becomes capital, job opportunities will grow. He also said there are about three lakh voters belonging to the fishermen community in Vizag Lok Sabha constituency and that they may rally behind the ruling party. "The state government is constructing fishing harbours at various locations along the coast. The infrastructure would certainly help our community," he added. Retired IAS officer EAS Sharma, a prominent citizen of Visakhapatnam said decentralisation of buildings is not equal to decentralisation of government. He opined that once a city is declared capital, the land value goes up and accordingly taxes will also shoot up. "I agree that the whole thing is on paper. It does not help the common man...for a common man property taxes will go up. There will be water shortage, congestion and pollution. I don't see much of an advantage (if Vizag is made capital)," Sharma said. Sohan Hatangadi, Vice President, Greater Visakhapatnam Citizens Forum the move, is not good for Vizag citizens except some sections. "But largely, it will be distressing for most people, because of crowds and increased traffic things like that. Too many street corner protests, sirens. So on and so forth. We don't like it," Hattangadi said. According to Lakshmi Muvkavalli, president of Information Technology Association of Andhra Pradesh (ITAAP) there are about 25,000 employees dependent on the IT sector in the state, with majority of them in Visakhapatnam.

Man booked for beating Congress agent

PTI ■ DAHOD
 The man arrested for live-streaming his bogus voting from a polling station in Dahod Lok Sabha constituency of Gujarat, has been booked in separate case of allegedly thrashing and intimidating a Congress party agent during the third phase of parliamentary elections on May 7, police said on Friday. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has declared null and void the voting that took place at Parthampur polling station at Santrampur taluka in Mahisagar district, taking into account the report from the returning officer and observer regarding the irregularities, after the man's live streaming video went viral. As per the FIR lodged at Santrampur police station in the state's Mahisagar district that falls under the Dahod parliamentary constituency, accused Vijay Bhabhor, son of a local Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, and three others allegedly confronted a Congress polling agent, Shana Taviad, at a polling station at Gothib village and threatened him. While leaving the polling station after the voting process, the accused confronted Taviad again and allegedly beat him up for not allowing him to cast his bogus vote, the FIR said. Bhabhor was arrested under sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 504 (insulting to threaten peace), 506 (2) (criminal intimidation) and 114 (present when offence is committed) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The complainant stated in his petition that when he was present at booth number 1 at Gothib village as a Congress agent, Bhabhor approached him along with three other persons identified as Prakash Katara, Pavan Agrawal, Piyush Bhavsar and asked to allow him to cast his bogus vote. When the complainant refused to do so, the accused persons abused him and threatened him with consequences.

JMM led alliance is in neck deep corruption, exploiting people: Rajnath

PTI ■ DUMKA (JHARKHAND)
 Alleging that the JMM-led Alliance in Jharkhand is "involved in neck-deep corruption" and exploiting people, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said the ruling coalition will be punished for atrocities on residents of the State. He also claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has worked tirelessly to make India a prosperous country and done "miraculous work to bring 25 crore people out of poverty", while "earlier PMs like Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi made hollow promises to alleviate poverty". "Corrupt JMM-led alliance is sucking the blood of innocent people. It is betraying them. The BJP believes in the politics of 'Insaaf and Insanaiyat (justice and humanity). The JMM-led coalition will be punished for atrocities on people," Singh said addressing a rally in Jharkhand's Dumka. "During the Manmohan



Singh regime at the Centre, India remained at the 11th position globally in economic prosperity, while the country secured the fifth place under the BJP-led rule, Singh said. "After the US and China, India would be the third prosperous country in times to come," the union minister said. Urging people to vote in favour of BJP candidate Sita Soren, Singh said that no one would be allowed to snatch reservations from people. Former Chief Minister Hemant Soren has put "Jharkhand's esteem at stake", he said, while appealing to

Kannauj famous attar manufacturers, potato growers hope their concerns will not go unheard

PTI ■ KANNAUJ (UP)
 As Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and BJP's Subrat Pathak lock horns in this high-profile seat, Kannauj's famous 'attar' manufacturers and potato growers hope their concerns will not go unheard in the political battle. After filing his nomination for the May 13 polls, Yadav promised to spread Kannauj's fragrance. During their rallies, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah mentioned the importance given by the BJP to 'attar' by gifting it to G20 guests last year. With campaigning at its peak and allegations and counter-allegations flying thick and fast, attar manufacturers of Bada Bazar want them to be heard. Perfume trader Sushil Kumar Jain said that during the SP's rule, ingredients gulkand and gulab jal were made tax free. "This provided a lot of relief to the traders. The BJP government has imposed tax on it. The government should give relief in GST, which is 18 per cent on essential oils so that small traders can move ahead. The government should also give subsidy for setting up perfume units so that small traders get benefit. Shops should be allotted to small traders in the perfume park," he said. The issue of delay in the perfume park taking shape is being raised by Akhilesh himself. The park was proposed during the SP regime here in 2015. Perfumers Association president Pawan Trivedi said the first phase of the park is ready and 15 shops have been allotted. "The Rs 40-crore Fragrance and Flavour Development Centre (FFDC) laboratory is also ready and packaging institute work is on," he said, adding gas pipeline work has been started to end use of hydro-distillation to extract scent from flowers using wood and cow dung cakes. set up here, farmers would benefit. Besides, Yadav and Pathak, BSP's Imran Bin Jafar is also in the fray in the polls. Kannauj has five assembly segments — Chhibramau, Tirwa and Kannauj are in Kannauj while Bidhuna and Rasoolabad are in Auraya and Kanpur dehat districts respectively. Except for Bidhuna, where the SP emerged victorious, the BJP won four seats from here. Akhilesh made his political debut from the seat in 2000 byelection after which he held the seat in 2004, 2009. His wife Dimple won the seat in 2012 byelection unopposed after Akhilesh left the seat after becoming the chief minister. She retained the seat in 2014, but lot to Pathak in 2019. Socialist Ram Manohar Lohia won the seat for the first time in 1967. The constituency has about 19 lakh voters including about 3 lakh Muslims, 2.5 lakh Brahmins and Yadavs, and over 4 lakh Dalits.



Lalit Maurya, another attar manufacturer, said the constituency has not witnessed any development in the past five years due to which people are angry. Potato growers of the city want a potato-based industry, which was promised by political parties earlier but did not see light of the day, so that their crops do not go waste. Vinay Dubey of Udaitapur village said Kannauj produces maximum potatoes in the state. "In 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised a potato-based industry here but even after five years nothing has happened. We are disappointed," he said. Ahmad Ali, a farmer from Saiyadpur village, said there are 200 cold storages in the city but there were times when they had to throw potatoes with bumper crop. Aditya Katiyar of Gukhru said the government should do something to ensure that they get due rates of their produce. Radhey Shyam Dohre of Narainpurwa says if potato chips or starch factories are



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Testing times

Stakes could not be higher in Haryana's political chess, with the outcome remaining anybody's guess

The recent developments in Haryana's political circles have again brought to the fore the intricacies of coalition dynamics. The Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), a key player in the State's politics, has decided to align with the Congress in demanding a floor test for the BJP-led Government in the Haryana Assembly. This comes on the heels of the withdrawal of support by three Independent MLAs to the ruling coalition, turning it into minority with 44 legislators in the House of 90. The Congress, buoyed by the latest developments and perhaps sensing an opportunity to tip the scales in its favour, has seized upon this moment to mount pressure on the BJP Government. However, in the backdrop of this high-stakes political manoeuvring, the JJP finds itself grappling with internal discord. Reports have emerged suggesting that three of its MLAs held clandestine meetings with former Chief Minister ML Khattar, raising eyebrows and fuelling speculation about potential defections. The apparent



dissonance within the JJP underscores the complex interplay of interests and ambitions that often characterises coalition politics. For a party like the JJP, which emerged as a key player following the fractured mandate in the last State elections, maintaining cohesion within its ranks while balancing competing demands from its coalition partners is no easy feat. To jog the memory, it was in Haryana that 'Aaya Ram Gaya Ram' culture started, which continues unabated. The outcome of this internal tug-of-war will not only shape the immediate political landscape in Haryana but also have far-reaching implications for the State's future.

As alliances shift and allegiances waver, the only constant is the relentless pursuit of power and the drive to stay one step ahead of the competition. With the House strength being 90 members, a political party needs the support of 46 MLAs to cross the halfway mark and form a Government. After the withdrawal of support by three Independents, the BJP is short of two MLAs to continue in the Government. The BJP now has 40 MLAs, besides the support of a lone Haryana Lokhit Party legislator and at least three Independents (earlier, it had six Independents in support), which brings to a total of 44 in the House. For the BJP, it is a double whammy, all this is happening days ahead of the Lok Sabha polls to the 10 Haryana seats on May 25. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP won seven of these seats in Haryana with a 35 per cent vote share. In 2019, the BJP won all 10 seats with a 58 per cent vote share. In the current situation, however, it might be a Herculean task. JJP's Dushyant Chautala has mounted pressure on the Nayab Singh Saini Government for a floor test, which he is likely to get the Chair's nod for. If the JJP breaks, it would give the BJP the much-needed elbow room but what is certain for now is that it is time for horse trading in Haryana.

PICTALK



A herd of elephants grazes near a village at Boko, in Kamrup district of Assam

PTI

Use of lighting in Indian architecture

Lighting greatly enhances India's architectural heritage, turning historic landmarks into captivating spectacles

India's architectural heritage reflects a blend of history, culture and tradition. In bustling urban environments, our heritage monuments stand as timeless witnesses to our rich past. However, these architectural marvels often fade into the background amidst the vibrant city scenes. Yet, through the strategic application of lighting, these structures are brought to life, captivating the imagination and enhancing their charm after dusk.

Enhancing Historical Significance Through Lighting

Carefully designed external lighting has the power to breathe new life into heritage landmarks, illuminating their intricate details and historical significance. technology, renowned for its energy efficiency and controllability, offers a unique opportunity to showcase these monuments in a manner that respects their heritage while captivating modern audiences. By leveraging lighting solutions, cities across India are revitalizing their architectural treasures, ensuring they remain bea-



cons of cultural heritage for generations to come.

Transforming Indian Architectural Landscape with Lighting

From the majestic Sun Temple in Konark to the iconic Roomi Gate in Lucknow, lighting has transformed India's architectural scene, infusing these structures with renewed splendour and magnificence.

Sun Temple, Modhera: Nestled in the heart of Gujarat, the Sun Temple stands as a testament to ancient craftsmanship and architectural ingenuity. Through the application of dynamic lighting, the temple's intricate carvings and majestic outlines are brought to life after sunset. Visitors are mesmerized as the tem-

ple emerges as a radiant spectacle, inviting them to embark on a journey through time and history.

Roomi Gate, Lucknow: As a symbol of Lucknow's rich Mughal heritage, Roomi Gate exudes grandeur and historical significance. Dynamic lighting accentuates the gate's intricate motifs and architectural features, casting a mesmerizing glow that captivates spectators. Illuminated against the night sky, Roomi Gate symbolizes the city's cultural legacy, inviting locals and tourists alike to marvel at its beauty.

Gujarat Bhawan: Nestled in the heart of New Delhi, Gujarat Bhawan serves as a cultural hub representing the vibrant heritage of Gujarat. Through the integration of dynamic lighting, the Bhawan transforms, becoming a luminous tribute that honours the State's rich traditions. The interplay of light accentuates its distinctive features, creating a captivating visual narrative for visitors and passersby.

