



BRIEF



Balkaur Singh, father of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala, with his newborn baby, on Sunday.

Re-elected

Nagpur: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha on Sunday re-elected Dattatreya Hosabale for the post of 'Sarkaryavah' (general secretary). Hosabale has been serving as the 'Sarkaryavah' since 2021, the RSS said in a post on X.

Date advanced

New Delhi: The Election Commission on Sunday advanced the date of the counting of votes for the Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim assembly polls to June 2 from June 4. The EC had announced earlier that the votes polled in the two assembly elections were to be counted on June 4 along with Lok Sabha poll votes.

Citizenship

Ahmedabad: Eighteen Hindu refugees from Pakistan residing in Ahmedabad have been granted Indian citizenship during a camp attended by Gujarat minister of state for home Harsh Sanghani. At the camp organised at the district collector's office on Saturday, Sanghani conferred Indian citizenship to the 18 persons and urged them to work together to realise the dream of a new India.

Spokesperson

New Delhi: Senior Indian Information Service (IIS) officer Sheyphali B Sharan has been appointed as the new government spokesperson, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said. A 1990-batch officer, Sharan will "look after" the charge as Principal Director General (Pr.DG) of the Press Information Bureau (PIB) after incumbent Manish Desai's superannuation on March 31.

Undercurrent

Patna: RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday said there is an "undercurrent" in Bihar which will lead to "astounding" results in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. Speaking to reporters, Yadav emphasised that the outcome of the polls will favour the Mahagathbandhan (grand alliance), indicating a strong wave against the NDA (National Democratic Alliance).

Arrested

Jaipur: The Anti Gangster Task Force of Rajasthan Police has caught two alleged smugglers who had come to supply illegal weapons to dacoits and local criminals in Rajasthan's Dholpur district. The force also seized 20 illegal firearms and 32 live cartridges from them in the Maniyani police station area.

Weather
High 34 Low 22

MAHADEV APP CASE

EOW registers FIR against Baghel

Raipur, Mar 17:

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) in Chhattisgarh has registered a case against former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and others in the alleged Mahadev online betting scam based on a probe report submitted by the ED, officials said on Sunday.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), which has been investigating the Mahadev app-linked money laundering case for more than a year, alleged in the past that its probe has shown involvement of various high-ranking politicians and bureaucrats from Chhattisgarh, where the two main promoters of the app hail from.

The projected proceeds of crime in this case are about Rs 6,000 crore, according to the ED. "The ED has been investigating the case and based on its report submitted to the state's Economic



Offences Wing/Anti-Corruption Bureau, the FIR was registered against Baghel and others at the EOW police station here on March 4," a senior EOW official said.

Baghel, the senior Congress leader, along with the app promoters Ravi Uppal, Saurabh Chandrakar, Shubham Soni and Anil Kumar Agrawal and 14 others have been named as accused in the FIR, he said.

Some bureaucrats, police officials, officers on special duty (OSDs) and other unidentified private persons have also been made accused (without

FIR names accused in case...

Baghel, the senior Congress leader, along with the app promoters Ravi Uppal, Saurabh Chandrakar, Shubham Soni and Anil Kumar Agrawal and 14 others have been named as accused in the FIR, he said. Some bureaucrats, police officials, officers on special duty (OSDs) and other unidentified private persons have also been made accused (without being named) in the case, he said.

'Political conspiracy'

Baghel had termed the ED's action in the Mahadev betting app case as a "political conspiracy" and accused the federal agency of acting at the behest of its "political masters". So far, the ED has arrested nine persons in this case.

being named) in the case, he said.

The case has been registered under various Indian Penal Code Sections, including 120B (criminal conspiracy), 420 (cheating) and 471 (using as genuine a forged document), and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018, the official said.

The FIR, citing the ED's

online betting through panel operators/ branch operators. They kept 70 to 80 per cent of the illegal earnings with them and distributed the rest of the money to panel operators/ branch operators, it alleged.

The promoters and panel operators fetched around Rs 450 crore per month through the online betting app after the lockdown was imposed in 2020 (following the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic), the FIR claimed.

For transaction of the illegally obtained money, bank accounts were opened on the basis of fake documents by the promoters and panel operators of the Mahadev Book App and hundreds of bank accounts were operated on the basis of commission with the money obtained from betting. The panel operators transferred illegal money to the promoters in the UAE through various bank accounts, it said.

The promoters created different platforms and conducted illegal acts of

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Flipkart to pay man Rs 10k for harassment

After it cancels iPhone order

Mumbai, Mar 17 (PTD):

A consumer disputes redressal commission here found Flipkart guilty of adopting unfair trade practices and ordered it to pay a customer Rs 10,000 for the mental harassment he suffered after it cancelled his iPhone order.

The cancellation was intentional to make extra profit, which amounts to a

deficiency in service and unfair and restrictive trade practice adopted by the online platform, said the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Central Mumbai, in the order passed last month.

The detailed order was available on Sunday.

The commission noted that though the customer had received a refund, he needed to be compensated for the mental harassment and agony he suffered because of the unilateral cancellation of his order.

Foreign students in Guj varsity attacked over namaaz

Two hospitalised

Ahmedabad, Mar 17 (PTD):

The police have arrested two men and are looking for more after students hailing from different foreign countries were assaulted allegedly by a group of persons in the Gujarat University hostel in Ahmedabad for offering namaaz there, police said on Sunday.

Two students one from Sri Lanka and another from Tajikistan were hospitalised after the incident which took place in the A-block hostel on Saturday night, they said.

An FIR was registered against 20-25 unidentified accused persons under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for rioting, unlawful assembly, voluntarily causing hurt, damage to property, and criminal tres-



A scene after students hailing from different foreign countries were assaulted over the issue of offering Namaz.

Varsity plans 'sensitivity' drill for foreigners

Gujarat University will be holding orientation sessions for its overseas students to train them in "cultural sensitivity", Vice-Chancellor Dr Neerja A Gupta said on Sunday, hours after a mob stormed a hostel and attacked foreign students for offering namaaz inside the premises. Vice-Chancellor Dr Gupta told the media that there was some tension between those in the mob and some overseas students, and Saturday's events led to an escalation. "The matter is under police investigation now," she said. Dr Gupta said that since these students are from overseas, they need to be trained in "cultural sensitivity". "These are foreign students and when you go abroad, you must learn cultural sensitivity. These students need an orientation. We will sit with them, provide cultural orientation and discuss how to strengthen their security."

Two arrested...

An FIR was registered against 20-25 unidentified accused persons under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for rioting, unlawful assembly, voluntarily causing hurt, damage to property, and criminal trespass, among others, and two persons identified as Hitesh Mevada and Bharat Patel have been arrested so far, DCP (Zone 7) Tarun Duggal said. Nine teams have been formed to conduct a probe into the incident, Police Commissioner GS Malik said.

pass, among others, and two persons identified as Hitesh Mevada and Bharat Patel have been arrested so far, DCP (Zone 7) Tarun Duggal said.

Nine teams have been formed to conduct a probe into the incident, Police Commissioner GS Malik said.

Future Gaming DMK's top donor

BJP got Rs 6,986.5 cr through poll bonds

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTD):

Top purchaser of electoral bonds Future Gaming and Hotel Services donated Rs 509 crore to Tamil Nadu's ruling party DMK through the now scrapped payment mode, the Election Commission data showed on Sunday.

The BJP received the maximum funds through these bonds at Rs 6,986.5 crore since they were introduced in 2018, followed by West Bengal's ruling party Trinamool Congress (Rs 1,397 crore), Congress (Rs 1,334 crore) and BRS (Rs 1,322 crore).

Odisha's ruling party BJD was the fourth largest recipient at Rs 944.5 crore

followed by DMK at Rs 656.5 crore and Andhra Pradesh's ruling party YSR Congress redeemed bonds worth nearly Rs 442.8 crore.

The JD(S) received bonds worth Rs 89.75 crore, including Rs 50 crore from Megha Engineering, the second largest purchaser of electoral bonds.

Future Gaming of lottery king Santiago Martin was the biggest purchaser of electoral bonds at Rs 1,368 crore, of which nearly 37 per cent went to the DMK.

Other major donors of the DMK included Megha Engineering Rs 105 crore, India Cements Rs 14 crore and Sun TV Rs 100 crore.

The TMC received Rs 1,397 crore through electoral bonds, second largest recipient after the BJP.

The DMK was among the few political parties to disclose the identity of the donors, while major parties such as the BJP, Congress, TMC and AAP did not disclose these details to the Election Commission, which has now made public those filing as per a Supreme Court order.

The TDP redeemed bonds worth Rs 181.35 crore, Shiv Sena Rs 60.4 crore, RJD 56 crore, Samajwadi Party got Rs 14.05 crore via electoral bonds, Akali Dal Rs 7.26 crore, AIADMK Rs 6.05 crore, National Conference Rs 50 lakh.

The CPI(M) has declared that it will not receive funds through electoral bonds, while filings made by the AIMIM and BSP showed nil receipts.

PM TO MINISTERS

'Draft roadmap for next 5 yrs of new govt'

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTD):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday told ministers to draft a roadmap for the first 100 days and next five years for new government, sources said.

Chairing a Cabinet meeting here this morning, the PM also asked them to meet secretaries and other officials of their respective ministries to discuss how the agenda for the first 100 days and the next five years can be better implemented. The meeting took place a day

after the Election Commission announced schedule for the Lok Sabha polls 2024. The Cabinet also initiated the process of notifying the dates of the seven-phase parliamentary elections by sending the Election Commission's recommendation to President Droupadi Murmu. The first notification will be issued on March 20 for the first phase of polls on April 19 on 102 seats. The nomination process begins for a particular phase with the issuance of the notification.

The case was lodged under provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and for criminal conspiracy under section 120B

Youtuber Elvish Yadav held over snake venom case

Noida, Mar 17 (PTD):

Youtuber Elvish Yadav was arrested on Sunday by Noida Police in connection with a probe into the suspected use of snake venom as a recreational drug at a party here, officials said.

Yadav was among six people named in an FIR lodged at Sector 49 police station here on November 3 last year. The five other accused were arrested but are currently out on bail, the officials said.

The case was lodged under provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and for criminal conspiracy under section 120B



Youtuber Elvish Yadav being produced in a court in the snake venom at rave case, in Greater Noida, Sunday.

of the Indian Penal Code, they said.

The case was later shifted from Sector 49 to Sector 20 police station for investigation. "The accused has

been arrested by a team of Sector 20 police station which was investigating the case," Additional DCP (Noida) Manish Mishra told PTI.

Yadav, a winner of reality show Bigg Boss OTT, has refuted the charges of involvement in the case and has been questioned by the police in the past.

A sub-inspector, who was also the incharge of the local Sector 49 police station where the FIR was registered, was shunted.

The case was lodged on the complaint of an official of animal rights group People For Animals (PFA).

Pune ISIS Case: NIA attaches assets of 11 accused

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTD):

The NIA has attached four properties as "proceeds of terrorism" in an ISIS module case in Pune, moving forward on its mandate to dismantle the global terror outfits' network in the country, an official said on Sunday.

The attached properties in the Kondhwa area are linked to 11 people accused in the case, including three absconders, and were being used for IED fabrication and its training and planning of terror acts, a spokesperson of the federal agency said.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has already chargesheeted all 11 in the case registered last year.



Attached under section 25 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the properties are residential houses or flats linked to the accused Mohammed Imran Khan, Mohammed Yunus Saki, Mohammed Shahnawaz Alam, Md Rizwan Ali, Kadir Dastagir Pathan, Simab Kazi, Zulfikar Ali Barodawala, Abdullah Faiyaz Shaikh, Talha Liyakat Khan, Shamil Nachan and Aakif Nachan, the official said.

'NDA moves ahead taking regional aspirations and national progress'

Amaravati, Mar 17 (PTD):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the NDA moves ahead taking regional aspirations and national progress and during the third term after the polls, the country will take many more big decisions.

Addressing an National Democratic Alliance (NDA) election meeting at Boppudi village in Palnadu district, Modi said NDA's aim is for 'Viksit Bharat' build 'Viksit



PM waves during a public meeting in Palnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Sunday.

Andhra Pradesh' and that during the past ten years, 25 crore people were lifted up from poverty.

Attacking the Congress party, Modi said the agen-

da of the grand old party is to 'use and throw' its alliance partners.

"Yesterday, the schedule for the Lok Sabha polls was announced. The whole country says that on June 4 (counting day), it is over 400 (seats for NDA)," the PM said. Asserting that the NDA's aim is for 'Viksit Bharat' and to build 'Viksit Andhra Pradesh', he said a double-engine NDA government in Andhra Pradesh will ensure speedy development of the state.

Political disconnect: Why environmental issues not winning votes in India

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTD):

The poisonous air is shortening lives across India, Bengaluru is grappling with a severe water crisis, while Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh are yet to fully recover from the devastating glacial lake outburst and flash floods last year.

Despite this, these issues remain secondary to livelihood concerns and are yet to hold significant sway in national elections, experts say.

One reason for this, they say, is that political and social movements in India predominantly focus on livelihood issues.

Tikender Singh Panwar, former deputy mayor of Shimla, told PTI that the lack of social mobilisation linking the environment with livelihoods is a major obstacle.

He praised Kerala's approach to risk-informed climate development but noted the challenges in states like Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand

due to the absence of such movements connecting disasters with livelihood and governance issues.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) member said it would take another five to 10 years for environmental issues to become mainstream in the country.

"You can see what Sonam (Wangchuk) is doing in Ladakh. Even in Delhi, when it is air pollution, you find some noises being made. But these are

just on the periphery," Panwar said.

Wangchuk is leading a "climate fast" to demand tribal area status for Ladakh, which he says will help protect the fragile ecology and tribal identity of the region.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Risks Report 2024 counts extreme weather events and critical change to earth systems as the greatest concerns facing the world over the next decade.

Political parties detailed about election programme

Bhilai, Mar 17:

With the announcement of Lok Sabha General Elections 2024 by the Election Commission of India, New Delhi on March 16, 2024, the Model Code of Conduct has become effective in seven assembly constituencies of Durg district. Election for Durg Parliamentary Constituency is scheduled in the third phase. A meeting of political parties was organized at the District Collector's office on Sunday. Collector and District Election Officer Richa Prakash Chaudhary detailed to them the program of Lok Sabha elections 2024 and preparations for the elections in the district. Representatives of recognized political parties attended the meeting. Representatives of political parties were given information regarding ensuring compliance of the instructions given in this regard from time to time by the Election



Commission of India, New Delhi and the Chief Electoral Officer, Chhattisgarh Raipur. All necessary information related to Durg Parliamentary Constituency was shared with the representatives of political parties. The schedule set by the Election Commission of India is publication of election notification on 12 April 2024, last date of nomination is 19 April 2024, date of scrutiny is 20 April 2024, date of withdrawal of nomination is 22 April 2024, date of voting is 07 May 2024 and date of counting is scheduled for June 2024. A total of 09 assembly constituencies come under Durg Parliamentary constituency, out of which 06 full and 02 partial assembly constituencies fall under the physical limits of Durg district and 03 assembly constituencies fall under Bemetara district. Thus, Durg parliamentary constituency covers a total of 09 assembly constituencies. The total number of polling stations under Durg parliamentary constituency is 2223. 36 auxiliary polling stations have been approved by the Election Commission of India, thus taking the total number of polling stations to 2259. The total number of voters of Durg parliamentary constituency is 2081191, out of which male voters are 1037765, female voters are 1043372 and other voters are 54. Sex ratio 1005, EP ratio 67.97, and the number of

service voters are 2119. There are a total of 6544 voters above 85 years of age in the Legislative Assembly constituency under Durg parliamentary constituency, out of which male voters are 2901, female voters are 2873 and other voters are nil. Similarly, the total number of disabled voters under Durg parliamentary constituency is 13266, out of which male voters are 7666 and female voters are 5599 and 01 other voters. The number is sufficient number of BU - CU and VVPAT in Durg District as per the prescribed standards. A total of 198 sector officers and 23 reserve sector officers, a total of 221 sector officers, have been appointed under Durg parliamentary constituency. All teams (FST, SST, VST, VVT Account Team, Assistant Expenditure Observer) have been formed. The place for distribution of material, return and counting of

votes has been decided. Nodal officers have been appointed and their seating positions have been determined. A 24x7 control room has been established for the parliamentary constituency, which will have the facility to get any kind of information and register any kind of complaint on toll free number 1950 and telephone number 0788-2210180 to the election office. All necessary orders related to the Model Code of Conduct have been issued. Employee database has been completed. MCMC committee has been formed. District level office bearers of Indian National Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party and Aam Aadmi Party and Additional District Magistrate and Nodal Officer MCC Arvind Ekka, Deputy District Election Officer Bajrang Dubey and Assistant Returning Officer Harvansh Singh Miri were present.

Use of loudspeakers banned from 10 pm to 6 am

Bhilai, Mar 17:

With the release of the program for Lok Sabha Elections-2024 by the Election Commission of India, New Delhi, the Model Code of Conduct has become effective in the district. During elections, all political parties, their workers and supporters use loudspeakers to promote their party. These loudspeakers are used not only at some particular permanent location, but also on moving vehicles like jeep, car, truck, tempo, three-wheeler, scooter, cycle rickshaw etc. These vehicles run on all the streets, roads and by-lanes and go through villages, settlements, mohallas and colonies broadcasting very loud sounds through loudspeakers. Unrestricted noise made on loudspeakers causes a lot of trouble to an old, weak or sick person, whether in a hospital, institution or at home. Collector and District Magistrate Richa Prakash Chaudhary, using the powers granted under Section 04 of the Noise Control Act 1985, to control the use of sound amplifying devices during the election period, in the rural areas and urban areas of the district, has issued orders to completely prohibit the use of loud

speakers from 10 pm to 6 am. According to the order, loudspeakers can be used on vehicles for election campaigning and in election meetings in urban and rural areas only after the permission of the concerned officer during 6 am to 10 pm. The loudspeakers will be of ordinary type and will be used in medium volume only. Keeping in view the public welfare, the use of loudspeakers with long cones has been completely banned. Installing more than one loudspeaker in groups in vehicles and election meetings has also been banned. Similarly, in rural areas and urban areas, the use of loudspeakers from 6 am to 10 pm is generally allowed after obtaining permission from the competent authority. The use of loudspeakers within a distance of 200 meters from educational institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, court premises, government offices, hostels, municipal councils, etc District Panchayat and any other local body office, bank, post office, telephone center etc will be completely prohibited even under normal circumstances. This restriction will remain effective in the entire district till the end date of the election process. The order has become effective immediately.