Signature Bridge: The Delhi Government's decision to illuminate the entire structure of the Signature Bridge

underscores the city's commitment to enhancing its architectural landmarks. Towering above the city's skyline, the bridge now glows at night, offering a spectacular view to visitors and residents alike.

Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram International Airport, Ayodhya: This architectural marvel, features dynamic lighting that complements its unique design inspired by the Nagara style of temple architecture. Blending modern facilities with rich cultural heritage, the airport offers a captivating experience for travellers and visitors.

Lighting greatly enhances India's architectural heritage, turning historic landmarks into captivating spectacles. Embracing this technology allows cities to showcase their cultural legacy and create vibrant public spaces, enriching the lives of residents and visitors. As India progresses, lighting signifies innovation, guiding towards a brighter future for its architectural landscape.

(The author is the executive director at Instapower Ltd, views are personal)



ABHIJIT VAISH

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Battle to save India's biodiversity

India's rich biodiversity is under severe threat due to climate change, as recent studies warn of potential economic losses and irreversible ecological damage



KAVIN KUMAR KANDASAMY

India, a land of diverse climates and rich ecosystems, is a global treasure trove of biodiversity. From the majestic Himalayan ranges to the vibrant coastal reefs, our country's biodiversity sustains countless life forms and plays a crucial role in regulating ecosystems. It's not just a vital resource for human sustenance, providing food, water, shelter and medicine, but also a critical indicator of our planet's health, a testament to our rich heritage and a responsibility we all share.

However, the delicate balance of India's biodiversity is now facing unprecedented threats from climate change. Recent studies warn that India may lose a staggering 35 per cent of its GDP by the year 2100 due to climate change, highlighting the deep interconnection between the nation's prosperity and its natural heritage. Rampant deforestation and habitat degradation, particularly in regions like the Western Ghats, are pushing carbon sinks towards becoming sources, exacerbating the climate crisis. The time for action is now.

Impact of Climate Change: A Looming Crisis

The repercussions of climate change are becoming quite evident in altering ecological balance, extreme weather events and increasing health risks. In an era marked by escalating environmental challenges, the climate crisis demands urgent and concerted action. According to a [i]United Nations' InterGovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, climate change is imperilling human well-being and planetary health, focusing strongly on interactions between climate, biodiversity and human society. The report suggests that the rise in extreme weather conditions has led to some irreversible impacts as natural and human systems are pushed beyond their ability to adapt.

Not only this, a report by the Reserve Bank of India highlights how climate change poses challenges for monetary policy, with frequent weather shocks threatening economic growth and stability. Moreover, a recent



study predicts that climate change could cut global income by up to 19 per cent in the next 25 years, with the most vulnerable countries suffering the most severe impacts.

To overcome these challenges, India has embarked on a journey to mitigate climate change and safeguard its biodiversity. With the G20 presidency last year, India has positioned itself as the voice of the Global South to lead the way in climate action and leveraged this positioning to drive impactful outcomes in various realms related to climate action. Tackling deforestation, reducing emissions and restoring ecosystems are key strategies. With over 26 per cent of the country grappling with expanding drought conditions, urgent measures are being taken to build resilience against environmental degradation.

Pioneering Climate Action Tamil Nadu, a coastal State in the heart of southern India, is emerging as a beacon of hope and leading the charge in climate change efforts. The State has become a forerunner in climate action by announcing three major missions, name-



INDIA'S BIODIVERSITY, A VITAL RESOURCE AND INDICATOR OF PLANETARY HEALTH, FACES UNPRECEDENTED THREATS FROM CLIMATE CHANGE, NECESSITATING URGENT ACTION TO MITIGATE IMPACTS AND SAFEGUARD ITS RICH NATURAL HERITAGE

ly Climate Change; Biodiversity Conservation and Greening; and Wetlands. Through initiatives like the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity and Greening Project (TBGP), the State aims to achieve a 33 per cent forest and tree cover by 2031. With approximately \$90 million in investments, Tamil Nadu's Climate Change Mission, Green Tamil Nadu Mission and Tamil Nadu Wetlands Mission demonstrate a commitment to sustainable development and ecosystem restoration.

Driving Solutions: Addressing the climate crisis necessitates collaborative efforts from all stakeholders. Supported by startups and Government interventions, public-private partnerships are essential to drive innovation and scale climate solutions. Startups are pivotal in developing innovative technologies that reduce carbon footprints while contributing to economic growth. International collaboration, exemplified by agreements like the Paris Agreement, provides a framework for collective action on a global scale. India's leadership in renewable energy, particularly through

initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA), underscores its commitment to driving sustainable development and fostering a harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. As India addresses the intertwined challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, the steps taken today will shape the legacy for future generations.

This demands reflection, unity and action to come up with sustainable solutions. In this crucial sustainability battle, India's role extends beyond its borders, contributing significantly to global biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation efforts. The recent Supreme Court ruling recognising the right against climate change as a fundamental right under Article 14 and Article 21 underscores India's steadfast commitment to climate action and environmental protection. This offers prospects for the Government, corporations and climate action companies to come together and work towards a sustainable future.

(The writer is the CEO of ProClima; their views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EVOLUTION OF MONETARY POLICY

Madam — This refers to the article, 'Evolution of monetary policy,' which was published on 8 May 2024. Even before India got freedom the Congress formed a committee to suggest the type of economic policy free India should adopt. The committee analysed and said the key infrastructure sector should be under the Public sector to help the investors with raw materials, power, transport and communication at a very economical cost.

This helps domestic ventures to produce more. None of the rich in India had so much reserve to invest in big projects and returns from such projects take some years. When Rajiv came to power he availed a small loan from the World Bank to develop mainly the telecom sector accepting the condition to open our door slightly for foreign goods to be marketed here. Though the country went bankrupt between 1980-1990, it is to be noted that the assets of the top richest families swelled from Rs 8000 CR to Rs 40,000 Cr during the same period. So irrespective of parties the interests of the rich are well cared for and produced more than 200 billionaires in a short span under the present regime. This course continues and will go on to enrich the rich, the cost of the due share of the unprivileged section.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

MISLEADING ADVERTISEMENTS

Madam — Apropos the editorial "The Name Game" published on 9th May, this is my response. There are guidelines issued by the Department of Consumer Affairs called "Endorsements know-hows" for celebrities, influencers and virtual influencers on social media platforms. The guidelines specify that celebrities must not endorse any product or service they have not personally used or experienced. Further, they are advised to be 'diligent' before endorsing any product or service i.e. extremely careful by analysing the pros and cons of it to save the health and money of lakhs of their followers. some of them blindly accept and adopt what they say. An

War of words over industrialists



Apropos, "Modi questions Rahul's silence on Ambani, Adani," The Pioneer, May 9, this is my response. The phenomenal industrialists Ambani and Adani have become fodder for the political parties in our country. They have been pilloried by Rahul Gandhi, alleging Modi helped them grow. In contrast, this time Modi turned the tables

example of carelessly endorsing a harmful product is 'pan masala' that too on a sports channel during the live telecast of a cricket match watched by millions of youngsters, highly prone to its habit-forming usage. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has reiterated the above guidelines. The Government needs to punish the celebrities indulging in misleading promotions under the Consumer Protection Act by a jail term, not mere fines to instil responsibility in them as advocated by the Court.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

FOOTBALL IS NUMBER ONE

Madam — Though top football-playing nations are restricted to Europe, Latin America and African countries, the beautiful game's popularity is unmatched in non-football-playing nations as well. The game is a universal language, to say so and has nicely flowered over the decades through champion players of diverse socio-economic milieus gathering together for a common cause: regale the fans with skill and perseverance. No surprise, the lovely game is viewed as a promoter of uni-

versal peace despite the onfield acrimony. The exhilaration of great players will captivate fans forever.

No game evokes such intense emotions that emanate after every goal is scored. Parallely, administrators and countries worldwide have displayed mostly unambiguous references towards the game. Now, in a huge honour to football, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has adopted a resolution proclaiming May 25 as "World Football Day". May 25 marks the 100th anniversary of the first ever Football tournament. As aptly described by a diplomat at the UNGA, football is the "number one game played and followed across the globe". Additionally, as the resolution Stated, football creates a space for international cooperation. World Football Day is intended to encourage global peace, overall development and women and empowerment of women and girls.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

Madam — Though top football-playing nations are restricted to Europe, Latin America and African countries, the beautiful game's popularity is unmatched in non-football-playing nations as well. The game is a universal language, to say so and has nicely flowered over the decades through champion players of diverse socio-economic milieus gathering together for a common cause: regale the fans with skill and perseverance. No surprise, the lovely game is viewed as a promoter of uni-

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

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FIRST COLUMN

TRAITS OF A SUCCESSFUL PERSON

He dares to defy convention and breathe life into audacious ideas



RAVI VALLURI

There is a part of us that will not let us be content until we become all that we are capable of being. Life is not about resting on our past achievements and laurels and residing in our comfort zone. It is an adventure from being ordinary to extraordinary. One's current situation may be good, but if a greater opportunity presents itself, one must be open to expanding. This does not mean you are to run away or violate your integrity.

Muscles stay strong and flexible only by use and stretching and so does our mind. The challenge is the way of the universe and showing us the path that the bigger we assume that form and shape. We should bless our dreams and our desires to identify the opportunity that is lurking as there would be several chances arising around the corner. We need the courage and humility to ask the Universe to provide such opportunities, leave behind all our limitations and step forward to live life as magnificent and gigantic as ordained by the Universe. Successful people stretch their hands and take up responsibility which empowers them to enter uncharted territories. This increases the level of their prana/chi, attention span and nature of work, adding a new dimension to the personality. Successful people are never straight-jacketed in their approach and revel in taking risks. Only risk-takers become game-changers.

Rahul Bajaj's sons Rajiv and Sanjiv embarked upon a fascinating idea to salvage the scrap of the decommissioned INS Vikrant to manufacture scooters. It was an innovative idea, utilizing scrap in a novel manner. While the bottom line of the exercise may be to generate profit, the unattainable thought is audacious. Therefore, successful entrepreneurs never kill an idea. An ingenious idea can be a platform for a radical discovery.



An awesome idea is breathtaking and amazing, stunning and awe-inspiring. When the idea germinates, something stupendous takes place. Think big and do not listen to people who tell you it can't be done. "Life is too short to think small", writes Tim Ferriss. The Universe listens to our deepest thoughts. If the thought is positive, we are blessed with positive results.

The cardinal principle in life is to ensure that we receive and circulate only positive thoughts. We should ensure that we are surrounded by efficacious people. Keep shouldering responsibility and ensure that we possess a YES MIND. Successful enterprises ensure that their workforce performs in harmony and synergy while working in teams. The Universe believes in the Laws of Attraction, the Laws of Abundance, the Laws of Gratefulness and the Laws of Spiralling Effect. All this gets transformed into what Darren Hardy calls the Compound Effect. Next, we ought to always feel blessed and have faith that a superior power is guiding us in our endeavours. There is a superior intelligence that is always creating wonderful opportunities for us and these should be grabbed and seized with humility.