Competent authority appointed for permissions

Bhilai, Mar 17:

Collector and District Magistrate Richa Prakash Chaudhary, keeping in view the Lok Sabha elections 2024 in Chhattisgarh, has appointed competent authority for permissions of loud speaker use in public meetings, etc. Election campaign meetings permission will be given by the authority in the context of the restrictive order issued regarding the use of loudspeakers under the Noise Act 1985, use of loud speakers in meetings, use of loud speakers in campaign vehicles. Regarding determining the route of the procession, Commissioner of Municipal Corporation Risali Bhilai, Monica Verma has been appointed as the competent authority.

The link officer will be Joint Collector Deepak Nikunj.

The competent authority appointed as per the order of the District Magistrate will register the receipt of applications for permission in her office. Loudspeakers can be used for election campaigns only from 06.00 am to 10.00 pm, even after getting permission from the competent authority. Generally, loudspeakers can be used for public meetings, campaigns and processions only from 6.00 am to 10.00 pm. Even after getting permission from the competent authority, the permission for use of loudspeaker will be granted only subject to certain conditions. This order has become effective with immediate effect and will remain effective till the end of the elections.

Committee of officers formed to ensure adherence to model code of conduct

Bhilai, Mar 17:

Collector and District Magistrate Richa Prakash Chaudhary, in the context of Chhattisgarh Lok Sabha Elections 2024, has directed candidates, political parties, government officials and employees and others to ensure compliance with the Model Code of Conduct issued by the Election Commission of India (Election Conduct After the announcement of the Code, with immediate effect). A committee has been formed for the officers to take action within their area.

As per the orders of the District Magistrate, the Commissioner, Municipal Corporation/Chief Municipality Officer in the urban area and the Chief Executive Officer and committee members in the District Panchayats will also

give instructions to their subordinate officers and employees to ensure adherence to the code of conduct.

According to the information received, the Commissioner Municipal Corporation for Municipal Corporation Bhilai area has been appointed as the chairman in the formation of the committee to take action. Sub-Divisional Officer (R), Executive Engineer Public Works Department Division and Assembly (concerned area), Executive Engineer Chhattisgarh State Electricity Board (concerned area), City Superintendent of Police (concerned area), Tehsildar (concerned area) and Police Station Incharge (concerned area) has been appointed as a member and Zone Commissioner (concerned area) has been appointed as the coordinator.

DPS-Bhilai celebrates Annual Open Day of Class-I

**Bhilai, Mar 17:**

The 38th Annual Open Day of the Pre-Primary Wing, DPS Bhilai was celebrated on March 15, 2024 in the Risali campus with a great fervour and ebullience. The entire school manifested an artistic appearance.

The Chief Guest on the occasion was Jitendra Shukla, IPS, Superintendent of Police, Durg. The programme was graced by a plethora of dignitaries, Prabir Kumar Sarkar, Pro-Vice Chairman, SMC, DPSB & CGM I/c. (Services), BSP, Bhilai, DN Karan, Member, SMC, DPS Bhilai & CGM (F&A), BSP, Dr Sangita Shukla, Mrs Keka Sarkar, Mrs Sujata Karan and Mrs Renu Vashishta.

The ravishing evening began with the presentation of bouquets to the guests followed by the traditional lighting of the lamp to lend

an auspicious start to the festivities. Parshant Vashishta, Principal DPS Bhilai, welcomed the distinguished gathering and made everyone aware regarding the renovation work going on at DPS Maroda Wing. Headmistress, Geeta Zunjani proudly presented the report of the attainments of the students of Class-I for the session 2023-24.

In his address, the Chief Guest Jitendra Shukla conveyed his gratitude and congratulated the school as well as the management for organising the programmes on such a grand level. He admired the hard work of the teachers and the opportunity that is given to each and every child to showcase his/her talent. He further asserted that children always remember their school and even school is recognised by the achievements of the children. He

also conveyed his best wishes to the little Dipsites who are quite advanced for their bright future.

The Cultural Bonanza was titled 'Magical Kaleidoscope' to portray the vibrant culture of our country and its unique background. The Prefectorial Body of the Pre-Primary Wing, under the guidance of Sushmita Moitra and Shubha Jiji Varghese, acted as astounding emcees and astonished each and everyone with their down pat compering.

The occult journey embarked with an array of euphonious folk songs resonating the heartbeat of the various parts of India. The jaunt continued and 330 little entertainers of Class-I took the audience to peregrinate from one state to another exhibiting the folk dances of Uttarakhand, Haryana, Rajasthan, West Bengal,

Nagaland, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat and last but not the least, our own Chhattisgarh. The programme displayed the varied cultural heritage of India flaunting the message of 'Unity in Diversity'.

The entire evening, starting from compering to the grand finale, was an exhilarating experience as one perceived the energetic and breathtaking execution of the hard work and innovative ideas of the dedicated team of teachers of Pre-Primary Wing under the able guidance of Sunanda Bajaj, Coordinator, Pre-Primary Wing. The mesmerizing LED display was prepared by Mrunmayee Mishra. The programme was highly appreciated by one and all. The Vote of Thanks was proposed by Sushmita Moitra. The evening concluded with the rendition of National Anthem.

BMC teams remove banners, hoardings and posters

Bhilai, Mar 17:

With the model election code coming into force, the teams of Bhilai Municipal Corporation removed banners, posters and flags as well as erased wall writings from 5843 places in Bhilai Municipal Corporation area under the defacement of property rules.



meeting of officers in the Corporation Auditorium and said that keeping in

mind the model code of conduct in the Corporation area for the Lok Sabha elections, political banners, posters, flags, wall writings, etc in the entire area should be removed immediately.

The corporation administration formed two teams to take action against property defacement in all the zone areas and removed 4982 posters and banners at 260 places on GE Road, market area,

main square, main road and internal roads of the city. 29 other political party's publicity materials have been removed. Similarly, political wall writing done on bridges, culverts and other places at 572 places was erased.

During the defacement of the property, the team of Zone 3 safely removed the religious flags installed at various places and handed them over to the temple committee.

Only through Teamwork & Effective Framing & Execution of Contracts can we Succeed, says Former CGM (Town Services) UK Jha

Bhilai, Mar 17:

When UK Jha joined Bhilai Steel Plant in August 1985, his first posting was in Town Services Dept (TSD). In June 2022, he retired from SAIL-BSP from the same department as Chief General Manager. In between, Jha worked in various other departments including Civil Engg Dept (Works), Traffic, Contract Cells (Works and Non Works). Major portion of his 37 years of service in BSP was however spent in two departments, TSD and Civil Engg Dept (CED). After having worked in TSD for 10 years till 1986, Jha got transferred to Works area in CED, where he spent 16 years of his service period in two spells of 10 years and 6 years. He served as CGM in TSD from Feb 2021 till his retirement. As such, Jha carries with him rich experience in both these departments. Here Jha shares his experiences and also talks about chal-

lenges faced and how decisions and actions he took along with his team impacted the organisation.

From being a raw hand straight out of college to someone who is more confident of handling difficult and tricky situations, both technical and administrative nature, my experiences are innumerable and abundant, said Jha.

Team Work is the Essence: Bhilai Steel Plant is a wonderful workplace for an individual to learn and develop and at the same time contribute to the progress of the company, he says. Describing team work as the essence of working in Bhilai, Jha says that BSP being an integrated steel plant with its processes labour intensive, all major achievements are made possible through teamwork only. This is unlike in few other industries like software, AI etc where there is scope for individual excellence also. Here, any individual, whether a member or the leader of the team, can

contribute through teamwork only.

Jha says he practically saw teamwork at play during his last 10 years of service heading CED and TSD. I could figure out very well that once every team member has a feeling of belongingness to the team, rest of the job about meeting targets, accomplishing difficult tasks is easy, he said, adding that one just has to keep the team motivated. This is the team leader's job.

Role of formal training programs imparted by HRD at Bhilai or the Management Training Institute, Ranchi is also important in development of an individual employee. There may be a general dislike for formal corporate training among employees, but these trainings have their impact in long run.

Effective Framing & Execution of Contracts is the Key: In 1985, BSP had employee strength of about 65,000 and Town Services had about 5000



employees. At that time, most of the jobs were done through departmental manpower and very few contracts were operated. The employee strength has now come down to about 15,000. Now most of the departments have much lesser regular manpower and most of the jobs are carried out through contracts.

Sharing his views on how performances can be improved, Jha says that transition from departmental working to contractual working has not been smooth. Most of the controlling executives still

have preference for working with manpower and are not properly attuned with contractual working and there is a tendency to treat contractors as manpower suppliers. The amount of thought and planning that should go into framing of contracts is often missing. This results in poorly framed contracts being unprofessionally executed. Much more attention is therefore needed in framing of contracts and its execution, said Jha.

Another point about contracts, Jha adds, is regarding proper quality of

manpower deployed through contracts. Deployment of suitable skilled and experienced manpower is very necessary, considering that running and upkeep of most of the important equipment in Plant is done through contracts. This can be ensured only if suitably skilled manpower is deployed through contracts and also ensuring that proper wages and facilities are provided to them as per labour laws. Only then getting things done through contracts can be sustainable in the long run.

Removing Encroachment: Jha says that while working in Town Services, he realized that Real Estate is a very important and valuable asset of the company. It is possible to mobilize equipment, plants and machinery as per need, but it is very difficult to acquire land or take back possession of the land and premises once encroached upon.

The Public Premises Act (PP Act) passed by Parliament in 1971 provides for very strong and effective provisions for eviction of encroachments on Public Premises owned by Government or Public sector companies, Jha said. But it is generally seen that provisions of this act are not fully utilized by Public Sector companies often citing lack of support from local authorities like police and administration, Jha says.

During his tenure at Town Services, with proper coordination with police and local bodies, it could be possible to evict a large number of encroachments with proactive and assertive action by our Enforcement Team and effective use of PP Act, he said. In this drive, whole hearted support was also provided by our Officers Association and various Unions as they too identified with interests of the company and the whole Team BSP was united on this issue.

Use of Technology for Compliant Behaviour: Jha says that it has been often observed that by effective use of technology, it is possible to ensure desired human behaviour. Installation of biometrics for logging of attendance is one such example. In Town Services, realization of dues is a problem area needing attention. A lot can be achieved by use of technology and automation in revenue collection in Town Services. Installation of Smart Electric Meters for those allotted quarters on third party basis can be one such initiative. There would be many other areas that can be explored.

Lastly, Jha says that he would say that Bhilai Township in general and Bhilai Steel Plant in particular is a place where one can get all that is needed for inclusive 360 degree growth of a person, his or her family and children. I will always remain indebted to this place and this company, concluded Shri Jha.

Over 2.05 crore eligible voters in Ch'garh: Kangale

● Up by 7.96 pc since 2019

Raipur, Mar 17: More than 2.05 crore persons, including 1.03 crore women and 1.01 crore men, are eligible to exercise their franchise in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in Chhattisgarh, officials said on Sunday.

The number of voters has increased by 15,14,013 (7.96 per cent) since the 2019 Lok Sabha polls and by 1,20,092 (0.6 per cent) since the 2023 state assembly elections, Chief Electoral Officer Reena Babasaheb Kangale told reporters.

A total of 2,855 persons aged 100 and above, 5,77,184 in the age group of 18-19 and 1,91,638 'divyang' (those with disabilities) persons are among the electors in the state, she



said.

There are 19,905 service voters, 17 Non-Resident Indian (NRI) electors and 47,11,890 in 20-29 age bracket, the official said.

Elections to the 11 Lok Sabha seats in Chhattisgarh will be held in three phases on April 19, April 26 and May 7 and votes will be counted on June 4. As on February 8, the state has 2,05,13,252 voters, including 1,01,80,405 males, 1,03,32,115 females and 732

transgender persons, Kangale said.

The state's elector-population ratio is 66.70 while there are 1,015 women per 1,000 men in the voter gender ratio, she said.

There are 24,229 polling centres, including 24,109 main polling stations and 120 assistant polling stations.

Of the total polling stations, 900 will be 'sangwari' booths (managed by women personnel), 450 'adrash' polling booths while 90 booths each will be managed by persons with disabilities and youth. Senior citizens above 85 years of age, persons with disabilities (more than 40 percent disability) and those infected by COVID-19 will be able to cast vote from home through postal ballots, the official said.

Eleven returning offi-

cers for as many Lok Sabha seats and 90 assistant returning officers have been notified and they have been provided training for conducting the polls, she said.

Out of the 11 parliamentary constituencies in the state, four are reserved for the Scheduled Tribe (ST) and one for Scheduled Caste (SC) category candidates.

The Naxal-hit Bastar (ST) constituency will witness polling on April 19 in the first phase, while voting in three other constituencies - Kanker (ST), Rajnandgaon and Mahasamund - will be held in the second phase on April 26. Polling in the other seven Lok Sabha seats - Surguja (ST), Raigarh (ST), Janjgir-Champa (SC), Raipur Durg, Korba and Bilaspur will be held on May 7.

Petrol pump pipe bursts, no incident reported

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 17: The petrol pipe of M/s Pali Fuels petrol pump got burst yesterday while refilling petrol in one of the vehicle and the person standing next to the vehicle got completely drenched from the petrol. Fortunately no untoward incident took place, as the bursting of petrol pump pipe could have led to fire as well and it could have proven to be nightmare for all those present at the petrol pump.

As per information in this regard M/s Pali Fuels petrol pump is near Pachpedhi Naka and here the customers come daily for refilling and this petrol pump is functional in the middle of the populated area.

When a person came to get a refill in his vehicle, the petrol pipe got burst and this led to sudden release of petrol in large quantity and it left a person standing nearby



completely drenched from petrol.

People standing nearby turned panicky and fortunately no untoward incident took place and the situation was brought under control well on time.

The District administration needs to check bare essentials services in all the petrol pumps and safety measures required to meet up any such emergency situation.

Second list of five LS candidates Cong likely today: Baij

● CEC important meeting in Delhi today

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 17: PCC Chief Deepak Baij speaking about declaration of LS candidate for remaining seats of Congress in Chhattisgarh said that at present the senior party leaders are taking part in the 'Nyay Jodo Yatra'. Tomorrow there is going to be an important meeting of CEC in Delhi and in this discussions will be held on remaining seats of Congress in Chhattisgarh and other states as well and it is expected that the list can be declared by tomorrow evening.

It is notable here that the Congress has so far not declared its second list of the remaining 5 LS candidates and commenting upon the criticism from BJP that about Congress being in state of

fear, PCC Chief Deepak Baij said that the BJP is in state of shock over seeing the first list of six names of Congress and therefore has taken up individual attack. They are not having any issues in hand and since they do not talk on issue, this clearly shows how much BJP is fearful about the same, Baij added. The names of five candidates which will be declared shortly, will be even the best and give another shock to BJP.

Speaking about preparations for LS polls, PCC Chief Deepak Baij said that he greets the people of Chhattisgarh, as the bugle for the LS polls has been blown and LS elections in Chhattisgarh will be held in three phases. In this massive occasion of democracy, this time with a major changes, a new government will be formed in the country and it would bring revolution for farmers, youth and women, he added.

Modi, Shah, JP Nadda to campaign in the state

For LS polls 2024

All LS, VS and divisional-level in-charges, co-in-charges appointed

Raipur, Mar 17: In view of the forthcoming Lok Sabha (LS) polls in the state, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and BJP National President JP Nadda would be visiting Chhattisgarh. In this context, the Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai too would conduct tour in all Vidhan Sabha areas and hold public meeting and campaign in favour of the party and its candidates.

BJP MLA Shivratna Sharma giving information in detail about the preparations for LS polls informed that in view of the Lok Sabha polls, Chhattisgarh has been divided into three clusters and appointment of in-charge and co-in-charge has been made. In the same way division in-charge and co-in-charge have also been appointed. Sharma said that prior to the declaration of election dates and model code of

conduct coming into force, the party had declared its 11 LS candidates for 11 LS seats in the state and party's election office in LS area and Vidhan Sabha (VS) areas have been opened.

Sharma informed that all the LS candidates have started campaigning in their respective LS seat. In view of the LS election management, 37 committees have been formed. To ensure that the elections are smoothly conducted, election manager, co-ordinators and co-managers have been appointed. To take up the promotion of 10 yrs of PM Narendra Modi's government at the Centre and 3 months of the government's achievements in the state, three 'Prachar Rath' (promotional chariots) will be used in each Lok Sabha area, he added.

Convener of BJP Election Management Samiti Shivratna Sharma informed that right after completion of VS polls, BJP has started focusing upon preparations for the LS polls and prepared outline for different programmes. In this series, the party's 'Gaon Chalo' campaign was launched by BJP National President JP Nadda. Under this cam-

paign, the BJP party workers went to 20000 villages. In this campaign, CM Vishnu Deo Sai spent times in Jashpur, BJP State President Kiran Deo in Raipur (rural) and coordinator of Gao Chalo Abhiyan Narayan Chandhel spent 24 hours in Janjgir. In the organization's 35 district, 'shakti Vandan' programme was held at 280 places. Under leadership of BJP National President Saroj Pandey, dialogue programme with District level NGO and Women Self-Help Group was held on Feb 8 & 9. Shakti Vandan programme is being organized all over the state from Feb 8. Sharma informed that as per the promise, the state government has so far sent more than 10000 person for 'darshan' to Ayodhya that of Ramlalla through 'Ayodhya Shradha train'. Under the 'Labharti Sampark Abhiyan', around 1.08 lakh party workers are knocking at the door of beneficiaries at home and distributing stickers, letters and memorandum in support of central government's schemes and the party is at present having data of around 40 lakh beneficiaries from the state, he added.