A triumphant individual hinges his belief on the thought that the Divine will take care of everything and by simply reposing faith in that Superior Power. Successful People work on these principles where the football swerves like a parabola and enters the net and we are numbed, giving a standing ovation. That is the miracle performed. Choose to call it the power of the Almighty or the architecture of the Universe. But this works on the premise of the power of positive thinking and becoming successful.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Precision agriculture: Key to food security



PARAG ACHARYA

The future of Indian agriculture hinges on a blend of tradition and innovation. Precision agriculture offers a crucial pathway to sustainably feed 1.7 billion people

India's population is projected to reach approximately 1.7 billion by 2050. It would be a significant challenge for Indian agriculture to meet the food demands of such a vast population amidst the emerging challenges of climate change. Additionally, the sector faces issues such as an ageing farmer population. Younger generations are increasingly veering away from taking over the family agricultural farm, choosing other, more lucrative and less labour-intensive career paths over agriculture. To address these challenges, the adoption of modern farming techniques like precision farming and digital smart agriculture becomes imperative to ensure sustainable food production and the future prosperity of Indian agriculture.

A recent parliamentary panel has emphasized the importance of promoting agricultural mechanization, particularly for small and marginal farmers and has advocated for the integration of tiny robots and Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Indian farm operations to address the challenges posed by fragmented land holdings. Furthermore, the panel recommended the establishment of a 'National Institute of Agricultural Robotics and Artificial Intelligence' to ensure that India remains at the forefront of agricultural development both domestically and internationally. On August 23, 2022, regarding Farm Mechanization, the Secretary of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education revealed that India's mechanisation level stands at 47 per cent, trailing China (59.5 per cent), Brazil (75 per cent) and the US (95 per cent). The level of mechanisation varies greatly by region inside India too. Northern States boast higher rates (70-80 per cent), driven by fertile land, labour decline and State backing. Southern and eastern States lag (35-45 per cent) due to fragmented land holdings. North-eastern States struggle due to terrain, equipment costs and socio-economic factors.

Certainly, agriculture has evolved steadily from a traditional, labour-intensive model to a sophisticated, technology-driven system. Key milestones include the establishment of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK). The development of high-yielding, cost-effective, disease/pest-resistant and climate-resilient varieties and technologies across crops, horticulture, animal husbandry and fisheries sciences by ICAR has significantly bolstered production and productivity. However, while acknowledging these strides, it's imperative to recognize that the pace of progress must match the urgency of our times.

Throughout history, people have always sought easier, faster and more efficient ways to get things done. This pursuit has sparked a technological revolution that merges age-old farming practices with cutting-edge innovations like the Internet of Things (IoT) known as Ag-IoT. It is a huge change in farming that could shake up how we grow, manage and protect our food. Its solutions are not merely about efficiency; they are about empowering farmers to achieve greater time efficiency, productivity and precision in their daily tasks. It's like having a super smart assistant that can take care of land, animals, crops and farms without needing humans to do everything. People also call it precision agriculture, smart agriculture, or digital agriculture.



THE INTERNET OF THINGS IS A HUGE CHANGE IN FARMING THAT COULD SHAKE UP HOW WE GROW, MANAGE AND PROTECT OUR FOOD. ITS SOLUTIONS ARE NOT MERELY ABOUT EFFICIENCY; THEY ARE ABOUT EMPOWERING FARMERS TO ACHIEVE GREATER TIME EFFICIENCY, PRODUCTIVITY AND PRECISION IN THEIR DAILY TASKS

It is like a big step forward in farming because it uses data to make decisions, making everything more efficient and productive. Through Ag-IoT, the very pulse of plant and animal needs can be sensed. The farmers can keep an eye on the soil all the time, control watering systems from afar and even check on the health of their animals without being right there. It's super handy because it can predict how much crops will grow accurately. In every aspect, Ag-IoT stands poised to revolutionize the landscape of crop management, insect and pest surveillance, food warehousing, livestock care, disease monitoring, dairy operations, supply chain logistics and beyond.

The evolution of drone technology has opened up boundless possibilities in the realm of crop assessment and monitoring. One such pioneering initiative, the NaMo Drone Didi Initiative, stands as a beacon of empowerment for rural women. In a momentous gesture, Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally handed over 1000 drones to 1000 Nammo Drone Didis across 10 locations nationwide at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in Pusa, New Delhi. These drones will help them do things like check on crops, spray fertilizers and plant seeds. Prime Minister Modi's announcement of the 'Drone Didi' yojana 2023-24 further underscores the Government's dedication to leveraging technology for the betterment of society. Significant financial allocations during 2020-21 and 2021-22, by the Indian Government including INR 1756.3 crores and INR 2422.7 crores respectively to States for the integration of cutting-edge technologies

like drones, artificial intelligence, blockchain, remote sensing and GIS into agriculture and INR 7302.50 crores and INR 7908.18 crores were made in the same periods to ICAR for R&D, further demonstrate the Government's dedication to modernizing agriculture.

Technological strides like RFID tags (radio frequency identification) and systems like NLIS (National Livestock Identification Scheme) and INAPH (Information Network for Animal Productivity & Health) have propelled Precision Dairy Farming.

With swift electronic scanning and data integration, farmers can efficiently manage cow health, productivity and records, marking a significant shift in the dairy industry towards precision and efficiency. Meanwhile, in the aquaculture industry, companies like Aquaconnect and Shrimpbbox are leveraging technology to revolutionise shrimp farming. Aquaconnect employs artificial intelligence and satellite sensing technologies to monitor farm performance and provide advice to shrimp and fish farmers, predominantly small to medium-scale operations. Shrimpbbox, on the other hand, specializes in shrimp farming in colder climates and landlocked areas, boasting impressive productivity with minimal water usage and without antibiotics. Cropin Technology, based in Bengaluru, has developed Aksara, an open-source microlanguage model tailored for climate-smart farming.

In India, the World Economic Forum's AI for Agriculture Innovation (AI4AI) initiative, led by C4IR India, is revolutionizing farm-

ing through AI. The 'Saagu Baagu' pilot in Telangana's Khammam district, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Digital Green, exemplifies this success. With over 7,000 farmers benefiting, chilli yields surged by 21 per cent, pesticide use decreased by 9 per cent, fertilizer usage dropped by 5 per cent and unit prices improved by 8 per cent. Consequently, farmers doubled their earnings, with incomes rising by over INR 66,000 per acre per crop cycle. Overall, AI interventions at 175 farms in India have boosted crop yields by 30 per cent, as per the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

In conclusion, the future of Indian agriculture hinges on a blend of tradition and innovation. With a burgeoning population and dwindling resources, precision agriculture offers a crucial pathway to sustainably feed 1.7 billion people. If established, the 'National Institute of Agricultural Robotics and Artificial Intelligence' would catapult Indian agriculture into unprecedented realms of excellence. The benefits of farm mechanization must permeate every corner of our nation, bridging divides and fostering inclusivity. We cannot afford to overlook those who are marginalized by the digital divide, particularly our small-scale farmers. As we look towards the future, let us remain committed to nurturing a vibrant, tech-enabled agrarian ecosystem that empowers farmers, preserves natural resources and ensures food security for generations to come.

(The writer is a scientist, at Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology, Bhubaneswar; their views are personal)

Revisiting Rohith Vemula's death after eight years

As the dust settles, revelations by the Telangana Police shed new light on Vemula's untimely death

Rohith Vemula (26), a PhD scholar at the University of Hyderabad was found dead in his hostel room on 17 January 2016. Had he lived for another fortnight, he would have celebrated his 27th birthday on January 30. But he was called back by the Maker as it is said that He prefers the favourite ones to join Him ahead of others.

The untimely demise of Vemula opened a Pandora's Box all over India. Opposition parties led by the Congress staged a nationwide protest and agitation blaming the Narendra Modi Government at the Centre for the death of this young man. The CPI(M)'s frontal organization SFI called for education bundh the next day and



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

demanding the resignation of Smriti Irani, the then union minister for human resources development and Bandaru Dattatreya, a minister of State from the council of ministers blaming the duo for the death of Rohith Vemula. Poets affiliated with the CPI(M) and other Left organizations wrote poems and short stories based on the life and times of Vemula. The fact that Vemula belonged to the Harijan com-

munity added to their ire and this was discernible from the power of the words with which they blamed the "communal and fascist" Government at the Centre. Many articles and features that appeared in regional newspapers and satellite TV channels blamed the doorstep of Smriti Irani for Rohith Vemula's suicide. A major political outfit promoted by the all-powerful minority community had declared a solatium of Rs 25 lakh to the family of Vemula within days of his unfortunate death. Though it is more than eight years since he bade farewell to this world, his mother or brother has not been given the promised amount. When Radhika, the mother of Rohith

Vemula contacted the leadership of the said party, they feigned ignorance about the amount and the matter was given a silent burial. More than eight years after the suicide of Vemula, the Telangana Police which was entrusted with the probe of finding out matters that led Vemula to resort to the extreme measure concluded that Rohith Vemula was neither a member of the Harijan community nor any Other Backward Community (OBC) student as he had claimed. The fear that the university was likely to detect the truth behind his caste status which would put an end to his political aspirations had made him take the drastic step, said the police report. The unanswered question in



the whole episode is why the investigating officers failed to track the phone calls made by Vemula during the last few days of his life. This would have thrown more light on the reasons behind the suicide of the research scholar. Many of his colleagues attribute a failed love affair as the cause behind his suicide.

Months before he committed suicide, Vemula had led a demonstration under the auspices of the Ambedkar Students Association on the University Campus to protest the death penalty awarded to Yakub Memon, one of the prime accused in the Mumbai serial blasts of 1993 which claimed 260 lives. There were reports that the soft-spoken Vemula and his friends had bashed up a member of the rival union and the victim needed hospitalisation. Moreover, there were charges against the University of Hyderabad for non-payment of a monthly scholarship of Rs 25,000 to Vemula though the university authorities denied the allegation. Rohith Vemula was neither the first Harijan student in the

University of Hyderabad or any other universities in India who have committed suicide. Rajini Anand, an engineering college student in Kerala had jumped to death in 2004 following the callous approach of the ruling Congress-led Government in the State towards her plea for financial assistance to pay college fees. Sometime last year, a CPI(M) member of Rajya Sabha asked the Government of India to furnish the number of Harijan students who had committed suicide in the country since 2014. The MP's innuendo was that no Harijan students had committed suicide in the country before the swearing-in of Modi as Prime Minister. The kind of fire from the

opposition faced by Smriti Irani was unprecedented and strange. The Rohith Vemula affair cost her the office of the HRD ministry and she was relegated to minister of textiles Opposition party leaders have all the right to criticize the Government and ministers for errors and omissions. But it should be restricted to the carelessness and irresponsibility of the concerned minister. For eight years, this young lady was crucified by her political rivals. Had they taken a little bit of time and gone through the releases issued by the Government of India, they would not have dared to throw mud at Smriti.

(The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

Heavy fighting in Rafah keeps aid crossings closed

Over one lakh civilians flee

AP ■ RAFAH

Heavy fighting between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants on the outskirts of the southern Gaza city of Rafah has left crucial nearby aid crossings inaccessible and caused over 100,000 people to flee north, a United Nations official said Friday. Israel's plans for a full-scale invasion of Rafah appear to be on hold for now, with the United States deeply opposed and stepping up pressure by threatening to withhold arms. But even the more limited incursion launched earlier this week threatens to worsen Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe. Heavy fighting was also underway in northern Gaza, where Hamas appeared to have once again regrouped in an area where Israel has already

launched punishing assaults. Over a million Palestinians have fled to Rafah to escape fighting elsewhere, with many packed into UN-run shelters or squalid tent camps. The city on the border with Egypt is also a crucial hub for bringing in food, medicine, fuel and other goods. The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, known as OCHA, says about 110,000 people have fled Rafah and that food and fuel supplies in the city are critically low. Georgios Petropoulos, an OCHA official working in Rafah, said the two main crossings near the city remain closed, cutting off supplies and preventing medical evacuations and the movement of humanitarian staff. "Even if there were assurances to us being able to pass through a corridor, the proximity so close to a military involved in fighting is just not acceptable for something that has to be a humanitarian zone," he said. The UN's World Food



University students supporting Palestinian people stage a rally to demand a stop to the crackdown on demonstrators at rallies for Palestinians on the campus of U.S. universities, near the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, South Korea, Friday. AP/PTI

Programme will run out of food for distribution in southern Gaza by Saturday unless more aid arrives, Petropoulos said. He said about 30,000 people were leaving Rafah daily in search of safety, but that humanitarian workers had no supplies to help them set up camp in a new location. "We simply have no tents, we have no blankets, no bedding, none of the items that you would expect a population on the move to be able to get from the humanitarian system," he said. Israeli troops captured the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing with Egypt on Tuesday, forcing it to shut down. Rafah was the

main point of entry for fuel needed to power vehicles, as well as the generators on which hospitals and water treatment plants rely. Israel says the nearby Kerem Shalom crossing — Gaza's main cargo terminal — is open on its side, but the UN says it remains inaccessible on the Gaza side because of ongoing fighting. Israeli troops are battling Palestinian militants in eastern Rafah, not far from the crossings. An Associated Press reporter in the city heard heavy artillery and gunfire throughout the night into Friday. The military said in a statement that it had located several tunnels and eliminated militants "during close-quarters combat and with an aerial strike." Hamas' military wing said it carried out a complex attack in which it struck a house where Israeli troops had taken up position, an armored personnel carrier and soldiers operating on foot. There was no comment from the Israeli military. It is not possible to indepen-

dently confirm battlefield accounts from either side. Hamas also said it launched a number of mortar rounds at the Kerem Shalom crossing, close to where Israeli troops are operating. The military said it intercepted two launches. The crossing was initially closed after a Hamas rocket attack last weekend that killed four Israeli soldiers. Israel says Rafah is the last Hamas stronghold in Gaza and key to its goal of dismantling the group's military and governing capabilities and returning scores of hostages captured in Hamas' October 7 attack that triggered the war. But Hamas has repeatedly regrouped, even in the hardest-hit parts of Gaza. Heavy battles erupted this week in the Zeitoun area on the outskirts of Gaza City in the northern part of the territory. Northern Gaza was the first target of the ground offensive, and Israel said late last year that it had mostly dismantled Hamas there. The north remains largely isolated by Israeli troops, and

the UN says the estimated 300,000 people there are experiencing "full-blown famine." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to proceed with the offensive with or without US arms, saying "we will fight with our fingernails" if needed in a defiant statement late Thursday. The Israeli military says it has what it needs for the missions it has planned, including in Rafah. The war began with Hamas' surprise attack into southern Israel last year, in which it killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took another 250 hostage. The militants are still holding some 100 captives and the remains of more than 30 after most of the rest were released during a cease-fire last year. The war has killed over 34,800 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures.

Police dismantle pro-Palestinian camp at MIT

Boston (AP): Police dismantled a pro-Palestinian tent encampment at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology early Friday and moved to clear protesters from University of Pennsylvania's campus in Philadelphia, hours after police tear-gassed protesters and took down an encampment at the University of Arizona. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, video showed police roaming through the MIT encampment. Police in riot gear arrived around 4 a.m., encircled the camp and gave protesters about 15 minutes to leave. Ten students who remained were arrested, the university's president said. A crowd outside the camp began gathering and chanting pro-Palestinian slogans but were dispersed by 6 a.m. At the University of Arizona in Tucson, campus police in riot gear fired tear gas late Thursday at protesters before tearing down an encampment that included wood and plastic barriers on campus. In a statement, the University of Arizona said it made the decision because the encampment violated school policy. "A structure made from wooden pallets and other debris was erected on campus property after 5 pm in violation of the policy," the school said in a statement. "University officials issued warnings to remove the encampment and disperse. The warnings were ignored." The school also said that police vehicles were spiked, and rocks and water bottles thrown at officers and university staff. In Philadelphia early Friday, police detained people who were at an encampment that has been in place at the University of Pennsylvania for more than two weeks. Officers moved in after giving protesters a warning to leave campus or face possible arrest. Tensions have ratcheted up in standoffs with protesters on campuses across the United States and in Europe. Some colleges cracked down immediately, while others have tolerated the demonstrations. Some have begun to lose patience and call in the police over concerns about disruptions to campus life and safety.

Suspected pirate attack in Gulf of Aden raises concerns

Jerusalem (AP): A European naval force detained six suspected pirates on Friday after they opened fire on an oil tanker travelling through the Gulf of Aden, officials said, likely part of a growing number of piracy attacks emanating from Somalia.

The attack on the Marshall Islands-flagged Chrystal Arctic comes as Yemen's Houthi rebels have also been attacking ships travelling through the crucial waterway, the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait connecting the Gulf of Aden, officials said. The assaults have slowed commercial traffic through the key maritime route onward to the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea. The pirates shot at the tanker from a small ship "carrying weapons and ladders," according to the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre, which oversees Mideast shipping routes. The pirates opened fire first at the Chrystal Arctic, whose armed, onboard security team returned fire at them, the UKMTO said. The pirates then abandoned their attempt to take the tanker, which continued on its way with all its crew safe, the UKMTO said. Hours later, the European Union naval force in the region known as Operation Atalanta said a frigate operating in the region detained six suspected pirates. The frigate seized the pirates given "the unsafe condition of their skiff" and said that some had "injuries of varied severity." It wasn't immediately clear if those injured suffered gunshot wounds from the exchange of fire with the Chrystal Arctic. The EU force declined to elaborate "due to the security of the operations." Once-rampant piracy off the Somali coast diminished after a peak in 2011. That year, there were 237 reported attacks in waters off Somalia.

UN to vote on resolution for Palestine rights

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The UN General Assembly is expected to vote Friday on a resolution that would grant new "rights and privileges" to Palestine and call on the Security Council to favourably reconsider its request to become the 194th member of the United Nations. The United States vetoed a widely backed council resolution on April 18 that would have paved the way for full United Nations membership for Palestine, a goal the Palestinians have long sought and Israel has worked to prevent, and US deputy ambassador Robert Wood made clear Thursday the Biden administration is opposed to the assembly resolution. Under the UN Charter, prospective members of the United Nations must be "peace-loving," and the Security Council must recommend their admission to the General Assembly for final approval. Palestine became a UN non-member observer state in 2012.

"We've been very clear from the beginning there is a process for obtaining full membership in the United Nations, and this effort by some of the Arab countries and the Palestinians is to try to go around that," Wood said Thursday. "We have said from the beginning the best way to ensure Palestinian full membership in the UN is to do that through negotiations with Israel. That remains our position." But unlike the Security Council, there are no vetoes in the 193-member General Assembly and the resolution is expected to be approved by a large majority, according to three Western diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity because negotiations were private. The draft resolution "determines" that a state of Palestine is qualified for membership — dropping the original language that in the General Assembly's judgment it is "a peace-loving state." It therefore recommends that the Security Council reconsider its request "favourably." The renewed

push for full Palestinian membership in the UN comes as the war in Gaza has put the more than 75-year-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict at center stage. At numerous council and assembly meetings, the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinians in Gaza and the killing of more than 34,000 people in the territory, according to Gaza health officials, have generated outrage from many countries. The original draft of the assembly resolution was changed significantly to address concerns not only by the US but also by Russia and China, the diplomats said. The first draft would have conferred on Palestine "the rights and privileges necessary to ensure its full and effective participation" in the assembly's sessions and UN conferences "on equal footing with member states." It also made no reference to whether Palestine could vote in the General Assembly. According to the diplomats, Russia and China which are strong supporters of Palestine's

UN membership were concerned that granting the list of rights and privileges detailed in an annex to the resolution could set a precedent for other would-be UN members — with Russia concerned about Kosovo and China about Taiwan. Under longstanding legislation by the US Congress, the United States is required to cut off funding to UN agencies that give full membership to a Palestinian state — which could mean a cutoff in dues and voluntary contributions to the UN from its largest contributor. The final draft drops the language that would put Palestine "on equal footing with member states." And to address Chinese and Russian concerns, it would decide "on an exceptional basis and without setting a precedent" to adopt the rights and privileges in the annex. The draft also adds a provision in the annex on the issue of voting, stating categorically: "The state of Palestine, in its capacity as an observer state, does not have the right to vote in the General Assembly or to

put forward its candidature to United Nations organs." The final list of rights and privileges in the draft annex includes giving Palestine the right to speak on all issues not just those related to the Palestinians and Middle East, the right to propose agenda items and reply in debates, and the right to be elected as officers in the assembly's main committees. It would give the Palestinians the right to participate in UN and international conferences convened by the United Nations — but it drops their "right to vote" which was in the original draft. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas first delivered the Palestinian Authority's application for UN membership in 2011. It failed because the Palestinians didn't get the required minimum support of nine of the Security Council's 15 members. They went to the General Assembly and succeeded by more than a two-thirds majority in having their status raised from a UN observer to a non-member observer state.

'Muslims in Singapore distressed by Gaza conflict'

Singapore (PTI): Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has said that he understands that Muslims in the multi-national-multi-racial country are distressed by the "unconscionable and inhuman" conflict in Gaza but has underlined that Singaporeans have to work together to acknowledge these feelings and provide help to the Palestinians in a practical manner. The conflict in Gaza was triggered by the unprecedented attacks against Israel by Hamas militants on October 7 that killed around 1,200 people. Israel has launched a massive counter-offensive against the Islamic militant group that has ruled Gaza since 2007. More than 34,900 people have been killed in Gaza in Israeli action, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

Trump Hush Money trial enters 3rd week, awaits Michael Cohen testimony

AP ■ NEW YORK

The third week of testimony in Donald Trump's hush money trial draws to a close Friday after jurors heard the dramatic, if not downright seamy, account of porn actor Stormy Daniels, while prosecutors gear up for their most crucial witness: Michael Cohen, Trump's former attorney. Daniels' story of an alleged sexual encounter with Trump was a crucial building block for prosecutors, who are seeking to show that the Republican and his allies buried unflattering stories in the waning weeks of the 2016 presidential election in an effort to illegally influence the race. Trump, who denies the sexual encounter ever happened, walked out of the court in a rage Thursday, angrily telling reporters, "I'm innocent." His attorneys pushed for



a mistrial over the level of tawdry details Daniels went into on the witness stand, but Judge Juan M. Merchan denied the request. Over more than 7½ hours of testimony, Daniels relayed in graphic detail what she says happened after the two met at a celebrity golf outing at Lake Tahoe where sponsors included the adult film studio where she worked. Daniels explained how she felt surprise, fear and discomfort, even as she consented to sex with Trump. During combative cross-examination, Trump's lawyers sought to paint Daniels as a liar and extortionist who's trying to take down the former president after drawing money and fame from her claims. Trump attorney Susan Necheles pressed Daniels on

why she accepted the payout to keep quiet instead of going public, and the two women traded barbs over what Necheles said were inconsistencies in Daniels' story over the years. "You made all this up, right?" Necheles asked Daniels. "No," Daniels shot back. The defence has sought to show that the hush money payments made on his behalf were an effort to protect his reputation and family — not his campaign — by shielding them from embarrassing stories about his personal life. After Daniels stepped down from the stand Thursday, Trump's attorneys pressed the judge to amend the gag order that prevents him from talking about witnesses in the case so he could publicly respond to what she told jurors. The judge denied that request too.