Lok Sabha Election-2024: Voting for Raipur on 7th May

Raipur, Mar 17: Collector Dr Gaurav Kumar Singh reviewed preparations for Raipur Lok Sabha elections 2024 at a meeting of the officers here today. Code of conduct has become effective with the announcement of Lok Sabha elections by the Election Commission and all officers have to discharge their responsibilities with commitment by following the model code of conduct, he said at the meeting.

He said that all the personnel should be impartial and conduct the election work impartially. According to the program issued by the Election Commission, elections are to be held in the third phase in Raipur parliamentary constituency. The date of release of notification is Friday 12th April, the last date for nomination is Friday 19th April. The date of scrutiny of nominations is Saturday 20th April, the last date for withdrawal of candidature is Monday 22nd April and the date of voting is Tuesday 7th May. The date of counting of votes has been fixed for Tuesday, June 4.

The Collector said that all the Assistant Election Officers should inspect the polling stations falling in their area and report the situation there. He said that arrangements for clean drinking water, sep-



arate toilets for men and women, lights, fans, and ramps for the disabled etc. should be ensured in all the polling stations. He also told them to establish coordination with the concerned Zone Commissioner in the

urban bodies for arrangements like cleanliness etc. Adequate arrangements for internet including electricity should be made at the polling stations where webcasting is to be held. He said that the nomination will be submitted in

Room No. 2 of Collectorate Court, Raipur. For this, the designated nodal officer should complete barricading in the premises and other arrangements inside the room within the stipulated time. The Collector said that as per the instructions of the Commission, this time people above 85 years of age and more than 40 percent disabled will be given special facility to vote. For this, a special team will be formed and options will be taken from them. According to

their wish, they will be given special facilities in home voting or polling centres. Preliminary preparations should be started for this and so that such voters do not face any kind of problem. He said that work should be done by making an action plan for the voter awareness programme.

Municipal Corporation Commissioner Abinash Mishra, District Panchayat CEO Vishwadeep and other officials were present in the meeting.

ITM University Raipur organizes badminton tourney

● Inter-college/university level ITM Badminton Cup 2024

Raipur, Mar 17: ITM University Raipur organized an inter college/university level two day badminton tournament ITM Badminton Cup 2024 on 15 and 16 March, Friday and Saturday with great enthusiasm and sportsmanship at Naya Raipur Based ITM Badminton Academy. The event witnessed a total of 21 participants in the Singles category and nine participants in the Doubles category, representing 13 colleges and universities of Chhattisgarh State. The participant universities & colleges are Amity University, CMD College Bilaspur, IIIT Naya Raipur, ITM University Raipur, MATS University, Pragati College, Rungta College of Engineering and Technology, Bhilai, Rungta College of Engineering and

Technology, Raipur, Vipra College, BIT, Durg, Shri Rawatpura Sarkar University, Anjaneya University and Netaji College. In the Singles category, Aditya Ranjan Gupta from ITM University emerged as the champion, showcasing exceptional skill and sportsmanship.

Sangeet Mishra, also from ITM University Raipur, displayed commendable performance and secured the runner-up position.

The Doubles category saw intense competition, with Kanishka Gandhi and Varun Kumar Jain from MATS University clinching the top spot. Aditya Ranjan Gupta and Ansh Kukreja from ITM University Raipur demonstrated remarkable teamwork and secured the runner-up position.

The inaugural program was graced by esteemed Chief Guests, Mr. Ashutosh Singh, Director of Holy Hearts Educational Academy,

and Ms. Harshita Pandey, Ex-chairperson of the State Women Commission, CG Government. In welcome address, Director General Ms. Lakshmi Murthy enthusiastically encouraged the students, expressing her pride in ITM University's upcoming plans for numerous tournaments. She announced the exciting prospect of a summer camp for students, inter-corporate tournaments, and inter-school competitions to be organized in the near future at the Badminton academy. Director General highlighted ITM Badminton Academy is accredited by Khelo India and known as the largest badminton academy in central India with the aim to promote education with sports. The academy has 50 residential students who play badminton tournaments at national and international level. Two of the students Aditya Gupta and Sangeet Mishra are students at ITM

University Raipur and are being trained at the academy under the supervision of Director of the Academy Mr. Sanjay Mishra at Naya Raipur. Registrar Mr. Saurav Chatterjee, Heads of University Teaching department and faculty members were present during the program.

In the prize distribution ceremony, Joint Registrar Mr. Vikas Bhonsale extended vote of thanks to Director General Ms. Lakshmi Murthy for the invaluable support and approval of the 1st ITM Badminton Cup 2024. He also acknowledged Director of CSR & International Relations Ms. Pallavi Magoo for her unwavering support for execution of the badminton tournament.

The tournament was well coordinated by event in charge Professor Arijit Goswami and Mr. Manu Prakash Mishra with the support of Mr. Barun and the entire team of the ITM Badminton Academy.

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Use of EV vehicles will prove to be a milestone in achieving the Panchamrit target: Sai

Raipur, Mar 17:

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai took part in a road safety awareness programme organized by the Chhattisgarh State Renewable Energy Development Agency (CREDA) at his residence today. He inaugurated the roadshow by flagging off the electric vehicle rally. The roadshow commenced under the leadership of the Chief Minister's residence, traversing through Bhagat Singh Chowk, Telibandha Chowk, VIP Chowk, and Fundahar, and culminating at the Energy Park.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Sai highlighted the ongoing transportation development efforts nationwide under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He mentioned the Prime Minister's global announcement of India's climate action's five nectar elements (Panchamrit) during the Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2021. He stated that in alignment with this, CREDA is leading various renewable energy-based projects in the public interest in the state.

Elaborating further, Chief Minister Sai stated

- CM Sai attends CREDA's Road Safety Awareness prog
- Inaugurated the roadshow by flagging off the electric vehicle rally

that under the Panchamrit target, our nation is dedicated to reducing its dependence on conventional energy sources by 2030, aiming for a transition towards clean energy. To accomplish this objective, the widespread adoption of electric vehicles in the transportation sector will serve as an important milestone.

Sai pointed out the growing trend in the nation towards increased electric vehicle adoption, with Chhattisgarh currently operationalizing 39,802 two-wheeled, 17,956 three-wheeled, and 1,596 four-wheeled electric vehicles. "Electric vehicles not only emit no harmful pollutants but also eliminate the need for petrol or diesel, offering a more cost-effective and sustainable alternative to conventional vehicles", he said.

He added that through CREDA's initiatives, essential amenities are



being extended to all segments of society through solar plants. Initiatives such as solar agricultural pumps for farmers, electricity and water provisions in remote rural households, and power supply in health centres are indeed a boon for our people. Highlighting the Government of India's Go Electric campaign as a forward-thinking measure, CM Sai urged collective commitment towards electric vehicle adoption, advocating for energy conservation and pollution reduction. He urged strict adherence to road safety

regulations and maximizing electric vehicle usage.

Food Minister Dayaldas Baghel, Health Minister Shyam Bihari Jayaswal, MLA Purandar Mishra, Energy Department Secretary P. Dayanand, CREDA CEO Rajesh Rana, Public Relations Commissioner Mayank Srivastava, along with other dignitaries, CREDA officials, and students from various educational institutions were present on the occasion.

Panchamrit Yojana: PM Modi's approach to India's climate action
Meanwhile, Prime

Minister Narendra Modi, while delivering a 'national statement' at the conference held in Glasgow, Scotland, presented a five-point agenda to address the issue of climate change, which he termed as five 'nectar elements' (Panchamrit). For the first time on the global stage, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced commitments from India to combat climate change. The most significant announcement among these is India's endeavour to achieve the target of net zero carbon emissions by 2070. He mentioned that half of the country's energy requirements would be fulfilled using renewable sources by 2030. Besides, India aims to reduce carbon emissions by one billion tonnes between 2022 and 2030. As the fourth point, India has set a target to reduce carbon emission intensity by 45 per cent by 2030. The 'Panchamrit Yojana' is envisioned to provide a more flexible, sustainable, and inclusive approach to economic development, offering new opportunities to marginalized communities and women. It will undoubtedly play a historic role in the ongoing efforts to combat climate change.

Category 3C VFR licence issued to Ambikapur Airport

Raipur, Mar 17: Through the special initiative of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai for the expansion of air services in the state, a Category 3C VFR licence has been issued to Ambikapur Airport. An application for licencing was submitted to the Director General of Civil Aviation in December 2022 for the operation of air services from Ambikapur. On March 15, 2024, the much-awaited licence for Ambikapur Airport was issued by the Director General of Civil Aviation, Government of India. With the licencing of Ambikapur Airport, three airports, including Bilaspur and Jagdalpur, are now licenced under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) in the state. With the Category 3C VFR licence obtained, air services can now commence from Ambikapur Airport with a 72-seater aircraft. The state government is making consistent efforts to initiate air services from Ambikapur Airport to Raipur, Bilaspur, Lucknow, Patna, and Ranchi. The commencement of air services from the Ambikapur airport will boost tourism and commercial activities in the northern region of the state, which will propel the development of the region.

Electrical OP wins 21st DRM Cup



Raipur, Mar 17: The 21st edition of the DRM Cup 2024 concluded with jubilation as Electrical OP clinched victory in a thrilling finale at SECRSA Ground, WRS Colony. The cricket competition, a long-standing tradition since 2004 for railway employees, saw enthusiastic participation from 19 department teams.

Commencing on March 4, the tournament witnessed intense matches among the teams, showcasing remarkable sportsmanship and skill. Following a series of league matches and a Super Six round, the stage was set for the semi-finals. In the semi-finals, Mechanical faced RPF while Electrical OP competed against Engineering. Electrical OP and defending champions Mechanical advanced to the final after winning their respective semi-final matches.

For the third-place position, Engineering clashed with RPF, emerging victorious and securing their spot on the podium. In the final showdown, Mechanical won the toss and opted to bat first, posting a for-

midable total of 100 runs within the allotted 12 overs. However, in a nail-biting encounter, Electrical OP secured a thrilling victory on the last ball of the match, clinching the championship for the second time.

Their stellar performance, led by standout player Shubham, earned them the championship for the second time, amid cheers and applause from spectators.

Divisional Railway Manager Sanjeev umar commended the dedication of the participants and emphasized the importance of fostering a culture of sports within the railway community. With plans for a comprehensive sports calendar, the celebration of athleticism is set to continue throughout the year, fostering camaraderie and well-being among employees. The event was graced by the presence of railway officials, union representatives, and supporters, marking not just a victory in cricket, but a celebration of unity and teamwork within the railway family.

'Women voters to play a decisive role in LS elections too'

- Women voters are more than men in 10 out of 11 seats

Raipur, Mar 17: Women voters will play a decisive role in the Lok Sabha elections this time too. On the lines of the Assembly, women voters can prevail over men in the Lok Sabha also. The total number of voters in Chhattisgarh is 2 crore 51 lakh 3 thousand 252, out of which the number of female voters is 1 crore 3 lakh 32 thousand 115 and the number of male voters is 1 crore 1 lakh 80, 405.

On the issue of high number of women voters, election officials said that women are actively participating in awareness pro-



grams across the state. The number of women in making voter ID was also more. Political analysts said that women voters will prove to be a big factor for both BJP and Congress parties in the Lok Sabha elections. The BJP government in Chhattisgarh has recently taken a big decision by starting the Mahtari Vandana Yojana for women, while the Congress has made infla-

tion an issue in this Lok Sabha election. Both the parties have made strategies to woo women.

If we look at the data of 11 seats in the state, only Raipur Lok Sabha seat has more male voters. Women voters are more in other Lok Sabha seats Surguja, Raigarh, Janjgir-Champa, Korba, Bilaspur, Rajnandgaon, Durg, Mahasamund, Bastar and Kanker. In Raipur Lok

Sabha seat, male voters are 11 lakh 73 thousand 167, while female voters are 11 lakh 69 thousand 358. There are total 23 lakh 42 thousand 827 voters in Raipur Lok Sabha.

If we look at the number of women voters in the state in the assembly elections, then the number of women voters was more in 57 out of 90 seats of the state, while the number of male voters was more in only 33 seats. During the Assembly elections in 2023, there were 1 lakh 9 thousand 370 more women voters than men, whereas if we look at the situation in the Lok Sabha this time, the number of women voters in the state is 1 lakh 51 thousand 710 more than men.

NIT organizes voter awareness campaign

Raipur, Mar 17: National Institute of Technology (NIT) Raipur's National Service Scheme (NSS) Club and Abhinay - the Dramatic Club organized a Pledge Ceremony and Nukkad Natak few days back, in a bid to cultivate an active engagement of the youth in the democratic process and to encourage students to participate in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The event was graced by esteemed guests, including Dr. N. V. Ramana Rao, Director, NIT Raipur along with Dr. P. Y. Dheke, Registrar, NIT Raipur; Dr. Shirish Verma, Dean (Academics) and Dr. Nitin Jain, Dean (Student Welfare). Under the adept guidance of Dr. Govardhan Bhatt, Faculty in charge,



NSS Club and Abhinay Club, the program aimed to align with the nationwide "Chunav Ka Parv" and "Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye" campaigns initiated by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth Affairs, and the Election Commission of India. In his speech, Dr. Rao emphasized on the crucial role of young people in voting, stating that they are torchbearers for

the future of India. He urged everyone present to pledge their commitment to actively participate in the electoral process without being influenced by any considerations of religion, race, caste, or language. Following Dr. Rao's address, attendees solemnly pledged to make informed decisions based on the issues affecting their communities, nation, and the world. They also vowed

to stand against corruption, injustice, and inequality, using their votes as tools for positive change. A captivating Nukkad Natak, orchestrated by the Abhinay - The Dramatics Club, unfolded at the central garden. The performance not only underscored the significance of thoughtful leadership selection but also debunked common excuses for abstaining from voting, urging citizens to fulfill their democratic responsibility. Through these concerted efforts, NIT Raipur endeavors to instill a sense of civic duty and active citizenship, catalyzing a wave of responsible electoral engagement among the student community and beyond.

Darima Ambikapur Airport receives license to begin flight operations



Raipur, Mar 17: Soaring to new heights, the long-anticipated dream of air travel becomes a reality for the residents of Surguja as Darima Airport in Ambikapur district receives licence for commencing flight operations. Tribal Development and Farmers Welfare Minister Ramvichar Netam expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia for this achievement.

Minister Ramvichar Netam, during his tenure as minister and as a member of the Rajya Sabha, has consistently raised his voice in Parliament to provide air connectivity to the people of Surguja. Finally, the moment arrived, and Darima Ambikapur Airport received the license for air carrier operations.

It is worth mentioning that the Office of the Director-General of Civil

- Surguja residents' dream of air travel realized
- Agriculture Minister Ramvichar Netam extends gratitude to Prime Minister and Union Civil Aviation Minister

Aviation, Government of India, has issued a license to Maa Mahamaya Airport Darima Ambikapur to commence flight operations. The airport infrastructure and necessary parameters were continuously inspected by the DGCA team. Recently, a final inspection was conducted by the team from the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) to assess the infrastructure and facilities' condition for passenger safety and flight operations. The team expressed satisfaction with all aspects, confirming the airport's suitability for safe flight operations. The report was forwarded to BCAS

Headquarters in Delhi for provisional approval, leading to the issuance of an order for aircraft operations the very next day on March 15.

With the licencing of Ambikapur Airport, the state now has 03 licensed airports, including Bilaspur and Jagdalpur, under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS). Following the acquisition of the 3-C VFR category license, the operation of air services via 72-seater aircraft can now commence from Ambikapur Airport.

The state government is actively working to initiate air service operations from Ambikapur Airport to Raipur, Bilaspur, Lucknow, Patna, and Ranchi. The commencement of air services from the airport is expected to boost tourism and commercial activities in the northern region of the state, thereby accelerating the region's development.

Policing is quite a challenging job, for which physical fitness and mental strength are crucial: CM

Raipur, Mar 17:

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai attended the concluding ceremony of the Chhattisgarh Police State Level Sports Competition 2024, held at the PTS Mana Camp in Raipur. He took the salute from the parade of police jawans and felicitated the winning participants and team. He stated that physical activities, including sports, can strengthen the body and enhance mental focus. Events like this also boost the enthusiasm of the youth. Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Vijay Sharma encouraged the participating athletes and teams.

During his address, the Chief Minister mentioned that policing is a quite challenging job. Physical fitness and mental strength are crucial for police personnel. A person's physical and mental fitness are the prime focus areas while recruiting takes place in the police department. It is often observed that seniority in the job brings a negligent attitude towards their physical fitness. This is neither good for themselves nor for the police department. The Chief Minister stated that regular exercise is very crucial for physical fitness, and sports are an excellent means for this. He fur-

- Sai participates in concluding ceremony of the Chhattisgarh Police State-Level Sports Competition
- CM honours the winners of the state-level sports competition 2024

ther mentioned, "Sports inculcate a sense of discipline and unity, while yoga enhances mental focus. Fitness and focus are essential to achieving any goal". He expressed his pleasure that sports are being encouraged in the police department. Chhattisgarh players are also performing well in the All India Police Sports Competition. The state government will provide all possible assistance to enhance the talent and skills of departmental players. The state government is committed to promoting sports throughout Chhattisgarh, including in the police department. The state government will revitalise traditional sports along with popular sports at the national and international levels. For this, the state government will launch the 'Chhattisgarhiya Krida Protsahan' Yojana. State players will be provided with national-level sports facilities and training opportunities.



The Chief Minister stated that after the implementation of new laws in the country, citizens are expecting a new approach to policing. The system of policing, which has been ongoing since the British era, is now changing. Every police officer should prepare themselves according to these changes.

Every police officer should act like a friend to the people and instill fear of the law in the minds of criminals.