Australian judge extends ban on X sharing video of bishop's stabbing

AP ■ MELBOURNE

An Australian judge on Friday extended a ban on X allowing videos of the stabbing of a Sydney bishop in his church last month after government lawyers condemned the social media company's free speech argument for keeping the graphic images circulating. Australian Federal Court Justice Geoffrey Kennett extended his order that X Corp., the company rebranded by billionaire Elon Musk when he bought Twitter last year, block users from sharing videos of the April 15 attack. The attack led to terrorism-related charges for the alleged attacker, a teenager, and triggered a riot outside the church. The order has existed since April 22 and Kennett will

decide on Monday whether it will continue in its current form. X is alone among social media platforms in fighting a notice from Australia's eSafety Commission, which describes itself as the world's first government agency dedicated to keeping people safer online, to take down the video of the attack during an Assyrian Orthodox service streamed online. A bishop and priest were injured but both survived. Musk has accused Australia of censorship and has applied to the Federal Court to overturn the eSafety notice. The court will sit on Wednesday to consider setting a hearing date for X's application. X has geoblocked Australian users from the content, but eSafety argues the video can be still accessed from Australia through Virtual

Private Networks. VPNs are services that allow users to access sites in other countries that are blocked in their own nation. The regulator wants a worldwide ban on the video. An eSafety lawyer, Tim Begbie, described X in court on Friday as a "market leader in proliferating and distributing violent content and violent and extremist material." Begbie said Australia could not be expected to conform to X's "pro-free speech stance." "The fact is that that stance is in large measure illusory. Because X doesn't stand for global removal is bad" in some pure sense," Begbie said. X's own policies repeatedly refer to circumstances in which the platform will elect to remove content globally, Begbie said.

Prince Harry and Meghan in Nigeria

AP ■ ABUJA

Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, arrived in Nigeria on Friday to champion mental health for young people affected by conflicts and to promote the Invictus Games, which the prince founded to aid the rehabilitation of wounded and sick servicemembers and veterans. The couple, in the West African nation for the first time on the invitation of its military, visited the Lightway Academy college which receives support from their Archewell foundation to educate and train young girls affected by conflicts in Nigeria. Harry and Meghan will also be meeting with wounded soldiers and their families in what Nigerian officials have said is a show of support to improve the morale of the soldiers, including those fighting a 14-year war against Islamic extremists in the country's northeast. "This engagement with Invictus is giving us the opportunity for the recovery of our



soldiers," Abidemi Marquis, the director of sports at Nigeria's Defence Headquarters, told reporters on Thursday. Harry served in Afghanistan as an Apache helicopter copilot gunner, after which he founded the Invictus Games in 2014 to offer wounded veterans and servicemembers the challenge of competing in sports events similar to the Paralympics. Nigeria was among the nations

During their stay, Harry and Meghan will attend basketball and volleyball matches and will meet with local non-governmental organisations in Abuja and Lagos that are receiving support from them. Meghan will also co-host an event on women in leadership with Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director General of the World Trade Organisation, according to their spokesman Charlie Gipson. The news of Meghan's visit excited some in Nigeria where her life — and association with the British royal family — is closely followed. Meghan has also said in the past that she found out through a genealogy test that she was 43 per cent Nigerian. The Nigerian military has touted the Invictus Games as one which could help the recovery of thousands of its personnel who have been fighting the homegrown Boko Haram Islamic extremists and their factions since 2009 when they launched an insurgency.

Polish farmers march against EU policies

AP ■ WARSAW

Tens of thousands of disgruntled Polish farmers marched through downtown Warsaw on Friday to protest the European Union's climate policies and oppose the pro-EU government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk. The march under the slogan "Down with the Green Deal" was organised by Solidarity, a farmers' trade union that is strongly opposed to the EU's farming policies, in particular a policy known as the Green Deal which aims to make agriculture more climate friendly. The farmers say it interferes with their work and imposes high costs on them. "We are protesting because we don't want to become slaves on our own land," said dairy farmer Grazyna Gasowska from eastern Poland. "According to the Green Deal we are supposed to grow what they tell us to, when they tell us to," Gasowska said as she held a national white-and-red flag.



"All those diversification requirements are very difficult for the farmers." The noisy march stopped at the EU Warsaw office and then at parliament. "Let Brussels eat worms, we prefer pork chops and potatoes," said one banner, referring to a general belief that the EU will advise eating insects and worms rather than cattle meat. The demonstration came as Poland's political parties campaign ahead of elec-

tions next month for the European Parliament. The protest was supported by Polish right-wing opposition party Law and Justice, which held power from 2015 until late last year and is looking to regain political momentum. With an eye to the election, Tusk on Friday announced a reshuffle of his Cabinet to replace four ministers running for the European Parliament next month. The changes are also seen as a chance to bring new energy into Tusk's government, which took office in December and embarked on deep reforms in many areas, including justice, foreign policy and the media. "Today comes the time of bringing order and this is one of the reasons for which we jointly decided to have these changes," Tusk said. He said there will be more changes in the future that would be dictated by the "interest of the state." Tusk's pro-European Union government has embarked on a wide reversal of the policies of the Law and Justice party, which put Poland on a collision course with the 27-member EU during its administration. Tusk's team is taking steps to free the judiciary and the state media from the political control that Law and Justice tried to impose, and bring to account those responsible for mismanagement and loss of funds by state-owned companies.

Ukraine says Russia is trying to break through its defences

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine rushed reinforcements to its northeastern Kharkiv region to hold off a Russian attempt to breach local defences, authorities said, a tactical switch by Moscow that Ukrainian officials have been expecting for weeks as the war stretches into its third year.

Intense nighttime shelling targeted Vovchansk, in the Kharkiv region and less than 5 kilometres from the Russian border, regional Gov. Oleh Sniehubov said. The barrage prompted authorities to begin the evacuation of around 3,000 people. Then, around dawn, Russian infantry tried to penetrate the Ukrainian defences near Vovchansk, Ukraine's Defence Ministry said, adding that it had deployed reserve units to fend off the attack.

Russian military bloggers said the assault could mark the start of a Russian attempt to carve out a "buffer zone" that President Vladimir Putin vowed to create earlier this year to halt frequent Ukrainian attacks on Belgorod and other Russian border regions. Ukraine had previously said it was aware that Russia was assembling thousands of troops along the northeastern border, close to the Kharkiv and Sumy regions. While the Kremlin's forces launched their most recent ground offensive in eastern Ukraine, Ukrainian intelligence officials said they expected the Kremlin's forces to attack in the northeast, too. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his country's military had antici-



ipated the attack and had calibrated its response. "Now there is a fierce battle in this direction," Zelenskyy was quoted as saying by Ukraine's public broadcaster Suspilne. Though Russia likely can't capture Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, it could compel Ukraine to send more troops to the region, leaving other areas more vulnerable to attack. Also, forcing Ukrainian authorities to evacuate civilians is likely to create disruption and divert resources. "The entire town is under massive shelling now, it is not safe to stay here," Vovchansk administration head Tamaz Hambarishvili told Ukraine's Hromadske Radio.

The Ukrainian Defence Ministry said fighting against Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups continued into the afternoon. Meanwhile, a Ukrainian long-range drone struck an oil refinery inside Russia on Friday, officials said, a day after what appeared to be the deepest strike by Kyiv's forces on Russian soil hit a petrochemical facility. Ukraine has repeatedly targeted refineries, hoping to disrupt the Kremlin's war machine. Russia is one of the world's biggest oil producers, providing key revenue and fuel. A Ukrainian drone hit a refinery near the city of Kaluga, southwest of Moscow, setting four oil

storage tanks ablaze, according to Vladislav Shapsha, the regional governor. He said there were no casualties. The Russian Defence Ministry said that air defences downed seven Ukrainian drones early Friday in the Moscow, Bryansk and Belgorod regions. On Thursday, a senior official in Russia's Bashkortostan region, some 1,300 kilometres from the Ukrainian border, said a drone strike in the city of Salavat caused a fire at a petrochemical facility. The Russian Emergency Ministry said a pumping station building on refinery land was damaged but there was no fire. Ukrainian military intelligence refused to comment.

Putin reappoints his PM, a low-profile technocrat

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin reappointed Mikhail Mishustin as the country's prime minister on Friday, a widely anticipated move to keep on a technocrat who has maintained a low political profile. Mishustin and other technocrats in the Cabinet have been credited with maintaining a relatively stable economic performance despite bruising Western sanctions for Russia's role in Ukraine. Most other Cabinet members are expected to keep their jobs, though the fate of Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu appeared uncertain.

In line with Russian law, Mishustin, 58, who held the job for the past four years, submitted his Cabinet's resignation on Tuesday when Putin began his fifth presidential term at a glittering Kremlin inauguration. Mishustin, the former head of Russia's tax service, steered clear of political statements and avoided media interviews during his previous tenure. The speaker of the parliament's lower house, Vyacheslav Volodin, announced that Putin submitted Mishustin's candidacy to the State Duma, which will hold a session later Friday to consider it.

Under the constitutional changes approved in 2020, the lower house approves the candidacy of the prime minister, who then submits Cabinet members for approval. The changes were ostensibly meant to grant parliament broader



Vladimir Putin takes oath as Russian president during an inauguration ceremony in the Grand Kremlin Palace in Moscow, Russia. AP/PTI

power, but the procedure is widely seen as pro forma given Kremlin control over the body. Most Cabinet members are expected to keep their jobs, but it was not clear if Shoigu, the defence minister, would be among them after last month's arrest of his top associate, Timur Ivanov. Ivanov, who served as deputy defence minister in charge of massive military construction projects, was arrested on bribery charges and was ordered to stay in custody pending official investigation. The arrest of Ivanov was widely interpreted as an attack on Shoigu and a possible precursor of his dismissal despite his close personal ties with Putin.

Shoigu was broadly criticised for Russian military's setbacks in the early stage of the fighting in Ukraine. He faced scathing attacks from mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, who marched on Moscow nearly a year ago to demand the ouster of Shoigu and the chief of the General Staff, Gen. Valery Gerasimov. After Prigozhin's death in a suspicious plane crash two months after the rebellion — widely seen as the Kremlin's revenge — Shoigu appeared to shore up his position. But Ivanov's arrest, interpreted by many as part of Kremlin's political infighting, again exposed Shoigu's vulnerability.

Japan defence chief urges higher security

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan's defence chief on Friday called for the bolstering of its anti-drone capability after a drone footage posted on Chinese social media showed a Japanese aircraft carrier docked at a restricted navy port west of Tokyo. Defence Minister Minoru Kihara called it a serious security threat. Kihara's acknowledgement of the vulnerability comes more than a month after a video filmed by a drone showed JS Izumo, one of two Japanese helicopter carriers, being retrofitted to carry stealth fighters to strengthen Japan's counter-strike capability in the face of China's assertive military actions in the Indo-Pacific.