The Chief Minister stated that for the security and development of the people, the state government has established 20 security camps in Bastar after assuming office. Every police personnel should work to develop a security camp as a development camp for the residents. During the concluding ceremony, the

Chief Minister felicitated the winning participants and teams. The winners are as follows: Kho-Kho Men's Category Winner: Bastar Range; Kho-Kho Women's Category Winner: CAF Central Range; Handball Men's Category Winner: Raipur Range; Volleyball Men's Category Winner: Raipur Range; Volleyball Women's Category Winner: Raipur Range; Hockey Men's Category Winner: CAF Central Range; Kabaddi Women's Category Winner: Bastar Range; Kabaddi Men's Category Winner: Raipur Range; Football Men's Category Winner: Bastar Range; Tug of War Men's Category Winner: Raipur Range; Best Athletics Male Category: Shri Manoj Kattam with 03 Gold Medals in 800m, 1500m, and 3000m from Bastar Range. At the

event, Sushri Ishwari Sahu, the Best Athletics Female, showcased the remarkable talent and secured 2 Gold Medals in the javelin throw and 1 Bronze Medal in Shot Put. Furthermore, the Bastar Range was awarded under the category of Overall Champion, bagging an impressive total of 17 Gold, 10 Silver, and 9 Bronze Medals, totaling 36 medals and accumulating 80 points. Notably, Inspector Shri Amber Singh Bharadwaj, who represented India in the World Police and Fire Games 2023, secured 1 Gold Medal in the Karate competition at Chhattisgarh Police State Sports Competition 2024. Additionally, the police department showcased various shows, including a Pipe Band Display, Police Dog and Horse Show, as well as demonstrations of fencing and Malkhamb, all conducted by the dedicated personnel of the police department. MLA Motilal Sahu, Director General of Police Ashok Juneja, ADGs S.R.P. Kalluri, Pradeep Gupta, Vivekanand Sinha, Amit Kumar, IGs SC Dwivedi, Ajay Kumar Yadav, Badrinarayan Meena, Amresh Mishra, Arif Hussain, BS Dhruv, Ram Gopal Garg, and other senior officers of the police department were present.

Deptt of Botany hoys annual seminar

On 'Plant Growth and Development: Relevance in present time'

Paradip, Mar 17:

The department of Botany, Paradeep College organized its annual seminar on the theme "Plant Growth and Development: Relevance in present time". Dr. Nihar Ranjan Singh, Assoc. Prof. Of Botany, Ravenshaw University graced the occasion as Chief Speaker and delivered inspiring talk on relevance of Plant Growth and Development in current scenario.

Dr. Sasmita Satpathy, Principal Paradeep College presided over the meeting and delivered welcome address. Sri. Abhisek Biswal, HOD department of Botany introduced guests as well as the topic. Ms



Rajlaxmi Barik, Lect. in Botany conducted paper reading and questionnaire session.

Ms Monalisha Rout, student of +3 3rd year Science delivered Annual Report of the Department. Ms Jainaseni Barik and Ms Lahari Jena presented

paper on this occasion. Sri Jyoti Ranjan Mohapatra, Demonstrator in Botany cooperated in smooth conduction of the said event.

Sri Anand Kumar Behera and Sri Subrat Swain provided technical support. On this occasion, Dr. Singh felicitated Sri

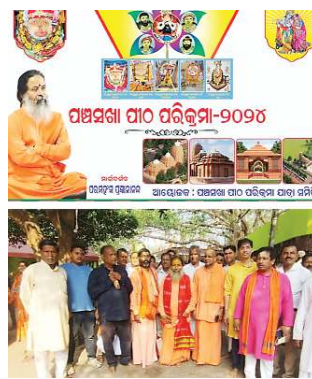
Bapi Gochhayat, Staff of the Paradeep College for his Environmental Protection and Cleanliness activities. A good number of students and faculties attended the seminar. At the end Ms Rajlaxmi Barik, Lect. in Botany extended vote of thanks to all.

Religious procession taken out to spread Panchaskha's teachings

Paradip, Mar 17:

The spreading of Sanatan Dharma is equated with the spread of Panchaskha's teachings across the globe. The Panchaskha Marg, the road connecting Nimal and Shrikshetra Puri, and the renaming of the Panchaskha Marg were all part of the proposal to the Indian government and state governments for the enhancement of the Pachaskha Pith-parikrama and Pith.

A leadership of Paramahans Pragyananda over 600 saints and followers took part. These redevelopment activities encompass the Panchaskha



Piths of Mahapurusa Achutananda's Dham, Nimal, Cuttack, Mahapurusa Yashovant Das Pith, Adhang, Jagatsinghpur, Mahapurusa Anant Das Pith, Balipatna, Khurda, Mahapurusa Balam Das



Pith, Begunia, Puri, and Mahapurusa Jagannath Das Pith, Puri.

Over two hundred cars took part in the excursion. All of the villages welcomed this endeavor. The people become more devoted as a result of this. The

state government supplied all of the assistance.

Swami Arupananda, Swami Sudhananda, Swami Brahmananda Giri, Swami Paripuraka Nanda, Sri Sisir Das, Harekrusna Pujhari, Ajaya Kumar Pursty, Santanu Pujhari, Dharani dhar Pujhari, Hemant Kumar Parida, Charan Shubhendu Kumar Swayum, Charan Lingaraj Pati, Sushant Kumar Das, Prakash Chandra Pani, Singer Rajshri Jena, Dr Pradeep Kumar Mohanty attended the meeting. On behalf of the committee, Prasanna Kumar Beura presented a vote of thanks to all the devotees and saints of the state government.

Kolkata GPO: India's first general PO connecting people for 250 years

Kolkata, Mar 17 (PTD):

Established in 1774 by the then Governor General of Bengal, Warren Hastings, Kolkata GPO holds the distinction of being India's first general post office. Over its 250-year history, it has served as a testament to the evolution of postal services in the country. This month, Kolkata GPO is celebrating its remarkable journey, highlighting its pivotal role in shaping the postal landscape of India.

Kolkata GPO has been the cornerstone of comprehensive and extensive postal services throughout the nation. It embodies the ethos that India Post is always on the move, as emphasised by Niraj Kumar, Chief Postmaster General of West Bengal Circle.

The authorities are leaving no stone unturned to showcase the rich heritage

and legacy of GPO Kolkata with a series of events such as postal and philatelic exhibitions on 'Journey of Mails', the release of a special cover on a boat, heritage walk and several cultural programmes during the March 14-19 period.

The 250th anniversary celebration of the Kolkata GPO is a "testament to its enduring legacy and unwavering commitment to serving the people, reflecting its timeless relevance in an ever-changing world", Kumar said. Flanked by the Hooghly river and a water body 'Laldighi', GPO Kolkata building, the white edifice among many British-era buildings in the Dalhousie Square area



of the city, has been given a spectacular look with illumination during the on-going celebrations.

The old GPO was relocated numerous times to various locations from 1774 to 1868, and the present GPO building was opened to the public on October 2, 1868. As part of the 250-year celebrations, homage was paid to the grand clock of the GPO

through the release of a special philatelic cover. As the Dalhousie Square area transformed into a bustling administrative and commercial hub, the installation of a clock became necessary to keep pace with time.

In 1896, this grand clock, imported from the manufacturer of the famous Big Ben in London, was added to the GPO at the cost of Rs 7,000. The ongoing exhibition at the GPO's rotunda showcases three-dimensional models, depicting various modes of mail transportation.

"The 250-year journey of Kolkata GPO coincides with the growth of the postal network in India. The ongoing exhibition at

the rotunda of the GPO building, probably for the first time in the country, is showcasing three-dimensional models of railway mail coaches, palanquins, bullock carts, boat and a replica of the first aeroplane that carried mail in 1911," the West Bengal circle chief postmaster general told PTD.

Additionally, the exhibition features models illustrating the utilisation of satellite technology by the postal department, alongside sculptures, paintings, and photographs portraying the lives around Kolkata GPO. To commemorate this momentous occasion, a heritage walk was organised, offering a symbolic journey through time, on Sunday morning. Picture postcards featuring Kolkata's majestic heritage structures were released, adding to the celebration.

Sreejita De joins the cast of 'Shaitani Rasmein'

Mumbai, Mar 18:

Star Bharat's 'Shaitani Rasmein' has kept the viewers hooked to their television screens with its screenplay and amazing twists and turns in the story. With a stellar star cast the show now welcomes the talented actress Sreejita De to its ensemble cast. Known for her versatile performances, Dey brings her captivating presence to the screen in her portrayal of the intriguing character, Chaya Dayan.

Sreejita De discusses her character Chaya Dayan, explaining, "I've previously portrayed a 'chudail,' but this marks my first time embodying a 'dayan.' I have a strong affinity for supernatural dramas due to the ability to fly and wield extraordinary powers they offer. My character is a formidable woman, exceptionally



strong, and aged 200 years. Her power resides within her braid, a common motif in such tales. Her appearance exudes allure and seduction, amplifying her influence with her captivating beauty. This adds to her formidable prowess, making her exceptionally powerful."

Expounding on the necessary preparations for portraying the character, she remarks, "To effectively portray a 'dayan' or 'chudail' in a supernatural

show, thorough preparation is essential to instill believability and foster audience connection. This entails immersing myself fully in the character's persona, facilitating a seamless connection with the audience. Given my appreciation for the empowering essence of supernatural roles, I was motivated to dedicate myself fully and deliver my utmost. Hence, extensive preparation was indeed integral to the process."

Korba Police conducts surprise checking

Action taken to remove ten pressure horns and black film from 12 vehicles

Central Chronicle News

Korba, Mar 17: Surprise checking was done in all the major intersections of urban police station and rural police station areas of Korba. Action was taken to remove black films from 10 pressure horns and 12 vehicles.

In view of the Holi festival, advice was given to those driving the vehicle by covering their faces with three passengers in two wheelers, face mask, towel, handkerchief, mask and other things. Korba Police is continuously taking action under Vigilant Korba.

In this context, on the instructions of Superintendent of Police District Korba Siddharth Tiwari, Additional



Superintendent of Police U.B.S. under the supervision of Chauhan and Neha Verma, informed that suspicious vehicles is being checked by all the gazetted officers of police stations and outposts of the district by setting up checking points in major intersections of urban areas and in all rural police station areas. In com-

pliance with the instructions of police officers, in view of Holi festival, foot patrolling is being done in the police station and out-post area.

During patrolling, continuous Excise Act, MV Act and restrictive action is being taken against anti-social elements and those who consume liquor in public places. Used to

be. During surprise checking on March 16, 2024, Korba Police took action to remove 10 pressure horns and black films from 12 vehicles. Korba Police appeals to the citizens not to ride three wheelers in two wheelers, not to cover their faces with masks, handkerchiefs, masks etc. and not to drive after drinking alcohol.

Do not drive without valid documents and driving license and also wear a helmet while driving because life is precious. After the explanation and warning on March 16, 2024, from today onwards, action will be taken by the police against those who do not follow the traffic rules under the Motor Vehicle Act as per rules.

SECL's OBR crosses 310 MCuM

Company creates a new record by achieving the target 16 days before the end of the financial year

Central Chronicle News

Korba, Mar 17: On March 15, OBR (Overburden Removal) of SECL has crossed the mark of 310 million cubic meters and with this the company has achieved the OBR target of this year. SECL has created a new record by achieving the target 16 days before the end of financial year 23-24 and now in this financial year the company is set to create a new record of highest OBR in its history.

SECL has already crossed last year's production and dispatch figures. If



compared to last year, till March 15 last year the company had around 248 million cubic meter OBR and this year the company has registered a historic growth of 24.64% (61.32 million cubic meter). All three megaprojects Gevra, Dipka, and Kusmunda have contributed significantly in

this milestone of the company.

Congratulations everyone on this achievement of SECL, CMD Dr Prem Sagar Mishra said that no goal is too big against the hard work, dedication and courage of our brave colleagues and every employee of the company has the abil-

ity to overcome any challenge no matter how big it is. The world's largest and most modern machines are used for OBR in SECL, which include vertical ripper which is capable of removing soil without blasting, 42 cubic meter shovel and 240 tonne dumper, 381 mm drill machine etc.

'Cong party's agenda is to 'use and throw' its allies'

Amaravati (AP), Mar 17 (PTD):

Hitting out at the Congress and INDI alliance partners (INDIA bloc), Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday alleged that the grand old party's agenda is to "use and throw" its partners.

Addressing an NDA election meeting at Boppudi village in Palnadu district, Modi said both the Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRCP in Andhra Pradesh and the Congress party in the state are the same and run by the members of the one family.

"In NDA, we take everyone along, but on the other hand the Congress party's only agenda is to use and



throw allies. Today, the Congress had to make the INDI alliance (INDIA bloc) out of compulsion, but their thinking is that only," he said.

"You can see what the Left and the Congress tell each other in Kerala. In Bengal, what the TMC and the Left say against each other and the kind of lan-

guage Congress and AAP use against each other in Punjab. Before the elections those people, who for their own benefit fight this way then what will they do after the elections you can guess," he charged.

Modi said the NDA moves ahead taking regional aspirations and national progress and during its third term after the polls, the country will take many more "big decisions." He said during the past ten years 25 crore people in the country were lifted out of poverty.

"Yesterday, the schedule for the Lok Sabha polls was announced. The whole country says that on June 4 (counting day), it is over 400 (seats for NDA)," the PM said.

Lok Sabha Polls: Biggest peacetime movement of men, material in world

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTD):

Holding of Lok Sabha elections is a mammoth exercise that entails the biggest peacetime movement of men and material in the world through waterways, air and land across India to ensure no voter is left behind.

The Election Commission, mandated to hold the gigantic democratic exercise starts preparing for the polls at least one-and-a-half years in advance by training officials, poll personnel and ramping up the supply of required EVMs and indelible ink, besides other equipment.

The elections for the 18th Lok Sabha will begin on April 19 followed by subse-

quent phases on April 26, May 7, May 13, May 20, May 25 and June 1. Nearly 97 crore registered voters across 543 constituencies will cast their ballot at 10.5 lakh polling stations.

Around 1.5 crore polling and security personnel, about 55 lakh EVMs and four lakh vehicles will be deployed for the polls, according to the poll authority. As early as in June last year, the EC had initiated "first level checks" of EVMs and paper trail machines across the country in a phased manner.

"Mock polls" are part of the first level check (FLC) process to ensure parties are satisfied with the machines. The EC issues a calendar for such exercises

and there are standing instructions that are to be followed by state chief electoral officers. During FLCs, electronic voting machines and paper trail machines are checked for mechanical flaws by engineers of BEL and ECIL, the two PSUs which manufacture the two equipment. Faulty machines are returned to the manufacturers for repair or replacement.

A mock poll is also held to check the two machines in the presence of representatives of political parties. While it puts the required equipment and infrastructure in place, the poll panel also starts interacting with its officials at the state level to understand their requirements. State chief electoral

officers are called for sessions where they share best practices and learn from each others' experience in election management, voter awareness and preventing malpractices which can disturb level playing field during polls.

A key component of election management is the deployment of security personnel and their movement by trains, boats and helicopters. To firm up the plan, the EC top brass holds meeting with senior officials of the Union home ministry and Railways. Comfortable stay and hygienic food for security and polling personnel also requires planning at the grass-roots level.

While the EC is busy sending the required num-

ber of EVMs in states ahead of polls, the Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd gets ready to complete its order of providing indelible ink. This time it has been tasked with providing over 26 lakh vials of indelible ink, which leaves a deep purple mark on a voter's left forefinger, to various states.

The Karnataka government undertaking has been manufacturing the ink since 1962, solely for the Election Commission. The ink is applied on the left forefinger of a person as proof that she or she has cast the vote. One 10 ml vial can ink 700 people. Every polling station has 1,500 voters, which means two vials of ink is needed per polling station.

Devotees abstain from bathing in Son Teerth Ghat

Dirty and murky water covering the area

Rajim, Mar 17:

After the conclusion of the famous Kumbh Kalp Mela, though lakhs of devotees and saints took holy bath at the confluence of three rivers, but the Son Teerth Ghat is filled with dirt water, owing to which people visiting here for rituals are abstaining from taking a dip. The people visiting the Ghat for Pind Daan and other rituals like ash immersion are continuously complaining of the dirt, but the administration is yet to ascertain the situation and its timely cleanliness.

Also it is important to mention that this ghat is surrounded by water hyacinth from all sides, due to which neither water nor sand is visible. The entire river area is covered with



water hyacinth and the government administration does not seem to be interested in removing it resulting in water pollution.

As per reports also people engage in extracting coins and other valuables from the water, which also is resulting in concentration of the dirt from the very bottom of the river. However apart from this issue, Sontirtha Ghat has

started shooting arrows at it, which burst his skull and he collapsed there. While dying, Gajraj called out to the king and said that he should immerse his ashes in Mahanadi Triveni Sangam so that he would get salvation.

The king reached Mahanadi Triveni Sangam with his Asti Kalash and freed him by immersing him. After that, becoming a Gandharva, he boarded the plane brought by the gods and went to Vaikuntha Dham. King Som immersed his bones at this place, hence it was named Son Teerth Ghat. It is said that bathing here gives results equivalent to donating gold. Since then, people's devotion towards the ghat has increased and the recognition of the religious area has also increased.

been made further polluted by devotees who live behind their clothes after taking a dip.

Why ash is immersed in Son Teerth Ghat?

There is a mythological story in this regard, that in ancient times there was a king named Som. He went into the forest to hunt and after seeing an elephant, he

'Action to be taken against property defacement'

After implementation of Code of Conduct

Khairagarh, Mar 17:

Under the direction of Collector and District Election Officer Chandrakant Verma, Additional Collector and District Nodal Officer (Training) Prem Kumar Patel and Deputy District Election Officer Surendra Kumar Thakur regarding property defacement work during the implementation of Model Code of Conduct for the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections-2024, a meeting of district officers was taken in the Collectorate meeting room.

During this, discussions were held to conduct the Lok Sabha elections in a peaceful and orderly manner and to strengthen the entire administrative system in the district. Information was given about the actions to be



taken by the administration as soon as the Model Code of Conduct comes into force. As soon as the Model Code of Conduct is implemented, the process of removing property defacement will start in the district and at the same time FST, SST and VST teams will become active which will influence the elections.

The agencies will keep an eye on distribution of free material, illegal transportation, distribution and storage of money, valuables, and narcotics and take seizure action.

Additional Collector and District Nodal Officer (Training) Prem Kumar Patel told in the meeting that as soon as the Model Code of Conduct is implemented, the action to remove property defacement will be taken as per the instructions of the Election Commission within first 48 hours. The vehicles of political officials of all corporations and boards will be acquired and all advertisements and hoardings put up on government expenditure will be removed.

Various enforcement agencies in the district are

involved in Income Tax, GST, Bank etc. will also become active for necessary monitoring and action. In the meeting, responsibilities of the enforcement agencies, actions to be taken under the model code of conduct, the status of polling stations in the district this time compared to the previous elections and other important topics were discussed.

In the said meeting, Project Director Jitendra Kumar Sahu, Executive Engineer Public Works Department Lalit Walter Tirkey, Women and Child Development Officer RK Jamulkar, CMHO Ganesh Kumar Vaishnav, Chief Municipal Officer Khairagarh Pramod Shukla, Chief Municipal Officer Chhuikhadan Kamal Narayan Janghale, Incharge Deputy Director Society Kalyan Ganesh Ram Verma and concerned officers were present.

Run voter awareness prog to increase voting percentage



Korba, Mar 17:

The meeting of the District Level SVEEP Core Committee was held here in the Collectorate Hall, in which Nodal Officer Sambit Mishra instructed all the members of the committee to organize sweep activities as well as conduct voter awareness campaigns regularly to increase the voting percentage. He said that voters should be made aware to exercise their franchise in a fair and transparent manner without any pressure or inducement. District Panchayat CEO and Nodal Officer SVEEP Mishra discussed the reasons for low voting percentage in urban areas during the last assembly elections and encouraged the urban voters to exercise their franchise

and their important role in building democracy. He gave instructions regarding making the sweep activities reach the target group through banners, posters, slogans and painting and other activities, ensuring participation of officers and employees associated with government, private and public sector undertakings and motivating them to vote. In the meeting, instructions were also given to organize programs through school-college, NCC, NSS, scout-guide students, and increase everyone's participation through street plays, rallies etc. Deputy District Election Officer Mrs. Seema Patre, CMHO Dr. S. N. Kesri, Principal Dr. Sadhna Khare, Balram Kurre and committee members were present.

Concerns over water scarcity for animals amid rising temperatures

Residents and students voice frustrations over power cuts

Rajim, Mar 17:

As the scorching heat of March intensifies, concerns over water scarcity have reached alarming levels, with animals and humans alike struggling to cope with the rising temperatures. The relentless sun, now in its strongest form, has prompted a desperate quest for water as ponds dry up and river levels diminish, exacerbating the challenges faced by both wildlife and residents.

In Rajim, where temperatures have soared to 36 degrees Celsius, the impact of the heat wave is keenly felt. By midday, the sweltering conditions trig-



ger profuse sweating, making outdoor work increasingly arduous for laborers. While humans endeavor to secure access to cool water, the plight of animals remains dire.

A poignant incident unfolded near a hospital on Friday afternoon, serving as a stark reminder of the urgency to address animal welfare concerns. At 1:00 pm, a mother cow, driven

by unbearable thirst, gravitated towards an open tap, eagerly lapping up the water as onlookers were moved by her distress. This heart-wrenching sight underscores the pressing need for concerted efforts to provide relief to thirsty animals.

Advocating for proactive measures, calls have emerged for governmental authorities and service

committees to step forward and ensure the provision of water, particularly by replenishing the Kotna tank. Last year, Kedareshwar Seva Samiti installed stone tanks at intersections across the city, recognizing the importance of water accessibility for both humans and animals.

However, alongside water scarcity, residents are grappling with additional challenges such as low voltage and frequent power cuts. Common consumers and students, particularly those preparing for board exams, express frustration over the disruptions caused by erratic electricity supply. As summer progresses, the demand for both water and electricity surges, underscoring the critical role these resources play in sustaining daily life.

Gaurishankar Agrawal distributes refreshments

To devotees going to Girodपुरi Dham

Katji, Mar 17:

In the refreshment distribution program organized under the aegis of Bharatiya Janata Party Mandal Kasdol, the chief guest, former Assembly Speaker Gaurishankar Agrawal, welcomed and honored the devotees going to Girodपुरi Dham Sant Samagam Mela, the birthplace of Baba Gurughasi Das, by distributing refreshments. In the said program, Dr. Ajay Rai, State Working Committee member, Shyam Bai Sahu, State Minister, Sarita Jaiswal, State Working Committee member, Rajkumar Jaiswal, District President, UP.

Morcha, Sheela Verma Mahila Morcha District Vice President, Melaram



Sahu Mandal President, Sudeep Das Manikपुरi Mandal Vice President, Nageshwar Sahu BJYM Mandal President, Anuradha Karsh Mahila Mandal President, Samaru Kaivartya General Secretary BJYM, Raju Sahu BJYM General Secretary, Anil Shrivastava Mandal Minister, Bharat Das Manikपुरi Sarpanch, Daras Ram Verma, Sundar Sahu and others were present.

Shiv Mahapuran to be organized from 16th May to 22nd May

Kurud, Mar 17:

Shiv Mahapuran will be organized from May 16 to 22 in the region and famous story teller Pradeep Mishra is going to narrate Mahashivpuran and regarding the arrangement of which, Kurud MLA Ajay Chandrakar took information about the preparations for the program with the organizing committee.

In particular, MLA Chandrakar, calling the narrator of Shivpuran, Pandit Pradeep Mishra, the biggest crowd-catcher of the present times, stressed on the need to manage the crowd and conduct well-organized programs. In the meeting, MLA Chandrakar also said that the big event involves extensive preparations, the first objective should be to organize the crowd and emphasis was



laid on connecting other social people, social organizations and service oriented organizations in this Mahashivpuran Katha event.

As per information, a stage of 3000 square feet will be prepared with special decorations from

where Pandit Pradeep Mishra will narrate the story. Similarly, for the devotees coming to listen to Shiv Mahapuran, and a strong pandal (dome) of 3 lakh square feet will be installed in the Katha place by a Nagpur firm, which will not move even in

strong winds and storms. In the meeting, special consideration was given to the facilities and arrangements for the crowd of people reaching the story site. In which due to the heat of the month of May, emphasis was laid on 24-hour availability of water pouches and tankers to provide drinking water.

Arrangements for food for at least 25,000 people every day for the devotees who stay and come from faraway places, as well as separate space in the pandal for distribution of snacks like khichdi, poha etc. by various social organizations and institutions was also discussed. Distinguished citizens of Kurud Nagar, heads of various societies, Officials and members of union organizations, including rice millers, businessmen and youth participated in the meeting.

Workers should make BJP victorious by strengthening their booth: Pandey

Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi, Mar 17:

National Vice President of BJP and party's candidate for Korba Lok Sabha, Saroj Pandey took workers meeting of various divisions of Marwahi Assembly. After welcome in Baraur and Marwahi of Marwahi North Division, she attended Mitani Conference,

Mitani Workers Conference, meeting at Dhanpur of South Marwahi Division. After the welcome program and meeting at Semra, she addressed the meeting at Kotmi Kala of Pendra Rural Mandal and while addressing the meetings, Ms. Saroj Pandey said that the Narendra Modi led BJP government at the Center is continuously working for the develop-



ment of villages, poor, farmers, women and youth. She also said that BJP also has a double engine government in Chhattisgarh, and according to the guarantee of Narendra Modi, two years

outstanding bonus, approval of eighteen lakh Prime Minister house, Rs 1000 per month is being given to women under Mahtari Vandan Yojana, purchase of 21 quintals of paddy per acre to the farm-

ers at Rs 3100 per quintal is being done.

She urged the BJP workers to strengthen their booths and make the BJP victorious with huge votes. Marwahi MLA Pranab Marpachi urged the workers to reach out to the general public through continuous public relations. On this occasion, prominent people were District BJP President Kanhaiya Singh Rathore, Rakesh Chaturvedi, Lalji Yadab, Kallusingh Rajput, Kubersingh Sarraati, Mathura Prasad Soni, Balkrishna Agarwal, Dwarik Prasad Soni, and Dr. Lushansingh Rathore, Kishansingh Thakur, Rajkumar Rohani, Chhotelal Soni, Shankar Chakradhari and others were present.

CM's directives spark reforms, district admn takes action

Govt employees should behave decently with common people: Collector

Korea, Mar 16:

In response to directives from Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, a wave of reform has swept through the district administration, signaling a renewed commitment to public service and governance.

The impact of Chief Minister Sai's directives resonated during a pivotal meeting convened at the Collectorate meeting room today. Collector Vinay Kumar

Langeh underscored the imperative of instilling a sense of fear among wrongdoers, emphasizing the need for robust law enforcement. He emphasized that revenue officers must prioritize addressing the grievances of the common people and adhere strictly to administrative protocols. During the session, Langeh briefed departmental officers on Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai's guidelines, particularly focusing on the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. He urged all SDMs, Tehsildars, and revenue staff across the district to actively promote the



scheme, encouraging eligible beneficiaries to secure permanent residences expeditiously.

Personal attention key

During departmental reviews, Langeh instructed officers to prioritize punc-

tuality and courteous behavior towards citizens. He urged swift resolution of pending revenue cases and vowed to alleviate the burden on common people by addressing their concerns directly, thus reducing the need for repeated

visits to administrative offices.

Zero tolerance policy against corruption

Langeh issued stern warnings to Tehsildars regarding the conduct of Patwaris, emphasizing the

importance of office attendance and prompt resolution of villagers' issues. In alignment with the Chief Minister's stance, Langeh underscored a zero-tolerance approach towards corruption, with strict penalties for any malpractice.

Strict measures against substance abuse

In a bid to uphold ethical standards, Langeh mandated stringent measures against alcohol consumption among government personnel. The District Education Officer was tasked with ensuring school hygiene and preventing alcohol-related in-

cidents among staff, with immediate suspension for offenders.

Ramlalla darshan prep

Collector Vinay Kumar Langeh directed officials to ensure seamless arrangements for devotees attending the Ramlalla Darshan (Ayodhya Dham) on March 17. Additionally, he instructed prompt rectification of errors in Mahtari Vandan Yojana beneficiary accounts. Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections 2024, Langeh emphasized zero tolerance for criminal activities and urged SDMs to uphold law and order rigorously.

Community inspection drive

Collector Langeh has directed officials to conduct regular inspections of essential facilities, including hospitals, schools, Anganwadis, hostels, and ration shops. This initiative aims to identify and rectify any shortcomings in arrangements promptly. Additionally, Langeh has urged all sections of society to participate in "Nyota Bhojan," encouraging community leaders, businessmen, and common people to share meals with schoolchildren during family celebrations, fostering mutual harmony and social cohesion.

Congress unveils empowerment plans for youth, women, and farmers

Manendragarh, Mar 17:

In a significant announcement, District Congress Committee President Ashok Srivastava unveiled a comprehensive set of guarantees aimed at empowering youth, women, and farmers, signaling the party's commitment to fostering prosperity and equality if elected to power in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Addressing a press conference, Srivastava outlined the party's ambitious plans, highlighting five guarantees each for the welfare of women and farmers, in addition to the existing promises for the youth. Central to these guarantees is the Mahalaxmi Yojana, a flagship initiative that promises every woman an annual financial support of Rs 1 lakh, translating to Rs 8,333 per month. This is a substantial increase



compared to the Rs 1,000 per month, or Rs 12,000 per year, provided by the BJP government in Chhattisgarh. Highlighting the significant disparity, Srivastava emphasized that the Congress government would provide women with eight times more financial support. Additionally, the Congress government pledges to prioritize the recruitment of women in central jobs, aiming to achieve gender parity in employment opportunities. Furthermore, if the Congress government is formed, it will double cen-

tral assistance to Asha workers, Anganwadi, and midday meal workers. To safeguard the legal rights of women, the Congress plans to appoint legal assistants in every Panchayat. Moreover, to support working women, the Congress proposes to construct hostels in all district headquarters across the country.

Meanwhile, Manendragarh Assembly MLA candidate Ramesh Singh outlined the Kisan Nyay initiative, aimed at transforming the agricultural landscape by providing legal status to Minimum Support Price

(MSP) and instituting a permanent Agricultural Loan Waiver Commission. Additionally, measures to streamline crop insurance schemes and formulate import-export policies tailored to farmers' interests were emphasized to ensure their financial security and prosperity. Furthermore, District Congress Committee spokesperson Saurav Mishra elaborated on the Youth Justice Scheme, encompassing initiatives to generate employment opportunities, safeguard against paper leaks in examinations, and provide social security in the gig economy. The promise of 30 lakh guaranteed jobs in the central government and the establishment of a dedicated fund for youth entrepreneurship underscored the party's commitment to nurturing talent and fostering innovation.

Government schemes take center stage in villages



Information drive empowers villagers with opportunities

Jagdalpur, Mar 17: The Public Relations Department of the State Government has launched an extensive campaign to promote public welfare schemes, leveraging innovative methods such as LED vans and art troupes to engage with communities in marketplaces and major settlements across the district. In a dynamic initiative,

LED vans are traversing through Haat-Bazaars and prominent areas, showcasing short films that highlight various government schemes. Accompanying this, art troupes are captivating audiences with songs, dramas, and skits, effectively disseminating information about the schemes and their benefits. Villagers are eagerly embracing these informative sessions, eager to learn and benefit from the government's initiatives.

Recently, during a Kisan Sammelan held at Dharampura College cam-

pus, the Public Relations Department screened a compelling short film through an LED van, complemented by an engaging presentation by the art troupe. The event garnered significant attention, emphasizing the importance of government schemes in rural development.

Furthering their outreach efforts, the LED vans and art groups visited villages such as Puspal, Bhainsgaon, Sulenga, Kurenga, Kalepal, Chhindabhar, Rajnagar, and Junwani, covering various blocks across the dis-

trict. Schemes such as Krishak Unnati Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, and Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana were highlighted, providing villagers with valuable information and resources.

As part of the campaign, promotional literature, including Janman magazine and materials based on various public welfare schemes, were distributed to villagers, empowering them with knowledge and opportunities for socio-economic advancement.

MLA Deepesh Sahu champions inclusive governance

Bemetara, Mar 17: MLA Deepesh Sahu spearheaded a public problem redressal camp at the district level in Patharra village of Bemetara assembly constituency, underscoring the commitment to ensuring that central and state government schemes reach every eligible beneficiary.

As the chief guest of the camp, MLA Deepesh Sahu, alongside Tehsildar, Patwari Secretary, and departmental officers and employees, convened to address the concerns and grievances of the local populace. Engaging directly with the people, MLA Sahu listened attentively to their demands and issues, pledging immediate action and instructing officers to resolve them promptly.



Encouraging village residents to leverage the public problem-solving camp, MLA Sahu emphasized the presence of officers and field staff from various departments, ready to address the needs and challenges faced by the community. He urged attendees to voice their concerns, assuring that concerted efforts would be made to address them effectively.

Underlining the importance of inclusive governance, Sahu issued strict directives to officials, emphasizing that no eligible beneficiary should be deprived of government welfare schemes. Departmental officials provided insights into various schemes, urging villagers to avail themselves of the benefits and ensuring that all eligible individuals receive their entitlements.

Revenue Department expedited the resolution of revenue-related matters, while emphasizing the necessity of essential documents for accessing government welfare schemes. Sahu highlighted the availability of public convenience centers and service centers for obtaining required documents, ensuring accessibility for all.

Sahu underscored the importance of maintaining basic facilities such as drinking water, electricity, and roads, particularly during the summer months, urging officials to prioritize the welfare of the community and mitigate any challenges faced by the populace. New ration cards were distributed to eligible beneficiaries in the camp.

Secretary SWD conducts surprise inspection at Gharaunda Organization

Jagdalpur, Mar 17: In a heartening display of dedication, Secretary Social Welfare Department, S. Prakash, conducted a surprise inspection at Gharaunda Chhidaipadar Kolchur, an establishment overseen by the Bastar Viklang Seva Samiti, a grant-aided organization under the district's Social Welfare Department.

During the inspection, S. Prakash interacted with the residents, many of whom are differently abled, gaining insights into the institution's activities and initiatives. He emphasized the importance of providing comprehensive medical facilities and tailored training programs to enhance the skills of the residents, empowering them to lead fulfilling lives.



Prakash urged active participation in the noble cause of humanitarian service, fostering a sense of community and support.

Furthermore, he underscored the necessity of strict adherence to the di-

rectives issued by the Social Welfare Department, ensuring the efficient functioning of voluntary organizations committed to social welfare. The visit witnessed the presence of Director

Social Welfare, Roktima Yadav, Additional Director Social Welfare, Pankaj Verma, and local officials, underscoring the collaborative efforts towards uplifting the marginalized sections of society.

Bastar police bolster security measures for elections

Jagdalpur, Mar 17: With the Lok Sabha elections on the horizon, the Bastar Police, under the vigilant leadership of Superintendent of Police Shalabh Kumar Sinha, has intensified efforts to ensure security and combat criminal activities in the region.

In alignment with this mission, a crucial meeting convened on Saturday, presided over by Additional Superintendent of Police Maheshwar Nag. The gathering aimed to strategize legal actions against anti-social elements, fortifying the district's safety measures in anticipation of the upcoming elections. Superintendent of Police Bastar, Shalabh Kumar Sinha, emphasized the importance of preemptive measures to deter miscreants and maintain law and order during the electoral process. Key directives



emerged from the meeting, prioritizing comprehensive control over unauthorized dealers of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. A dedicated de-addiction campaign, aptly termed a 'war against drugs,' has been initiated to raise public awareness about the detrimental effects of substance abuse. Stringent measures, including challan actions under the COTPA Act, await individuals found intoxicated in public spaces. The concerted efforts of various departments, including

Social Welfare, Food and Drug, Municipal Corporation, Education, and Child Protection, alongside the Police Department, underscore the collaborative approach towards campaign implementation.