The footage, also showing plants, buildings and other facility at the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force's Yokosuka naval base was posted on a Chinese social media site in March, prompting investigation by ministry officials. The footage has also been posted on other platforms such as X. "After the video analysis we have reached a conclusion that the footage was most likely filmed by a flying drone," Kihara told reporters. "We are taking the findings extremely seriously," the minister added. "If drones harm defence facilities, it could cause serious disruptions to the defense of our country."

Pak to seek rollover of \$12 bn debt to meet budget targets

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has decided to seek a rollover of around USD 12 billion debt from key allies like China in the 2024-25 fiscal year to meet a whopping USD 23 billion worth of gap in its external financing as the federal government aims to achieve budget targets before the expected arrival of an IMF team to the cash-strapped country. According to the Finance Ministry insiders, USD 5 billion from Saudi Arabia, USD 3 billion from the UAE and USD 4 billion from China will be rolled over, adding that the estimate of further new financing from China would also be included in the next financial year's budget. The Express Tribune newspaper reported. Pakistan will receive more than USD 1 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the fresh loan programme, whereas new financing from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank has also been included in the estimated budget. According to the Finance Ministry sources, new loan programme agreements will be made with financial institutions. The federal government aims to achieve budget targets before the anticipated arrival

of the IMF review mission in Pakistan. Negotiations for a new loan programme with the global lender are expected to commence in mid-May ahead of the budget which will be presented in June. The Finance Ministry sources said the ministries had been instructed to complete the targets before the negotiations on the new loan programme. They added that the details would be given to the IMF delegation when all the important targets were met. It has also been decided to have the budget strategy paper approved by the federal cabinet before the IMF review mission arrives in the country. According to the sources, the Finance Ministry has started preparing the budget to set the targets for debt repayment, defence budget and tax collections. Besides, the development and ongoing budget targets will also be determined, according to the paper. Pakistan has been suffering the chronic ailment of how to meet external liabilities. Traditionally, it depended on remittances, export proceeds and foreign loans to meet its liabilities. But exports haven't increased to match the imports and avenues of foreign aid have gradually dried up, putting pressure on the rupee and

essential imports. Last year, it narrowly avoided default due to a timely short-term loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund which provided USD 3 billion during nine months. The country is once again looking towards the global lender to provide a fresh loan to keep it moving. In the trying economic conditions, Pakistan has been heavily supported by the remittances its workers living and working around the globe send. The country received the second-highest remittances of the ongoing 2023-24 fiscal at USD 2.8 billion in April 2024. According to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the remittances increased by 3.5 per cent to USD 23.8 billion cumulatively in the first 10 months of FY24 compared to the same period last year. Remittance inflows during April 2024 were primarily sourced from Saudi Arabia (USD 712 million), the United Arab Emirates (USD 542.3 million), the United Kingdom (USD 403.2 million), and the United States of America (USD 329.2 million), according to the bank. The remittances earlier had peaked near USD 3 billion in the prior month of March 2024, marking a 23-month high.

Pak's maiden lunar orbiter sends first images

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's maiden lunar orbiter sent the first images of the sun and the moon, days after it was launched as part of China's moon mission, it was announced on Friday. Pakistan's mini satellite 'Cube-Qamar' was launched as part of China's Change-6 lunar mission on May 3 from the Hainan province.

The images were unveiled at a ceremony organised at the China National Space Agency (CNSA) to mark the successful mission, Maria Tariq, spokesperson of Pakistan's national space agency Suparco, told Dawn.com.

She said that pictures were officially handed over to Pakistan's ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi, at the data handover ceremony in Beijing. At 16:14 (1:14 pm Pakistan time) on May 8, the Pakistani CubeSat, one of the international payloads carried by the Change-6 mission, "separated from the orbiter near the far moon point of the 12-hour large elliptical orbit around the moon, and then successfully captured the first image. Pakistan's CubeSat project achieved the set goal of 'successfully separating and obtaining telemetry' and achieved complete success," the CNSA announcement said. The first image showed the sun as a bright spotlight; the second was that of a sparkling half moon while the third image showed the moon on the left and the sun on the right, according to images shared by CNSA online.

The module was designed by Islamabad's Institute of Space Technology (IST) in collaboration with China's Shanghai University (SJTU) and Suparco. It carries two optical cameras to capture the lunar surface. The cube satellite or cubesat is a miniature satellite typically characterised by its small size and standardised cubic design. They help to collect valuable data for scientific advancement and innovation. Pakistan got the opportunity to launch the lunar orbiter after it was offered by the CNSA through the Asia Pacific Space Cooperation Organisation (APSCO) to become part of the Change-6 mission. Meanwhile, the news of the first lunar orbit sending back images has infused a sense of pride in the country beset with daunting economic and security challenges.

Bushra Bibi's right to life violated in sub-jail: HC

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani high court has concluded that the state transgressed the right to life of former premier Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi by confining her at her private residence designated as a sub-jail and depriving her of interaction with other prisoners, a media report said on Friday. On Wednesday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) ordered the former first lady's transfer to the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, where her 71-year-old husband Khan has been jailed. Bushra Bibi, 49, had been incarcerated at Bani Gala, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party founder's mansion in the suburbs of Islamabad, after conviction in two cases, while

Khan was kept at the Adiala Jail. On Thursday, the IHC issued a 15-page written order in which it said that the state has not just made the sentence of simple imprisonment harsher and heavier but has also violated Bushra Bibi's right to life guaranteed under Article 9 of the Constitution, The Express Tribune newspaper reported. "The mere fact that the room where the petitioner [Bushra Bibi] was confined in the sub-jail [was] guarded by a prison ward [did] not mean that the petitioner [was] not in isolation," it said. Asserting that it has the power and responsibility to intervene and protect the prisoner against inter alia harsher restraints and heavier severities than the sentence carries, the court noted that the sentence of 14-

year rigorous imprisonment handed out to Bushra Bibi had already been suspended. It also noted that a seven-year sentence given to her in another case was simple imprisonment. "By keeping her in isolation at the sub-jail and depriving her of interaction with other prisoners, the state has not just made the sentence of simple imprisonment harsher and heavier but has also transgressed the petitioner's right to life guaranteed under Article 9 of the Constitution," it said. The court noted that the entire Bani Gala was declared a sub-jail, implying that the property could not be freely accessed by either Bushra Bibi or her husband's children or family members unless specifically permitted by the superintendent or the court.

PR exec departs Baidu after comments glorifying overwork draw backlash

AP ■ HONG KONG

A top Baidu public relations executive has reportedly departed the Chinese technology company after she drew public outcry over her comments that were seen as glorifying a culture of overwork. Baidu's head of communications Qu Jing had implied in a series of videos that she was not concerned about her employees as she was "not their mom" and said she only cared about results. She also said that the relationship between her and her subordinates was purely an "employer-employee relationship." The backlash was swift, with many on social media platforms like Weibo saying Qu lacked empathy. Chinese online media outlet 36Kr first reported late

Thursday that Qu had left her position at Baidu, citing unnamed sources. Internal systems showed Qu is no longer with the firm, according to a Baidu employee who asked not to be named as they were not authorized to provide that information to media. Qu had earlier posted an apology Thursday on her private WeChat account, where she "sincerely apologized to all netizens" and clarified that she had not sought Baidu's permission before posting the videos. Qu said her videos did not represent Baidu's stance. Baidu operates China's dominant search engine as well as Ernie Bot, an artificial intelligence service similar to ChatGPT. "Many of the criticisms are very pertinent, I am reflecting deeply and humbly accept them," she said. "There are

many inappropriate (things said) in the video that caused external misunderstandings about the company's values and corporate culture, causing serious harm. I sincerely apologise." Qu also pledged to improve her communication and management style and care more for her colleagues. Her comments came at a time when many young people in China are pushing back against a culture of competition and grueling hours in the workplace. Qu had also been criticized for other comments she made in the series of short videos on Douyin that have since been removed. In the series, she threatened to ruin the careers of employees who sent hundreds of complaint letters against her to the office, by ensuring they could

not find another job in the industry. She also criticized an employee who refused to go on a 50-day business trip during the COVID-19 pandemic - a time when China severely restricted movement and required weeks of quarantine for travelers. "Why should I take into consideration my employee's family? I'm not her mother-in-law," Qu said, adding that if employees refused to go on such business trips then they would not get salary raises or job promotions. Chinese technology firms have long been criticized for their long working hours. A public debate was sparked in recent years over the "996" work culture, where employees in technology firms were expected to work from 9 am to 9 pm, six days a week.

Top Philippine security official seeks Chinese diplomats' expulsion

AP ■ MANILA

A top Philippine security official demanded Friday the immediate expulsion of Chinese diplomats allegedly behind a reported leak of a phone conversation between one of the diplomats and a Filipino admiral about South China Sea disputes that have strained diplomatic ties. National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano said he was backing a call by the Philippine defence chief for Manila's foreign office to take actions against Chinese embassy individuals in Manila "who claim to have recorded an alleged phone conversation between a Chinese diplomat and a military official" in violation of Philippine laws and international diplomatic protocols. Two Manila newspa-

pers cited a Chinese Embassy source as saying that in a recorded call with a Chinese diplomat in January, a Filipino admiral agreed to a new way of transporting supplies to a Philippine-occupied shoal in the disputed waters. It required Manila to notify Beijing for such offshore missions and promise not to bring construction materials. "Those individuals in the Chinese Embassy responsible for violating Philippine laws and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and those responsible for these malign influence and interference operations must be removed from the country immediately," Ano said in a strongly worded statement. In Beijing, China Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said the "Philippines' attitude just proves that they lack

confidence in the face of facts and evidence and have reached the point where they are frustrated and have no bottom line. "China solemnly demands that the Philippines ensures that Chinese diplomats can perform their duties, stops infringement and provocation and does not deny the facts, act indiscreetly or hurt itself by its own actions," he said. The escalating word war and diplomatic row have been sparked by hostilities between Chinese and Philippine coast guard ships and other vessels since last year at the Second Thomas Shoal and Scarborough Shoal. The Chinese coast guard has used powerful war cannons, a military-grade laser and dangerous maneuvers that

have caused minor collisions, injured several Filipino navy personnel and damaged their supply boats. The Philippine government has repeatedly summoned Chinese embassy diplomats in Manila to hand over protests. President Joe Biden and his administration have repeatedly warned that the US is obligated to defend the Philippines, its longtime treaty ally, if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China. Aside from China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have had overlapping claims in the busy seaway, a key trade route where many fear a major escalation of the conflicts could draw US forces on a collision course with China military.

Iranians vote in parl runoff election

AP ■ TEHRAN

Iranians voted on Friday in a runoff election for the country's parliament after hard-line politicians dominated March balloting. People in 22 constituencies across the country will elect 45 representatives from a pool of 90 candidates, 15 of whom are considered moderate. In the capital, Tehran, 16 representatives will be chosen from 32 candidates, all hard-liners. Final results are expected on Monday, though counts in smaller constituencies are likely before that. Iran's parliament plays a secondary role in governing the country. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has the final say in all important state matters. State TV showed Khamenei

voting on Friday immediately after the polls opened. He urged people to vote and said the runoff election was as important as the main one. In the March election, hard-liners won 200 out of 245 seats, with more moderate candidates taking the other 45. A total of 25 million ballots were cast, for a turnout of just under 41 per cent. The previ-

ous lowest turnout was 42 per cent in the 2020 parliamentary election. Politicians calling for change in the country's government, known broadly as reformists, were generally barred from running in the election. Those calling for radical reforms or for abandoning Iran's theocratic system were also banned or didn't bother to register as candidates.

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Sensex, Nifty rebound as ITC, Reliance gain



PTI ■ MUMBAI
Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty found firmer ground on Friday, propelled by a rally in market heavyweights Reliance Industries, ITC and Bharti Airtel amid a supportive trend overseas. Recovering from the sharp decline in the previous trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 260.30 points or 0.36 per cent to settle at 72,664.47. During the day, it rallied 542.37 points or 0.74 per cent to 72,946.54. The NSE Nifty climbed 97.70 points or 0.44 per cent to 22,055.20. From the Sensex basket, Power Grid, NTPC, JSW Steel, Asian Paints, ITC, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and Tata Motors were the biggest gainers.

On the other hand, Tata Consultancy Services, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, Wipro, Mahindra & Mahindra and HDFC Bank were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled with gains. European markets were trading in the green. Wall Street ended in positive territory on Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.41 per cent to USD 84.22 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 6,994.86 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. In the previous session, the BSE benchmark dropped 1,062.22 points or 1.45 per cent to settle at 72,404.17 on Thursday. The NSE Nifty dived 345 points or 1.55 per cent to 21,957.50.

BPCL to invest ₹1.7 lakh crore in core, new energy business

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) plans to invest Rs 1.7 lakh crore over the next five years in its core oil refining, fuel marketing and petrochemical business as well as in clean energy such as hydrogen, its chairman G Krishnakumar said on Friday. As part of 'Project Aspire', a five-year strategic framework, BPCL plans to raise its oil refining capacity, augment petrochemical business and expand its presence in cleaner fuel space with an eye on energy transition and meeting country's fuel demand, he said at a post earnings investor call. "Our strategy is based on two fundamental pillars - 'Nurturing the Core'; and 'Investing in Future Big Bets'. We remain committed to our core businesses, which include the refining, marketing of petroleum products and upstream. In addition, we are focusing on our big bets, which comprise petrochemicals, gas, green energy, non-fuel retail, and digital," Krishnakumar said. This will not just help meet the rising fuel demand of the world's fastest growing economy but also help the firm meet its target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040. "Overall, we plan to invest Rs 1.7 Lakh crores over a period of 5 years. Of this, Rs 75,000 crores is earmarked for refineries and petrochemicals. We plan to undertake strategic pipeline projects with an investment of Rs 8,000 crores, of which projects worth Rs 5,000 crores have already been identified. "We will invest more than Rs 20,000 crore in our marketing business. We have also earmarked investments of Rs 32,000 crores in upstream production, mainly in Mozambique and Brazil, depending on positive developments on ground. We will invest Rs 25,000 crores on gas business, (and) Rs 10,000 crores on green energy business," he said. BPCL, which owns three refineries that convert crude oil extracted from below earth's surface into fuels like petrol and diesel, plans to expand refining capacity to 45



million tonnes per annum by March 2029 from current 35.3 million tonnes, he said. The capacity addition would majorly be at Bina refinery in Madhya Pradesh, which is being expanded to 11 million tonnes from current 7.8 million tonnes. Smaller capacity additions through debottlenecking are planned at Mumbai and Kochi refineries as well. On fuel retailing infrastructure, BPCL is looking to add about 4,000 petrol pumps to its 22,000-odd retail stations. Also, the company is undertaking two petrochemical projects at Bina and Kochi, he said. "In line with the government's focus to increase gas share in the Indian energy portfolio from 6 per cent to 15 per cent, we intend to increase our gas footprint by building optimal city gas infrastructure and acquiring high opportunity geographic areas. We are also exploring enablers like diversification of sourcing, trading capabilities, storage facilities and LNG regasification infrastructure etc. To support our aspirations," he said. Alongside, it will pursue green ambitions. "We aim to build 10 GW of renewable energy portfolio

through organic and inorganic acquisition of operating assets, by 2040," he said. The clean energy business will include producing green hydrogen, which emits only water when burnt. "We will produce 30,000 tonnes per annum of green hydrogen in our refineries by 2030, to meet 10 per cent of our hydrogen demand. We will also engage in pilots for green hydrogen fuelled mobility and other applications," he said. The firm is also aggressively pushing for biofuels and plans to set up 26 compressed biogas plants in the near term. "In the EV charging business, we plan to reach a total of 7,000 EV charging stations by FY25. As of March 2024, we added 2,443 new EV charging and battery swapping stations, taking our total to 3,135 EV charging and battery swapping stations," he said. The EV charging stations will complement its fuel retailing network which also includes 2,034 CNG stations. Expecting petrol and diesel demand to grow in the near term, he said the growth in demand of petrol is expected to be around 5 per cent whereas in diesel about 1.5-2 per cent. "India has struck the right balance between its energy security and climate goals. Our rapidly expanding economy will inevitably lead to a surge in energy demand, prompting a continued demand and growth in BPCL's core and new businesses," he said. India has set a goal of attaining net-zero emissions by 2070. "This will accelerate the adoption of green and low carbon energy solutions, opening significant economic opportunities for companies operating in the broader energy sector, including BPCL." On price outlook, he said the expectation is that global supply and demand will be relatively balanced and the prices would be in the range of USD 83-87 per barrel. "The factors that could impact prices are largely related to unplanned production disruptions, a risk highlighted by the recently escalating tensions in the Middle East."

Rupee settles 1 paisa lower at 83.49 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee stayed range-bound and settled 1 paisa lower at 83.49 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, as the support from positive domestic equities was negated by elevated crude oil prices. Forex traders said significant foreign fund outflows dented investors' sentiments. At the interbank foreign

exchange market, the local unit traded in a narrow range. It opened at 83.48, and touched an intraday high of 83.46 and a low of 83.51 during the day. The domestic unit finally settled for the day at 83.49 (provisional), down 1 paisa from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee closed at 83.48 against the American currency. The Indian rupee traded on a flat note. Positive domestic markets and a weak US dollar supported the rupee, however, a rise in crude oil prices and sustained foreign fund outflows capped sharp gains, said Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 105.23,



higher by 0.01 per cent as the US dollar declined on rising weekly unemployment claims from the US. Weekly unemployment claims rose to 231,000 vs 209,000 in the prior week and the forecast of 212,000. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias and the US dollar may rise again amid hawkish Fed speak and

safe-haven demand amid geopolitical tensions in the Middle East," Choudhary said. Selling pressure by foreign investors and rising global crude oil prices may also pressurise the rupee. However, a rise in risk appetite in global markets may support the rupee at lower levels. "Traders may take cues from India's IIP data and Michigan consumer sentiment data from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.30 to Rs 83.75," Choudhary added. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.62 per cent to USD 84.40 per barrel. On the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 260.30 points, or 0.36 per cent to close at 72,664.47 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 97.70 points or 0.44 per cent higher at 22,055.20. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 6,994.86 crore, according to exchange data.

This may be published in Newspapers and TV form the day following the last date for withdrawal of candidature and upto two days before the date of poll

Format C-2
(for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

Declaration about criminal cases
(As per the judgment dated 25th September 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs Union of India & Anr.)

Name of Political Party : **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**
*Name of Election : **LOKSABHA- 2024**
Name of State/UT : **JHARKHAND**

1	2	3	4	5	
Sl. No.	Name of Constituency	Name of Candidate	(A) Pending criminal cases	(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences	
			Name of Court, case no. & status of the case(s)	Sections of the Acts concerned & brief description of offence(s)	
			Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	
				Maximum Punishment Imposed	
1	RANCHI	SANJAY SETH	Smt. Nutan Ekka Spl. JMFC, MP, MLA, Civil Court Ranchi Dhurwa PS Case no. 159/2021 Pending	Sec. 147, 148, 341, 323, 353, 332, 427, 188, 269, 270, of IPC and Sec. 51 of DM Act 2005- Allegation for Participating in a public protest against the state government.	
2			Smt. Nutan Ekka Spl. JMFC, MP, MLA, Civil Court Ranchi Dhurwa PS Case no. 107/2023 Pending	Under Sec. 147, 148, 188, 353, 332, 109, 427, 323 of IPC	

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.



ITA seeks financial help from Centre to support struggling Darjeeling tea industry

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Indian Tea Association (ITA) on Friday reiterated its plea for financial assistance from the Centre to support the struggling Darjeeling tea industry. According to the ITA, the situation in Darjeeling is critical due to decreasing yields and plummeting prices. Without a financial relief package, the survival of the Darjeeling tea industry is in jeopardy, the association said, adding that it has urged the government to consider and act upon a financial revival package endorsed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce in March 2022. "The association has urged the government to extend a financial revival package to the Darjeeling tea sector which has been already endorsed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on commerce in March 2022. This awaits consideration and action," the ITA said. The ITA, quoting Tea Board data, highlighted that adverse weather conditions have affected tea production in Assam and West Bengal, leading to a significant decrease in production. From January to March 2024, production was down by 13.69 million kg at 96.10 million kg across the country, according to Tea Board data. Prices at the auctions have also taken a beating during the same period, the ITA said, adding that at an all-India level, auction prices were down by Rs 16.08 per kg at Rs 128.12. Meanwhile, tea exports from India during January to December 2023 fell to 227.91 million kg as compared to 231.08 million kg in the same period of 2022, adding to the industry's challenges, the ITA said.

Bank of Baroda Q4 profit rises marginally to ₹4,886 crore



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) on Friday posted a marginal 2.3 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 4,886 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024. The bank had earned a net profit of Rs 4,775 crore in the January-March quarter a year ago. The total income increased to Rs 33,775 crore during the quarter under review, against Rs 29,323 crore in the same period last year, BoB said in a regulatory filing. Interest income grew to Rs 29,583 crore during the latest three-month period from Rs 25,857 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago. On the asset quality side, the bank's gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) moderated to 2.92 per cent of gross advances as of March 31, 2024, from 3.79 per cent at the end of March 2023. Net NPAs also declined to 0.68 per cent of the advances, from 0.89 per cent at the end of 2023. As a result, provisions for bad loans and contingencies eased to Rs 1,302 crore, as against Rs 1,421 crore earmarked during the same quarter a year ago. The Provision Coverage Ratio of the bank stood at 93.30 per cent at the end of March 2024. For the financial year ended March 2024, the bank's net profit increased by a 26 per cent to Rs 17,789 crore, as compared to Rs 14,110 crore in the preceding fiscal. Total income of the bank increased to Rs 1,27,101 crore in FY24 as against Rs 99,614 crore in the preceding fiscal. The board has recommended a dividend at Rs 7.60 per equity share of face value of Rs 2 each fully paid up for the 2023-24 subject to approval at the ensuing 28th Annual General Meeting. Capital Adequacy Ratio (CRAR) improved to 16.31 per cent, from 16.24 per cent as on March 31, 2023. Net Interest Margin (NIM) of the bank stood at 3.18 per cent at the end of March 2024.