The meeting witnessed the participation of all police sub-divisional officers and station-in-charges from across the Bastar district, reaffirming collective commitment towards safeguarding the community and upholding the sanctity of the electoral process.

Enthusiastic welcome for Bhupesh Baghel



Khairagarh, March 17: In a display of fervent support, the Backward Class Congress in Khairagarh rolled out a grand welcome for Congress Lok Sabha candidate Bhupesh Baghel. Led by Backward Class Congress President Suryakant Yadav, the arrival of Baghel was marked with vibrant fireworks and the adornment of flower garlands near the Collector's office. The atmosphere was electric as Baghel was greeted by a sea of enthusiastic supporters. Amidst the jubilant

crowd, Bhupesh Baghel expressed his gratitude and rallied the gathering to unite wholeheartedly in the upcoming elections. Addressing the assembled crowd, Baghel emphasized the importance of collective effort and urged everyone to actively participate in the electoral process. The event witnessed the presence of several prominent figures, including Backward Class Congress leaders and dedicated party workers, all of whom echoed the sentiment of solidarity and determination.

Preparations underway for LS elections in Khairagarh

Jagdalpur, Mar 17: As the Lok Sabha elections approach, the Khairagarh Collectorate and the district's Superintendent of Police (SP) came together for a joint press conference, underscoring their commitment to ensuring a smooth electoral process. Led by Collector Chandrakant Verma and SP Trilok Bansal, the conference addressed various aspects of election preparedness.

In the meeting, Collector Verma highlighted the significance of adhering to the model code of conduct and shared insights into the arrangements made for polling booths across Khairagarh and Dongargarh assembly constituencies. Additionally, SP Bansal emphasized the importance of law enforcement to guarantee peaceful voting procedures. The event, attended by Additional SP Neha Pandey and other district officials, underscored the collective effort to uphold democratic



principles.

Polling Stations Allocation
The Collector announced the allocation of polling stations for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. A total of 283 polling stations will be established in the Khairagarh constituency. Among these, 37 will serve urban areas, while the remaining 246 will cater to rural communities.

Additionally, the Collector disclosed that Dongargarh Rural Assembly will host 97 polling stations within the district's jurisdiction. With a combined total of 380 polling stations, the electoral process is set to encompass both urban and rural locales.

Voting is scheduled to take place on April 26, with 343 rural and 37 urban polling stations ready to facilitate the electoral process. Prior to this, the nomination process will commence on March 28, allowing candidates to file their nominations until April 4. The deadline for withdrawal of nominations is set for April 8. Counting of votes will subsequently occur on June 4, marking the culmination of the electoral journey.

Security measures
SP Bansal assured comprehensive security arrangements for the elections, including the deployment of 49 companies of central security forces across all polling stations. Bansal emphasized the importance of adherence to electoral guidelines, cautioning against misinformation and hate speech. Strict enforcement measures will be taken against any violations, ensuring a fair and orderly electoral process.

Knowledge, democracy's mighty arsenal for common citizen: DSJ Sahu

Consumers should be aware of their interests and rights: Collector

Korba, Mar 17: In commemoration of World Consumer Rights Day on March 1, a significant workshop convened at the Collectorate meeting room in Korba, aimed at bolstering consumer awareness and safeguarding their interests within the market landscape. Under the stew-

ardship of District and Sessions Judge Satyendra Kumar Sahu, the workshop underscored the pivotal role of knowledge and awareness in protecting consumer rights.

Present at the workshop were key stakeholders including Collector Ajit Vasant, Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority Sheetal Nikunj, Chairperson of the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission Ranjana Dutta, along with various



departmental officials and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, District Advocates Association, and financial institutions. The event commenced

with traditional ceremonies, including the garlanding and lighting of lamps, symbolizing the collective commitment to consumer welfare. Addressing the gathering, Satyendra

Kumar Sahu extended felicitations for Consumer Day and emphasized the imperative of acquainting consumers with the Consumer Protection Act and the legal mechanisms

designed to uphold their interests. He stressed that knowledge empowers citizens, serving as their strongest weapon in a democratic society.

Judge Sahu advocated for grassroots-level awareness campaigns on consumer rights, highlighting the importance of recognizing and safeguarding the rights of all consumers. He underscored the accessibility of legal recourse through consumer forums, enabling individuals to seek justice

and redress against exploitation and fraud.

Echoing Sahu's sentiments, Collector Ajit Vasant emphasized the significance of consumer protection laws in ensuring fair treatment and preventing exploitation. He urged consumers to assert their rights and take legal action when necessary to safeguard their interests.

The workshop also provided a platform for attendees to address queries and concerns, fostering dialogue and facilitating

greater clarity on consumer rights and legal recourse.

Notably, initiatives such as 'Jago Grahak Jago' by the Government of India, Department of Consumer Affairs, aim to enhance consumer awareness and protect against market exploitation.

World Consumer Rights Day serves as a vital reminder of the ongoing commitment to empower consumers with knowledge and ensure their rights are upheld in everyday life.

Maritime Heroes

Indian Navy's High-Stakes Rescue

In a display of unparalleled bravery and tactical prowess, the Indian Navy executed a remarkable 40-hour operation to rescue 17 crew members held hostage by Somali pirates aboard the hijacked vessel Ruen. The daring mission, which unfolded over 2,600 km of treacherous waters, showcased the Navy's unwavering commitment to safeguarding maritime security. The saga began when the Indian warship INS Kolkata, acting on intelligence, zeroed in on the Ruen, which had served as a pirate stronghold for three harrowing months. Undeterred by the inherent risks, the Navy swiftly mobilized a formidable array of resources, including warships, drones, aircraft, and elite marine commandos. As the operation unfolded, the pirates, emboldened by their illicit hold on the vessel, brazenly opened fire on approaching aircraft and Navy vessels. Undeterred by these hostile actions, the Navy remained steadfast in its mission, swiftly transitioning to a stance of self-defence while steadfastly demanding the pirates' surrender. With precision and determination, the Navy orchestrated a multi-pronged assault, leveraging the support of patrol vessel INS Subhadra, HALE drones, and P8I maritime patrol aircraft. These assets provided crucial surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, enabling the Navy to maintain a strategic advantage throughout the operation. The climax of the rescue unfolded as a squad of 8 elite marine commandos, known as MARCOS PRAHARS, descended upon the hijacked vessel via a daring air-drop from a C-17 aircraft. Their mission: detain the pirates and ensure the safe evacuation of the crew. In a testament to their skill and professionalism, the commandos executed their task flawlessly, neutralizing the threat posed by the pirates without incident. Remarkably, the operation concluded without any injuries, a testament to the meticulous planning and execution by the Navy's personnel. Following the successful rescue, the vessel underwent thorough inspection to ensure the absence of illegal arms, ammunition, or contraband. The Indian Navy's resounding success in this high-stakes operation not only underscores its formidable capabilities but also highlights the critical role it plays in safeguarding maritime security. As threats to maritime trade and navigation persist, the Navy's unwavering vigilance and swift response serve as a beacon of hope and reassurance for seafarers and nations alike.

Tobacco's Toll

Safeguarding Cardiovascular Health

The scourge of tobacco consumption casts a dark shadow over global cardiovascular health, with the World Health Organization (WHO) identifying tobacco use as a significant contributor to heart disease deaths. Despite ample evidence linking tobacco to cardiovascular disease (CVD), public awareness of this deadly connection remains shockingly low. Tobacco, in all its forms, poses a grave threat to cardiovascular well-being. Whether smoked or chewed, tobacco inflicts widespread damage on the cardiovascular system, increasing the risk of coronary heart disease (CHD), heart attacks, stroke, and peripheral arterial disease (PAD). Blood vessels suffer under the assault of tobacco, leading to heightened blood pressure, reduced exercise tolerance, and an elevated propensity for blood clotting. Even seemingly less harmful forms of tobacco, such as chewing tobacco or snuff, exact a heavy toll on heart health over time. Smoking tobacco, in particular, exacts a devastating toll on cardiovascular health. Cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and shisha sessions all contribute to a threefold increase in the risk of heart disease mortality. The staggering volume of smoke inhaled during shisha sessions, equivalent to smoking up to 150 cigarettes, underscores the gravity of the situation. Shockingly, approximately 30% of all heart disease deaths globally can be directly attributed to tobacco smoking, surpassing even smoking-related lung cancer in mortality rates. The physiological effects of tobacco on the cardiovascular system are equally alarming. Carbon monoxide and nicotine, two prominent components of tobacco smoke, wreak havoc on the heart by impeding oxygen transport, increasing heart rate, and raising blood pressure. Over time, these harmful chemicals inflict extensive damage on blood vessels, leading to atherosclerosis, coronary artery narrowing, and heightened susceptibility to heart attacks and stroke. Cigarette smoking further compounds the risk, acting as a multiplicative factor alongside hypertension and hypercholesterolemia for the development of CHD and arteriosclerosis. Beyond direct consumption, exposure to second-hand smoke poses a significant risk to cardiovascular health. Non-smokers living with and around smokers face a 30% increased risk of heart disease, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive tobacco control measures. India, grappling with a high prevalence of tobacco-related heart diseases, faces an uphill battle in safeguarding public health. Shockingly, 76% of young heart attack victims in India are smokers, underscoring the urgency of the situation. The economic burden of tobacco-related healthcare expenditures, compounded by indirect costs such as absenteeism and premature death, exacts a heavy toll on the nation's resources. Effective tobacco control strategies must encompass a multifaceted approach. Rigorous public education campaigns, strict enforcement of anti-tobacco laws, and taxation measures to deter affordability are essential components of any comprehensive tobacco control plan. Equally critical is the provision of comprehensive cessation support, including medical interventions and behavioral therapies, to aid individuals in overcoming tobacco addiction. Government intervention is paramount in protecting public health from the scourge of tobacco. Implementation of smoke-free policies in indoor public spaces, workplaces, and public transport is essential to shield citizens from harmful exposure. Stringent regulations banning tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship are necessary to mitigate the allure of tobacco products, particularly among vulnerable populations. As we confront the epidemic of tobacco-related heart disease, concerted action is imperative. By empowering individuals with the tools to quit tobacco, enacting robust tobacco control policies, and fostering a societal ethos that prioritizes cardiovascular health, we can chart a course towards a tobacco-free future and safeguard the well-being of generations to come. It is time to rise to the challenge and reclaim our cardiovascular health from the clutches of tobacco.

Central Chronicle invites articles, write-ups, and comments on a wide range of issues for our editorial page. Submissions should be between 800-900 words in length. In addition, we welcome letters to the editor for this page. While letters may be edited for clarity, we aim to preserve the integrity of the original message, and ask that they be kept to around 50-60 words. Submissions can be sent via emailto:editor@centralchronicle@gmail.com.

VOTER AWARENESS MARATHON



People take part in 'Vote-a-thon', a marathon organised to raise voter awareness ahead of General Elections 2024, in Bengaluru, Sunday, March 17.

What helps us to fight off the devil within us



M.R. LALU



There are understandable fears among people over death that they are sure would arrive one day. Growing day by day into old-age is the natural way of approaching the ultimate moment of life and there is undoubtedly a day that would put a full stop to the entire episode of life's fantasies. It will be a catastrophe if people keep thinking about this unpopular visitor called Death who, they are sure, would visit them one day. Death is sure as everything that is born is bound to be dragged by its ruthless force into its terrain of complete oblivion, with no conscious return ever possible. A preparation for meeting the last moment of our life graciously without being anxious about it would be the most intelligent act. But it takes an enormous amount of understanding to welcome it with a smiling face. A healthy life and peaceful death would be a great blessing. But the fundamental question on the mind and body today is: in what way can we keep the body healthy and mind sound and attentive. There are ways suggested by health experts, mostly our ancient rishis, as to how a healthy body and a peaceful mind can be developed when we are surrounded by chaotic disruptions and deliberate outrages. Fundamentally, a logical conclusion on life and death is possible only when the life is lived with awareness and death is approached with a serene quietude within, a genuine preparation that strengthens our self-inquiry.

Life in this transitory framework of the universal essence should be lived with

happiness and awareness. And that is the solution, the solution to push our existence through the consumerist global mindset of today where people are recognized, rewarded and egotized for what they really are able to systematically, dramatically make a display of their existence. A severe competition by crippling our real fundamental values of coexistence has already overtaken the imaginations of people all over the world. An uninterupted flow of unethical indulgence where a real self-inquiry is discarded as an unprincipled prerequisite, as human life has profoundly dethroned the values of amicable coexistence and began to surrender to the degenerative impulses of their own creation. At this juncture, Lord Buddha reminds us how transitory is life and how inconsolable are people as the time of their exit comes. He calls life a flash of lightning. Imagine how evanescent life is and we, in most of the cases, stay close-fisted mostly penny-pinching all through, with a single purpose of amassing wealth as much as possible. And in some other cases, we disdainfully spend as much wealth as possible as if the imminent conclusion of life is near. In both cases, our life is amiss of the conclusive reality of the supreme awareness, that we are capable of realizing, while dissipating our energy indiscriminately on inconsequential matters.

Life in its entirety around us is a spectrum of surprises. Enmeshed in a variety of complex situations, people often forget to enjoy the small surprises that it offers.

Complexity of life is the creation of our own or contributed by people around us. And there, with the deepening complex occurrences in life, we miss the happiness that we are actually aspiring to take hold of. Mostly the crisis further deepens in old age. There is a dearth of acceptance and a vacuum that emerges from the same complex attitude of people around us. An unfeeling society that keeps alienating the old has been the reality. Mostly advanced with the advent of science, we dreadfully shift from the values that we traditionally imbibe. This obviously creates a tough friction between science and religion.

In personal life both bring us reasons to contemplate. But between science and religion the tussle hardly discovers the real aspect of ultimate solace that we are in search of. The impact of the tussle is that it intellectually leads us to accept either science or religion or give prominence to both. This conflict between the logic of science and the faiths of religion usually runs riot in our brain and the outcome is, in most of the cases, people live unsuccessful in understanding the real purpose of their existence. Merely executing our brilliance to satisfy the biological inclination becomes the common norm. Beyond it is the spiritual realm and this aspect of life remains to most of the people a dry area of meaningless irreversible practices that they accrue habitually. But spirituality in the real sense is capable of driving us beyond mere practices and shows us the glimpse of reality which is peaceful and filled with ecstatic joy.

In most of the cases, intense range of radicalism among people is the result of the dominance of beliefs over the real conclusive understanding of life's purpose. The question that gains prominence here is what would be the role of humans, in a world that has mostly enslaved him of his beliefs failing to make conclusive understanding on the real purpose of life. When science studies the external, religion is supposed to study the internal, helping a person to look within. The latter indeed is known to help a person to come out of the chaotic framework of his own thoughts leading him to the higher realms of his own intelligence. This it achieves without any instruments but in the case of

science every discovery comes with the support of an instrument. Indirectly, the ultimate stress of science is to understand the real source of power that helps the whole manifestation of creation to pulsate. Similar ideas can be attributed to religious practices as well. Leading the person to the higher realms of self discovery, a sincere search for the divine within, religion is the study of the inner being and beyond.

Undoubtedly, religions all over the world place this idea of an internal universe that only man is capable of having access. And science for that matter offers scopes enormous to study the external.

Understanding this from a spiritual angle, Swami Vivekananda says that the journey from the microcosm to the macrocosm is what spirituality offers. And religions are supposed to hold this ability to take its followers to this wave of realization. The most beautiful aspect of this journey is that it leads us to the inner space of the being and slowly helps us to encapsulate the strength of the macrocosmic evolutionary universe in our mind space. This, according to religions, is an achievement of a spiritual aspirant that he gains without the help of any instrument. So understanding the true self in a person is the real purpose of life's journey. Once we experience the real fragrance of the inner spiritual splendor which is tranquil and contented, all chaos begins to evaporate. This is a personal experience that ultimately helps us to drive the devil in us. Until then the conflict which is internal continues. To fight off the devil within us remains impossible when there is a tussle between the knowledge that we gain through this inner journey and the knowledge that our surroundings peripherally offer. Choosing the one that is real and valid is the most important. A personal experience to this level surely enhances purity of mind and thoughts and the result is absolutely incomparable that neither science can fathom nor logic can slice. That is purely spiritual.

(Writer is a Freelance Journalist, Ranni, Pathanamthitta District, Kerala. The views expressed above are the author's own. They do not necessarily reflect the views of Central Chronicle.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Academic Integrity

The leakage of exam papers and utilization of unfair means in exams are alarming, eroding trust in exams and institutions. Immediate measures are crucial to combat cheating, especially involving teachers. Recent incidents emphasize the urgency of strict action against those jeopardizing students' futures. Implementing robust mechanisms and a zero-tolerance approach towards corruption is essential for upholding the integrity of the education system.

MK Nair, Raipur

Probe Agency Failure

The recent leak of the UP police exam paper to over 1,500 candidates is deeply troubling. What's astonishing is how such malpractices occur on a large scale without detection by agencies like the ED or the CBI. It's baffling that candidates were transported to a resort where the paper was distributed. How do these criminals operate with impunity? Is there no agency capable of halting their activities? The incident underscores a critical failure in law enforcement and raises serious questions about the efficacy of our investigative bodies.

Shive Kumar Mishra, Raipur

Justice for Aspirants

The UP police exam paper leak to 1,500 candidates for Rs 7 lakh each, is appalling. Honest aspirants suffer when exams are cancelled or require retesting due to such malpractice. Miscreants cannot undermine the examination system with impunity. The government must not spare the culprits. Exemplary punishment for those responsible can send a strong message, reinforcing the integrity of the examination process and ensuring justice for deserving candidates.