China willing to help Indian firms to cater to its market demand: Envoy

PTI ■ BEIJING

The Chinese market is open to all countries, including India, China's new envoy to India, Xu Feihong, has said, maintaining that Beijing understands New Delhi's concerns over its burgeoning trade deficit and is willing to address this issue by facilitating more Indian companies to tap the Chinese market. The trade deficit, a major concern of India for years, stood at USD 99.2 billion in 2023 in the overall bilateral trade of USD 136.2 billion. In 2022, the trade deficit crossed the USD 100 billion mark by touching USD

101 billion for the first time. India has been periodically flagging concerns and pressing China to open its IT and pharma sectors besides grains, its major export potential sectors. In an interaction with the PTI and China's CGTN-TV here before he headed to New Delhi to take up his posting, Xu reiterated Beijing's often repeated assertions that it is not China's intention to seek a trade surplus. "There are multiple factors behind India's trade deficit. China understands India's concern. It is never our intention to seek a trade surplus." "The Chinese market is open to all countries, including India. We have sent many trade promotion delegations to India to buy Indian products, and we would like to see more marketable Indian products enter the Chinese market."

This may be published in Newspapers and TV form the day following the last date for withdrawal of candidature and upto two days before the date of poll

Format C-2
(for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

Declaration about criminal cases

(As per the judgment dated 25th September 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs Union of India & Anr.)

Name of Political Party : **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**

*Name of Election : **LOKSABHA- 2024**

Name of State/UT : **JHARKHAND**

1	2	3	4		5		
Sl. No.	Name of Constituency	Name of Candidate	(A) Pending criminal cases		(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences		
			Name of Court, case no. & status of the case(s)	Sections of the Acts concerned & brief description of offence(s)	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed
1	DHANBAD	DULU MAHATO	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Dhanbad PS Case no. 85/2020 Pending	385, 504, 506 of IPC	Md. Umar, JMFC Dhanbad 20-01-2016 (In Conneti on with Barora PS Case no. 307/2006)	1 Year (12 Months), Appeal(Cri. Rev. 278/2016) is Admitted and Pending in High Court in Ranchi	
			Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Kenduadih PS Case No. 132/2023 Pending	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 307, 120B, 504, 25(1-B), 26, 27 (2), 35, 326 of IPC	S.D.J.M., Dhanbad 09-10-2019 (In Connecti on with Katras PS Case No. 120/2013)	18 Months, Appeal(Cri. Rev. 1157/2022) is Admitted and Pending in High Court in Ranchi	
			Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Barora PS Case No.150/2006 Pending	147, 149, 160, 323, 342, 504, 506, 109, 120B of IPC			
			Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Barora PS Case No.12/2022 Pending	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 307, 354, 427, 379 of IPC			
			Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Rajgang PS Case No. 15/2022 Pending	147, 148, 149, 379, 384, 385, 427, 120B of IPC and 27 Arms Act			
			SDJM Dhanbad Katras PS Case No. 106/2018 Pending	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 324, 427, 120B of IPC and 27 Arms Act			
			Akhilesh Kumar ADJ XVI Dhanbad Barora PS Case No. 11/2020 Pending	147, 148, 341, 323, 307, 354, 504, 506 of IPC and 27 (1) of Arms Act			
			Akhilesh Kumar ADJ XVI Dhanbad Baghmara PS Case No. 17/2020 Pending	395, 120B, of IPC and 27 of Arms Act			

9	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Barora PS Case No. 21/2021 Pending	147, 148, 149, 324, 341, 427, 120B, 307 of IPC and 3/4 of Explosive Act			
10	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Barora PS Case No. 54/2022 Pending	147, 148, 149, 341, 324, 387, 307, 120B of IPC and 27(1) of Arms Act			
11	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Barora PS Case No. 39/2021 Pending	341, 387, 504, 506 of IPC			
12	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Loyabad PS Case No. 58/2021 Pending	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 337, 504, 506, 307, 353, of IPC and 25 (1B) (a), 26, 35, 27 of Arms Act and 3/4 Explosive substance Act			
13	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Loyabad PS Case No. 59/2021 Pending	147, 148, 149, 120 B, 504, 506, of IPC and 27 Arms Act and 3/4 Explosive Substance Act.			
14	ADJ 1st ST/SC SPL Court Dhanbad Barora PS Case No. 17/2020 Pending	147, 148, 149, 341, 504, 506 of IPC and 3(1) (F), 3(1)(G) of SC/ST Act			
15	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Barora PS Case No. 20/2020 Pending	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 385, 386, 307, 504, 506 of IPC and 27(1) of Arms Act			
16	Nupur Ekka JM Ranchi Dhurwa PS Case No. 107/2023 Pending	147, 148, 188, 353, 332, 109, 427 of IPC			
17	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Jogta PS Case No. 11/2024 Pending	147, 148, 149, 341, 323, 379, 307, 387, 120B of IPC and 27 Arms Act and 3/4 of Explosive Substance Act.			
18	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Barwadda PS Case No. 53/2024 Pending	109, 387, 504, 506, 120B of IPC			
19	SDM Dhanbad Barora PS Case No. 05/2024 Pending	107 of IPC			
20	Anuska Jain Judicial Magistrate Dhanbad Dhansar PS Case No. 69/2024 Pending	188, 171-F of the IPC			

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KKR TARGET PLAYOFF BERTH AT HOME

PTI ■ KOLKATA
In red-hot form, two-time former champions Kolkata Knight Riders will look to seal an IPL playoff berth for the first time in three years when they take on the struggling Mumbai Indians in their final home match of the season, here on Saturday. The return of their two-time title-winning skipper Gautam Gambhir as team mentor has done wonders for the side which has found ways to win games from difficult situations this season. Sitting at the top of the 10-team standings with eight wins from 11 matches, another win will guarantee them the playoff berth as the Shah Rukh Khan-owned franchise will look to end on a high, its campaign at the home venue of Eden Gardens. Gambhir's ploy to back Sunil Narine as an opener along with World No.2 T20I batter Phil Salt has been a masterstroke. The duo have scored bulk of the team's runs, giving it the perfect platform in power-plays to post six 200-plus totals from eight matches

MI SEEK TO SALVAGE PRIDE



batting first. With 32 sixes to his name, Narine is also the second in the list behind Abhishek Sharma (35). The consistency with which Narine keeps churning out high scores match after match has been phenomenal. With one century and three fifties, the Trinidadian has also been their leading run-getter, amassing 461 runs at a strike-rate of 183.66. Englishman Salt has scored 429 runs at a strike-rate of 183.33. The duo's explosive form has also meant that the likes of Andre Russell and Rinku Singh, who have been their designated finishers, have not got enough opportunities. Their performance has also covered up the team's bowling profligacy, particularly that of Mitchell Starc.

The young Angkrish Raghuvanshi at No.3 has also proved his worth, while Ramandeep Singh has been spectacular at the death. In contrast, five-time champions Mumbai Indians, under Hardik Pandya, became the first team to be knocked out after Sunrisers Hyderabad demolished Lucknow Super Giants the other day. Coming on the back of a morale-boosting win over SRH, MI will look to salvage some pride. Fresh from his knocks of 56 and 102 not out, Suryakumar Yadav has been in scintillating form which augurs well for Team India ahead of the T20 World cup in less than a month. At the same time, Team India fans will hope that Rohit Sharma and Hardik Pandya also return among runs. The India captain has four single-digit scores and one 11 in last five games, while Pandya's best this season has been 46. The struggling all-rounder has failed to cross 10 in his last six innings. Pandya would be desperate to strike form given that it would be crucial to India's chances in the T20 World Cup next month.

TEAMS (FROM):
Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherrane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Gus Atkinson, Allah Ghazanfar and Phil Salt.
Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwena Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shephard, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Harvik Desai (wk), Nehal Wadhwa and Luke Wood.



The Big Cricket League to promote local talent

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Promising to transform the landscape of Indian cricket, the Big Cricket League (BCL) was officially launched here recently at an event with an aim to bridge the gap between established cricketing stars and aspiring local talents. Led by former India international cricketer Rudra Pratap Singh, the BCL revolves around providing a platform for showcasing raw talent and offering a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to play alongside cricketing icons. The launch event was attended by legendary cricket figures including former India Captain Dilip Vengsarkar, League Commissioner, and former West Indies Captain Courtney Walsh, Vice President. Both Vengsarkar and Walsh echoed Singh's enthusiasm, emphasizing the significance of the BCL in providing opportunities for those who have missed out on traditional pathways to cricketing success. At the inaugural season, it was announced that six franchises were set to compete in 18 live T20 matches. These matches will feature a blend of former international icons, first-class cricketers, and aspiring local talents, ensuring a captivating spectacle for cricket enthusiasts worldwide. With matches set to be broadcasted on both television and OTT platforms across India and in over 30 countries, the BCL aims to make its presence felt amid a global audience. Furthermore, opportunities for team ownership and sponsorship are available, signaling the league's commitment to fostering collaboration and support within the cricketing community, said a statement from the BCL.

Virat Kohli should open in T20 WC: Ganguly

PTI ■ BENGALURU
Former Indian captain Sourav Ganguly on Friday said the Indian team management should make Virat Kohli open in next month's T20 World Cup to exploit the star batter's rich vein of form in the ongoing Indian Premier League. Kohli is the current Orange Cap holder in this IPL with 634 runs from 12 matches, averaging 70.44 and at an impressive strike-rate of 153.51, which is significantly

higher than his career rate of 134.31. "Virat is playing exceptionally well. The way Kohli batted last night — 90 in quick time, you need to use him as opener in T20 World Cup. He should open, evidenced by his last few IPL innings which have been outstanding," Ganguly told PTI here on the sidelines of a promotional event. Ganguly said India have picked a balanced squad for the T20 World Cup which has the wherewithal to land the trophy after a gap of 17 years.



India's lone triumph in the T20 World Cup came in 2007, the inaugural edition held in South Africa. "This is an excellent squad. I think they have picked the best possible squad. Apart from batting depth, bowling looks

excellent. "Bumrah is the best fast bowler in the world at the moment. We have experience in Kuldeep, Axar, Siraj. It's an ideal combination we have this time," said Ganguly. This edition of the IPL has seen teams breaching the 250-run mark quite effortlessly, and the 51-year-old said the trend would continue in the future as well. "This is going to be the trend in the years to come. T20 cricket has become a power-oriented game and that's what it is going to be.

"I was reading Sanju Samson's comments the other day, where he said there's no time to settle down in modern T20s. You just have to hit, and that's the way it is going to be," said Ganguly. The Kolkatan, himself no stranger to hitting some monster sixes during his playing days, identified the evolved mindset of batters and Impact Player rule as the main reasons behind such mammoth totals in the IPL.

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NOTICE
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India vide letter no. EC identification no EC24A0101JH5842990N (File no J-11015/307/2005-IA.II (M)) dated 01-05-2024 has Granted Environmental Clearance for Expansion of North Urimari OCP (4.5 MTPA) of Barka Sayal Area of CCL. A copy of this environment clearance is available in the office of Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board and can be viewed on the Parivesh portal of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

This may be published in Newspapers and TV form the day following the last date for withdrawal of candidature and upto two days before the date of poll

Format C-2
(for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

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1	Jamshedpur	Bidyut Baran Mahato	Chaibasa MP/MLA Court Sakchi (Jamshedpur) PS Case no. 3/22 Pending	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s) Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed Maximum Punishment Imposed

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.

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