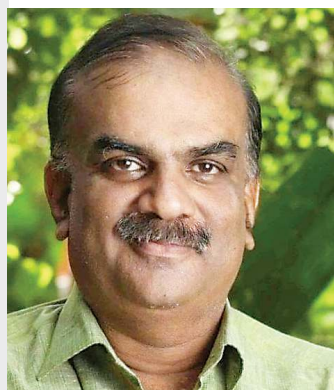
Krishna Das, Kollam

Unified Elections

The committee chaired by Ram Nath Kovind has submitted its 'One nation, one election' report to President Droupadi Murmu, coinciding with the Lok Sabha elections announcement. The recommendations align with expectations. Concerns that simultaneous polls might favor the ruling party at the Centre are baseless. The advantages are manifold, as highlighted in the BJP's 2019 manifesto, including cost reduction and efficient resource utilization. Embracing unified elections could streamline the electoral process, fostering better governance and accountability.

Raj Kumar, Kannur

From Pitch to Podium: The Political Journey of India's Cricket Icons



Dr. Vasisht M.C

Cricket, being one of the most beloved sports in India, has witnessed a remarkable surge in popularity since the nation's historic victory in the 1983 World Cup, led by the legendary Kapil Dev. This rise in popularity not only elevated the stature of cricketers but also caught the attention of political parties, who saw them as potential candidates in various elections.

Among the notable cricketers who transitioned into politics are:

1. Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi: Also known as Tiger Pataudi, he captained India in 40 out of his 46 test matches and led the team to its first foreign test series victory in 1968 against New Zealand. Pataudi contested in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections from the Bhopal constituency for the Indian National Congress but was defeated. Despite receiving 2,06,738 votes, BJP candidate Sushil Chandra Verma defeated him handily by a margin

of 1,02,208 votes.

2. Kirti Azad: A former all-rounder who played a crucial role in India's 1983 World Cup victory, Azad ventured into politics following his cricket career. He has been associated with multiple parties, including BJP, Congress, and currently, the Trinamool Congress. Azad had played 25 ODIs and seven tests for India in the 1980s. The former all-rounder, who played for the 1983 World Cup winning team, is most remembered for his economical 12-over spell in the semifinal match against England. After his career in cricket, Kirti Azad followed in the footsteps of his father, former Bihar chief minister Bhagwat Jha Azad (1922-2011), and entered politics. Azad was elected three times from the Darbhanga constituency on the BJP ticket: in 1999, 2009, and 2014. However, he was suspended from the BJP in December 2015 for publicly criticizing then finance minister Arun Jaitley on alleged irregularities and corruption in the Delhi Cricket Association. He thereafter became a member of the Indian National Congress. He ran for the Lok Sabha seat in 2019 from Dhanbad (in Jharkhand) on a Congress ticket but was defeated by Pashupati Nath Singh, the BJP candidate, by a margin of 4.8 lakhs. After this defeat, he left Congress and joined the All India Trinamool Congress in November of 2021.

3. Md Azharuddin: A former Indian cricket captain who played 99 Test matches and 334 ODIs, Azharuddin joined the Congress party in 2009. He contested the Lok Sabha in 2009 from Moradabad constituency in Uttar Pradesh. He defeated the BJP candidate Kunwar Sarvesh Kumar Singh with a margin of 48,000 votes. In 2014, he contested for the Lok Sabha from

the Tonk-Sawal Madapur seat in Rajasthan, but Sukhbir Singh of the BJP defeated him with a margin of 1,36,000 votes. He was named the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee's acting president in 2018. From Hyderabad's Jubilee Hills assembly constituency, Azharuddin contested for the Telangana assembly in 2023 but was defeated by BRS candidate Maganti Gopinath with a margin of 16,000 votes.

4. Navjot Singh Sidhu: Representing India in 51 Test matches and 136 One-Day Internationals, Sidhu switched between BJP and Congress during his political career. He became a member of the BJP in 2004 and ran from Amritsar for the Lok Sabha in both 2004 and 2009, winning on both occasions. He defected from the BJP in 2017 and joined the Congress, running in the assembly elections from Amritsar East. With a commanding 42,809 votes, he won the election and was admitted to the Congress government of Amarinder Singh. He contested from the Amritsar East constituency in the Punjab assembly election of 2022, but Aam Aadmi Party candidate Jeevan Jyot Kaur defeated him.

5. Mohammad Kaif: Known for his stellar performance in the 2002 NatWest series final, Kaif joined the Congress party and contested in the 2014 elections but was unsuccessful. Represented India in 13 test matches and 125 One-Day Internationals. His innings in the 2002 NatWest series championship are his most well-known. In chasing down 326, he scored 87 runs off of 75 balls. Following his cricket career, he joined the Congress and ran for parliament in 2014 from Phulpur, Uttar Pradesh. However, he was not victorious in the polls, receiving only 58,127 votes as opposed to 5,03,564 for

the BJP candidate.

6. Chetan Chauhan: Partnering with Sunil Gavaskar as an opening batsman, Chauhan ventured into politics after his cricket career. He participated in 40 test matches for India and was renowned as Gavaskar's usual opening partner. He did not score a century in his 2084 runs. Following his cricket career, he entered politics actively. He ran for Lok Sabha five times, representing the Amroha constituency. He was victorious in 1991 and 1998 but defeated in 1996, 1999, and 2004. After winning the Naugawan Sadat seat in the 2017 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, he was appointed to Yogi Adityanath's cabinet. From 2017 till 2020, he served in the cabinet.

7. Vinod Kamble: A batting partner of Sachin Tendulkar, Kamble contested in the 2009 Maharashtra assembly election but failed to secure a win. Was Sachin Tendulkar's well-known batting partner. During his brief 17-test career, he amassed two double hundreds: 224 against England in Mumbai in 1993 and 227 against Zimbabwe in Delhi in 1993. In 104 One-Day Internationals, he scored 2,477 runs for India. He ran as a candidate for the Lok Bharati party in the 2009 Maharashtra assembly election from Vikhroli. However, he was not elected.

8. Gautam Gambhir: Known for his crucial innings in the 2011 and 2007 World Cup finals, Gambhir joined BJP and won the East Delhi Lok Sabha seat in 2019. Joined BJP in 2019 and defeated Arvinder Singh Lovely of Congress in the Lok Sabha elections from East Delhi by a massive majority of 3,91,222 votes. Gambhir participated in all three game types from 2003 to 2016. This left-handed opening batsman made two vital knocks in the

2011 World Cup and the 2007 T20 World Cup finals. He scored 97 runs off of 122 balls against Sri Lanka in the 2011 finals and 75 runs off of 54 balls against Pakistan in the 2007 finals.

9. Manoj Tiwari: Tiwari, joining Trinamool Congress in 2021, won the Shibpur assembly seat in West Bengal and became a minister of state in Mamata Banerjee's ministry.

10. Manoj Prabhakar: Representing India in both Tests and ODIs, Prabhakar contested in the 1996 Lok Sabha elections but faced defeat.

11. Yusuf Pathan: The latest cricketer to enter politics, Pathan plans to run for Trinamool Congress from the Berhampore constituency in Bengal.

In India, cricketers pursuing careers in politics is an intriguing phenomenon. Let's investigate the causes of this fascinating crossover. Cricket players are very well-liked and have a sizable fan base. Political parties find them appealing candidates because of their social impact, which has the ability to change public opinion. Many cricketers move into politics because they genuinely want to make a difference in society. They view politics as a forum for bringing about constructive change. They might be motivated to take on more significant problems like infrastructure, healthcare, and education by their experiences playing cricket. Players look for other opportunities after leaving cricket. There is a chance for ongoing public service in politics. Their move from a prominent sporting career to politics keeps them visible to the public. Leadership skills acquired in the field are transferable to the political sphere. It appears that cricketers players will continue to participate in politics and run for office in the future.

BRIEF

IHCL

New Delhi: Tata Group hospitality firm Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) is planning to increase the number of skill training centres to 50 across India by next year, apart from accelerating online training in partnership with group firm TCS to meet its target of skilling 1 lakh people by 2030, a senior company official said. The company, which has identified skilling as one of the areas of focus under its environmental, social, and corporate governance initiative Paathya, is focussing on rural areas for the skill training programme.

Flipkart

New Delhi: E-commerce firm Flipkart's valuation has declined by USD 5 billion or around Rs 41,000 crore as of January 2024 compared to that in January 2022, according to equity transactions carried out by its US-based parent firm Walmart. The valuation of the e-commerce firm declined to USD 35 billion as of January 31, 2024, from USD 40 billion in the financial year ended on January 31, 2022, as per Walmart's change in equity structure in Flipkart.

Decathlon

Lille: French sports retailer Decathlon is accelerating its investments to ramp up production and enhance its retail presence further in India, one of its "most important" global markets, its Global CEO Barbara Martin Coppola has said. Decathlon expects to continue its "high growth rate" from the Indian market, which is also emerging as an important manufacturing hub for the sports retailer, from where it currently exports around 65 per cent of production to global markets, she added.

Real estate sector

New Delhi: The real estate sector is estimated to reach a market size of USD 1.3 trillion by 2034 and USD 5.17 trillion by 2047, according to a report by realtors body CREDAI. The current market size of Indian real estate is Rs 24 lakh crore (around USD 300 billion), split between residential and commercial segments in the ratio of 80 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, it said in a statement on Saturday.

Timex

Candolim, Goa: Timex, the global iconic fashion-forward watch brand partners with the 10th edition of India Beach Fashion Week (IBFW) as the title sponsor. The finest beach couture and fashion trends will be seen merging at this fashion gala scaling over two days March 18 and 19 at the opulent Taj Village Holiday Resorts in Candolim, Goa. With the onset of summer, witness the newest styles in swimwear, resort attire, and accessories come alive as the models walk the ramp, personifying the style, and grace of each collection, set against the breathtaking Arabian Sea backdrop.

India's economic boom feels like 2003-07: Morgan Stanley

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI):

India's current world-beating economic growth rate on the back of an investment boom resembles that of 2003-07 when growth averaged more than 8 per cent, according to economists at Morgan Stanley.

In a report 'The Viewpoint: India - Why this feels like 2003-07', Morgan Stanley said after a decade of investment to GDP steadily declining, capex has emerged as a key growth driver in India. "We think the capex cycle has more room to run, therefore the current expansion closely resembles that of 2003-07."

The current cycle is driven by investment outperforming consumption, public capex leading initially but private capex rapidly catching up, the urban consumer leading

ECONOMY



consumption followed by catch-up in rural demand, market share in global exports rising and macro stability risks kept in check.

"We think the defining characteristic of the current expansion is the rise in the investment-to-GDP ratio."

Similarly, in the 2003-07 cycle investment to GDP rose from 27 per cent in F2003 (fiscal year ending March 2003) to 39 per cent in F2008, which was close to the peak. "Investment to

GDP then hovered around those levels until it peaked in F2011. 2011 to 2021 then registered a decade of decline - but the ratio has now inflected again to 34 per cent of GDP and we expect it to rise further to 36 per cent of GDP in F2027E," it said.

In 2003-07, the capex boom led to an acceleration in productivity, job creation and income growth. As more labour was absorbed into employment by the strengthening

economy, savings to GDP also rose from 28 per cent in F2003 to 39 per cent in F2008.

During 2003-07, GDP growth averaged 8.6 per cent and headline CPI inflation averaged 4.8 per cent.

The current account balance stayed within the central bank's comfort zone, ranging between 2.8 per cent to -1.4 per cent of GDP on a 4Q trailing sum basis.

Even when oil prices shot up to USD 145 per barrel in July 2008, the current account deficit only widened to 2.4 per cent of GDP the following quarter, the research report said.

Gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) growth in India accelerated sharply from 8.2 per cent in 2002 to 17.5 per cent in 2004, and the pace of growth held firm at 16.2 per cent in 2005-07.

Numerous Swiss companies keen on investing in India: Helene Budliger

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI):

A number of companies from Switzerland including chocolate maker Barry Callebaut Group, and technology group B hler are interested in investing in India, Swiss State Secretary for Economic Affairs Helene Budliger has said. Budliger said HESS Green Mobility intends to manufacture around 3,000 electric buses in India by 2025, equating to an investment of USD 110 million over the next six to eight years. Chocolate maker Barry Callebaut Group is set to make its third manufacturing facility in India operational by 2024, bringing its investment in India over the past five years to more than USD 50 million, she said in an email interview to PTI. Similarly, the Swiss technology group B hler intends to invest an additional USD 23 million over the next two to

three years to mark the 30th anniversary of B hler India.

"We are aware of numerous Swiss companies interested in investing in India. There are too many to list all of them here, but we are happy to share some examples ... There are many small Swiss companies that are interested in entering the market," she added.

India and the four-nation European bloc EFTA on March 10 signed a trade pact - Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) - under which, New Delhi received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping, while allowing several products such as Swiss watches, chocolates and cut and polished diamonds at lower or zero duties.

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

This is India's decade as global destination for investments and travel: VFS Global founder

Washington, Mar 17 (PTI):

India has a vibrant and diverse economy, a large young population and a rich cultural heritage which make it attractive for investors and visitors, according to the CEO of the world's largest visa outsourcing company.

Zubin Karkaria, founder and CEO of VFS Global, said India is undergoing a rapid economic and social transformation.

"This creates new opportunities for business, trade, tourism, and culture. I truly believe this is India's decade," he said. "In VFS global, we are very optimistic about the prospects of India as a global destination, as a source, both for inbound tourism and outbound



travellers. India has a vibrant and diverse economy, a large young population, and a rich cultural heritage. These factors make India attractive, both for investors and visitors," he told PTI in a recent interview.

Known for creating a new industry of visa and passport outsourcing, VFS Global in just 22 years of its inception operates in 149 countries through 3,353 application centers. So far it has processed 278 million applications and

LAKME FASHION WEEK



Actor Triptii Dimri walks the ramp showcasing a creation of fashion designers Shantnu and Nikhil during the Lakme Fashion Week x FDCI, in Mumbai, Sunday.

FPIs infuse over Rs 40,000 cr in equities on strong economic growth

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI):

FPIs came back strongly to invest in the Indian equity markets, buying shares worth Rs 40,710 crore in the first fortnight of the month amid an improvement in the global economic landscape and robust domestic macroeconomic outlook.

The inflows came following a modest investment of Rs 1,539 crore in February and an outflow of Rs 25,743 crore in January, data with the depositaries showed.

FPIs have been changing their strategy in response to the changes in the bond yields in the US. Therefore, now that US bond yields have again spiked up in response to

stubborn inflation, they may again turn sellers in some of the days, going forward, V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said. In March, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) turned big buyers but this figure includes some bulk deals executed through the stock exchanges and, therefore, is not a true indicator of FPI activity. However, the rising trend of FPI investment continues, he added.

"The improvement in the global economic environment as well as Indian macro-economic scenario have prompted FPIs to invest in high growth-oriented markets like India.

Mother Dairy to invest Rs 750 cr to set up 2 dairy, fruits & vegetables processing plants

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI):

Mother Dairy will invest Rs 650 crore to set up two new plants for processing of milk as well as fruits and vegetables to expand its business amid rising consumer demand.

Mother Dairy, which is a leading milk supplier in Delhi-NCR, will also invest another Rs 100 crore to expand capacities of its existing plants.

"In our endeavour to expand our distribution and reach to our consumers, we have earmarked a capital expenditure (capex) outlay of over Rs 750 crore to enhance our dairy and F&V (fruits and vegetables) processing capacities across key locations," Mother Dairy Fruits and



Vegetables Pvt Ltd MD Manish Bandlish told PTI. Mother Dairy is coming up with a big dairy plant in Nagpur, Maharashtra with an investment of around Rs 525 crore, he said.

The greenfield plant will have a processing capacity of 6 lakh litres of milk per day, which can be expanded up to 10 lakh litres a day.

This upcoming plant will serve the markets of

central and southern regions.

"We also plan to commission a new fruit processing plant in Karnataka with an investment of over Rs 125 crore under our Safal brand," Bandlish said.

These two plants are expected to be completed in about two years.

"In addition to these new greenfield plants, we are also strengthening our capacities in our existing facilities with an outlay of around Rs 100 crore," Bandlish said.

At present, Mother Dairy has nine company-owned processing plants for dairy with a total milk processing capacity of more than 50 lakh litres per day.

Adani to invest USD 14 bn in FY25

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI):

Adani group plans to invest more than Rs 1.2 lakh crore (about USD 14 billion) across its portfolio companies that range from ports to energy, airports, commodities, cement and media in fiscal year starting April 1, as it doubles down on its USD 100 billion investment guidance over the next 7-10 years to grow businesses, sources said.

The projected capital expenditure or capex for 2024-25 (April 2024 to March 2025) fiscal is 40 per cent higher than what the portfolio is estimated to have incurred in FY24.

According to analysts, the portfolio is estimated to have incurred a capex of around USD 10 billion in FY24 that ends on



March 31.

Sources said these investments will set the stage for exponential profit growth.

The group had previously guided a USD 100 billion capex over the next 7-10 years. Most of this investment is going to go into group fast growing businesses - renewable, green hydrogen and airports.

As much as 70 per cent of the planned capex will go into its green portfolio - primarily renewable power, green hydrogen, green evacuation. Of the remaining 30 per cent, the majority will be spent towards airports and ports businesses, they said.

In calendar year 2023, the portfolio delivered a USD 9.5 billion EBITDA (up 34.4 per cent year-on-year), while its net debt has reduced by 4 per cent from March 2023 to September 2023 (balance sheet figures are only declared half yearly).

In the December quarter, Adani's portfolio reported record EBITDA growth of 63.6 per cent, taking its 12-month EBITDA to an all-time high of USD 9.5 billion (Rs 78,823 crore) in 2023.

Kerosene consumption falls sharply by 26 pc CAGR during FY14-23: Govt data

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI):

Kerosene consumption in the country has declined sharply by 26 per cent CAGR between 2013-14 and 2022-23, mainly due to government policies to promote clean energy.

The latest 'Energy Statistics India 2024' of the National Statistical Office (NSO) stated, "The impact of energy policies of recent time is evident on the consumption of kerosene as a fuel in the country".

The data showed that the consumption of kerosene has seen a steady decreasing trend with a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of (-) 25.78 per cent from 2013-

14 to 2022-23.

The report stated that among all the petroleum products the HSDO (diesel), which has the highest share of consumption (38.52 per cent) during 2022-23, experienced a positive growth of 12.05 per cent over the last year.

Petrol and pet coke have witnessed a growth of 13.38 per cent and 28.68 per cent, respectively, over the last year.

HSD (diesel) has also registered a 12.05 per cent growth to 85.90 MTs during 2022-23(P) compared to 76.66 MTs during 2021-22.

The report stated that the consumption of natural gas has experienced a fluctuation over time.

Banks asked to check mis-selling, safeguard account holders' interest: DFS Secy

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI):

Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi has said that public sector banks have been asked to check mis-selling of insurance products and ensure protection of account holders' interest.

Banks have been sensitised on the matter, as the Department of Financial Services (DFS) regularly gets complaints that fraudulent and unethical practices are being adopted by banks and life insurance companies for procuring policies from the bank customers, he told PTI in an interview.

"Banks have been asked to give utmost importance to the interest of account holders," he said.



There have been instances where life insurance policies were sold to customers aged above 75 years in tier-II and III cities.

Usually, banks push products of their subsidiary insurers.

When resisted by customers, branch officials would sheepishly admit that they are under pres-

sure from the top. Insurance products are pushed when customers go to seek any kind of loan or buy a term deposit.

It is also conveyed that the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has raised objection, as incentives for selling insurance products bring not only pressure on the field staff but the core business of banking also gets affected and quality of advances may get compromised in the lure of commission and incentives for staff.

Meanwhile, the DFS has also directed all state-owned banks to review their gold loan portfolio as instances of non-compliance with regulatory norms have been noticed by the government.

Indian patent office grants 1 lakh patents in past year

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI):

Indian patent office has granted over 1 lakh patents in the past year on account of steps taken by the government to further strengthen the intellectual property rights ecosystem, an official statement said on Saturday.

It also said that there has been a notable surge in Geographical Indication (GI) registrations, demonstrating a threefold increase compared to the previous year.

As on date, 573 GIs are registered in India. In 2023-24, 98 new GIs have been registered and another 62 will be registered by March 31 this year.

registrations totalled at 36,378 and 27,819 respectively.

"Every 6 minutes one technology is seeking IP protection in India. In 2023, an all-time high of 90,300 patent applications were received. Patent office granted over one lakh patents in the last one year (15-Mar-2023 to 14-Mar-2024). Every working day, 250 patents were granted," the commerce and industry ministry said.

It added that the Patent Rules, 2024 have been notified and these rules introduced several provisions aimed at simplifying the process of obtaining and managing patents, thereby facilitating a conducive environment for inventors and creators.

Modi's four guarantees achieved in record time: Vikrant Singh

Central Chronicle News

Khairagarh, Mar 17: In a press conference organized by the District BJP, District Panchayat Vice President Vikrant Singh hailed the historic fulfillment of Modi's four guarantees within the Sai government's first three months in office. Singh described this accomplishment as a monumental milestone, emphasizing the transformative impact it has had on the state's governance landscape.

Singh commended the Vishnu Deo Sai government for swiftly addressing the long-standing issues that plagued the state during the previous five years. He highlighted the government's commitment to good governance and its dedication to opening doors of development for women, farmers, and youth across the state.

Singh outlined the government's achievements, including the approval of Rs 12,168 crore for the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, the distribution of a two-year bonus amounting to Rs 3,716 crore to farmers, and the transfer of Rs 655 crore to 70 lakh women beneficiaries under the Mahtari Vandan Yojana. Additionally, he noted the significant support provided to farmers through the Krishak Unnati Yojana, where Rs 13,320 crore was transferred to 24 lakh farmers, setting a benchmark for agricultural support prices.

In the last three months, the government, under the leadership of Vishnu Deo Sai, has undertaken several significant initiatives for the welfare and development of Chhattisgarh. Among these accomplishments, the increase in



tendupatta remuneration from Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,500 per standard bag stands out as a notable achievement. Chhattisgarh government is the first government to provide free Ayodhya darshan to the people of the state after the construction of Ram temple.

To address past injustices in job prioritization, the government has infused renewed vigor into the unemployed population by extending the age limit for recruitment by five years. Additionally,

measures such as the implementation of merit-based compassionate appointment, alignment with the National Education Policy, establishment of a State Employment Commission akin to the Central Niti Aayog, allocation of Rs. 10,000 annually for landless farmers, and provision of double benefits under the Ayushman Yojana have been undertaken.

Furthermore, initiatives like the recruitment of 33 thousand teachers, the

Shaktipeeth Yojana, providing Rs. 6,000 for college student transportation fees, launching Jagdalpur air services, enhancing infrastructure for special backward tribe families, and improving road connectivity for settlements have been initiated.

Notably, the government's budget has been structured without imposing any new taxes. Vikrant Singh emphasized that these achievements, which were not realized during the five years of Congress governance, have been accomplished within just three months under the Vishnu Deo government, setting Chhattisgarh on a promising trajectory of development. District BJP President Ghamman Sahu, Anand Sinha, Dayanand Patel, and Rajkumar Janghel were among the attendees at the press conference.

Saroj Pandey's swift action brings relief to farmers

Central Chronicle News

Gaurela Pendra Marwahi, Mar 17: In a display of responsiveness and commitment to public welfare, BJP National Vice President and Lok Sabha candidate for Korba constituency, Dr. Saroj Pandey, intervened swiftly to alleviate the challenges faced by farmers at the District Cooperative Central Bank branch in Marwahi.

During a visit to Marwahi assembly as part of her constituency outreach, Saroj Pandey, on Saturday, halted her convoy upon noticing a large number of farmers enduring long queues and hardships under the scorching sun outside the bank premises. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, she immediately engaged with the farmers to understand their predicament.

Moved by their plight, Saroj Pandey wasted no



time in initiating action. She promptly liaised with the District Collector to address the farmers' concerns and expedited the appointment of two additional employees to enhance banking services at the branch.

Furthermore, she advocated for the establishment of a separate branch to streamline operations and cater to the growing needs of the farming community.

The tangible impact of Pandey's intervention

was palpable as farmers rejoiced in the newfound ease of conducting transactions at the bank. Their expressions of gratitude and relief underscored the significance of responsive leadership in addressing grassroots challenges and fostering community well-being.

Echoing sentiments of appreciation, farmers lauded Saroj Pandey's approach, acknowledging her dedication to addressing the needs of the common people.

Accident on National Highway claims one life

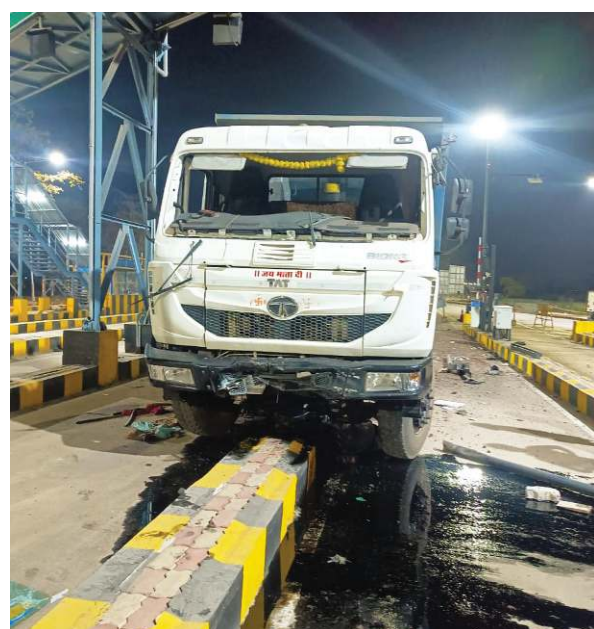
Driver's negligence results in fatal collision

Central Chronicle News

Kurud, Mar 17: Another unfortunate incident adds to the string of fatal accidents on the National Highway, highlighting the pressing need for enhanced safety measures.

In the wee hours of Friday night, tragedy struck as a Haiwa vehicle travelling from Raipur to Dhamtari route collided with the divider near the Marod toll plaza, resulting in grievous injuries to the driver and the untimely demise of the helper.

According to Kurud Police sources, the incident occurred around midnight when an empty Haiwa vehicle, en route from Bemetara to procure sand from the Kurud sand mine, careened recklessly near the toll



tax plaza at Marod.

The impact of the collision was catastrophic,

claiming the life of Shyamlal Prajapati, aged 52, hailing from village

Bharehari in Rewa district, who was seated as the helper in the vehicle. Meanwhile, the driver, Ramlu Kaur, aged 30, sustained injuries in the mishap.

Promptly responding to the call, Kurud Police swiftly arrived at the scene, initiating necessary legal procedures. Following a meticulous investigation and completion of the deceased's Panchnama, the authorities handed over Shyamlal Prajapati's remains to his grieving family members.

Furthermore, a case has been registered against the negligent driver, Ramlu Kaur, as the investigation delves deeper into the circumstances surrounding the tragic incident.

Saint Gadge Jayanti enlivens Kurud

- Devotional procession and Kalash rally grace Kurud streets
- Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh extends warm welcome to Sant Gadge procession

Central Chronicle News

Kurud, Mar 17: The vibrant spirit of festivity and reverence filled the air in Kurud Nagar as the Jhiriya Dhobi Samaj Kurud commemorated Saint Gadge Jayanti with unparalleled fervour and devotion.

The jubilant festivities commenced at 11 am with a magnificent procession originating from the revered Goddess Maa Chandi Temple, featuring the resplendent chariot carrying the essence of Saint Gadge.



Amidst the rhythmic beats of the Dhumal band, women adorned with Kalash added to the grandeur, while the air reverberated with hymns extolling the virtues of Saint Gadge.

Winding its way through the heart of the city, the procession traversed a route from Chandi Mandir to Kargil Chowk, passing

through iconic landmarks such as Thana Road, Old Bazaar Chowk, and Hutatma Chowk.

Along the journey, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh greeted the entourage with floral tributes, joined by enthusiastic members of the Kurud section.

Continuing its majestic journey, the procession pro-

ceeded towards the Purani Mandi complex via Kachari Chowk, Janpad Road, and Sirsa Chowk, culminating in Shankar Nagar.

Here, amidst prayers offered to Saint Gadge, a bountiful Mahaprasad Bhandara awaited all members of the society, symbolizing communal harmony and unity.

New Community Hall to be build in Maurikhurd village

Central Chronicle News

Kurud, Mar 17: A significant stride towards community development unfolds as the foundation stone for the inaugural community hall in Sahu Samaj Maurikhurd was laid, courtesy of the MLA funds allocated by the esteemed Ajay Chandrakar.

Amidst a gathering brimming with anticipation, the auspicious Bhoomi Pujan ceremony was conducted before the enforcement of the code of conduct. Leading the event were distinguished guests, including Krishnakant Sahu, representing MLA Ajay Chandrakar, and Tikesah Sahu, the Sarpanch of Navagaon. Spearheading the proceedings was Rajesh Sahu, the Sarpanch of the village Panchayat Dahdaha, with the generous hospitality extended by Thaneshwar Sahu, Hema



Sahu, Surendra Sahu, Omprakash Sahu, Keshav Sahu, and Gaindlal Sahu.

Expressing pride in the concerted efforts directed towards rural upliftment, Krishnakant Sahu highlighted the unwavering dedication of Ajay Chandrakar towards facilitating essential amenities for every village. The impending construction of the Gramin Sahu Bhawan, following the recent approval of

the Regional Sahu Bhawan, stands as a testament to Chandrakar's commitment to the region's holistic development. The ceremony, attended by esteemed members of the rural Sahu Samaj, including Hirendra Sahu, Mahendra Sahu, Dhruv Kumar Sahu, and Gautam Sahu, among others, signifies a collaborative endeavour towards fostering community cohesion and progress.

Strategic meeting boosts election preparedness efforts

Gaurela Pendra Marwahi, Mar 17: In a step towards ensuring the integrity and transparency of the upcoming Lok Sabha General Elections 2024, a crucial meeting was convened to address the control of economic crimes and bolster expenditure monitoring measures.

Under the stewardship of Collector and District Election Officer, Leena Kamlesh Mandavi, key stakeholders including officers from Income Tax, GST, Lead Bank, Excise, Railway Protection Force, Sub-Divisional Officer Revenue, and Sub-Divisional Officer Police convened in the Arpa Sabha room of the Collectorate for a training cum meeting session.

Master trainers delivered insightful presenta-



tions, equipping officers with the necessary tools and strategies to effectively combat economic crimes and monitor expenditures during the electoral process. The rigorous training underscored the importance of upholding principles of fairness and

transparency in electoral proceedings.

Addressing the assembly, Collector Leena Kamlesh Mandavi emphasized the paramount importance of conducting elections with utmost diligence and integrity. She urged all officers to re-

main vigilant against illegal practices such as cash distribution, bribery, and other forms of inducements aimed at influencing voters.

Furthermore, the Collector issued directives to intensify surveillance efforts, particularly at bor-

der checkpoints and barriers, to curb the illegal transportation of goods and materials intended to sway voter sentiment. Immediate action protocols were established to ensure swift response to any illicit activities reported during the electoral period.

In a spirit of collaboration and mutual coordination, the concerned departments were urged to execute their duties impartially, adhering strictly to established rules and provisions. The meeting witnessed the active participation of Additional Collector Namrata Anand Dongre, Nodal Officer Expenditure Monitoring Dileram Dahire, and various other officials representing different departments.

MLA Rohit Sahu extols Chief Minister's welfare initiatives

- Advocating for farmer rights and power solutions

Central Chronicle News

Rajim, Mar 17: In a display of collaborative governance and proactive representation, Rajim assembly constituency MLA, Rohit Sahu, led a delegation to meet Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, extending gratitude for the state government's pivotal decisions aimed at the welfare of farmers, women, and the working class.

Expressing heartfelt appreciation, MLA Rohit Sahu commended Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai for the far-reaching policies designed to uplift the agricultural and



socio-economic landscape of the state. Emphasizing the importance of addressing pressing issues, Sahu meticulously apprised the Chief Minister of the challenges confronting the region. One significant concern highlighted by Sahu pertains to the delay in disbursing the differential amount to farmers under the Krishak Unnati Yojana, particularly those possessing land registered in the name of Regha Adhiya.

The shortfall of Rs 917 per acre has inflicted substantial losses on farmers, affecting communities across Sendar, Chaitra, Raveli, and other areas within the constituency. Furthermore, the delegation underscored the critical need for resolving electricity-related problems, including persistent issues of low voltage in the Rajim area. Proposals for establishing a 132 KV sub-station in Madeli (Chhura) and completing the

construction of a 220 KV sub-station in Koma (Rajim) were advocated to alleviate the region's power woes, especially concerning agricultural activities reliant on tube wells.

Amidst discussions, the delegation voiced their satisfaction with recent government decisions, including the approval of 18 lakh Prime Minister's houses, two years' outstanding bonus for paddy, and the Mahtari Vandan Yojana. The meeting, attended by esteemed members such as BJP Mandal President Fingeshwar Pyarelal Sonkar and BJYM District Vice President Raju Sahu, exemplified the efforts towards addressing grassroots concerns and fostering inclusive development in the region.

Dr. Shivkumar Dahria performs Jalabhishek at sacred sites

Central Chronicle News

Lavan, Mar 17: Amidst the serene ambiance of devotion and spirituality, former Cabinet Minister and Congress candidate for Janjgir Champa Lok Sabha constituency, Dr. Shivkumar Dahria, embarked on a journey of reverence and solidarity, paying homage to revered sites in Lavan and Kharaud.

Commencing his pilgrimage from his residence in Palari, Dr. Dahria made his way to Lavan to partake in the revered Girodपुरi fair organized by Baba Guru Ghasidas's Jait Kham and Satnami Samaj. Bowing in

humility, he performed Jalabhishek at the sacred Jait Kham, offering prayers and flowers in reverence to the divine.

Following the conclusion of the fair, a heartfelt Bhandara awaited the returning pilgrims, where Dr. Dahria extended his warm regards and inquired about the well-being of devotees, fostering a sense of community and care among all present.



Continuing his spiritual odyssey, Dr. Dahria proceeded to the ancient Lakshmeshwar Shiv Temple in Kharaud, Janjgir Champa district, where he performed Aarti with

flower garlands, symbolizing devotion and adoration. Joined by local residents and hundreds of Congress workers, the atmosphere reverberated with collective reverence and unity.

In a demonstration of political camaraderie, a Congress workers conference was organized in Kharaud, Pamgarh Assembly, under the esteemed presence of Pamgarh MLA Shesh Raj Harvansh. The gathering saw the convergence of Congress workers from Navagarh and Pamgarh blocks, affirming a collective commitment to the party's ideals and vision.

Kohli back in India for IPL, set to join RCB training camp



New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTD):

Batting maestro Virat Kohli on Sunday returned to India, following the birth of his son Akaay, and is set to join his franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore's training camp ahead of the upcoming IPL. Kohli had opted out of the India-England Test series citing "personal reasons". Later on, it was announced that the break was taken so that the batting star could be present for the birth of his son in the UK. "@imVkohli HAS ARRIVED ...and that moment is here! The Red King is back in India, ready to start his #IPLonStar

campaign on March 22 v CSK," IPL broadcaster Star Sports tweeted. "Get ready to cheer for the King and groove to some Kingly beats as Star Sports' new anthem - Kohli Calling has dropped on all platforms. And tune in only to Star Sports (as always!) for 'all things Kohli' this IPL." The batter landed in Mumbai on Sunday, and he is expected to join the training camp of Royal Challengers Bangalore soon. Despite his brilliance for the side over the years, RCB are still yet to get their hands on the coveted IPL trophy. Kohli aggregated 639 runs in last year's IPL.

Ashwin has been an absolutely terrific cricketer: Gavaskar

Chennai, Mar 17 (PTD):

Yesteryear India stars Sunil Gavaskar and Kris Srikkanth have called Ravichandran Ashwin an "absolutely terrific cricketer" and attributed his success to tremendous self-belief and support from former BCCI president N Srinivasan.

Ashwin was felicitated by the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) on Saturday for playing in 100 Tests and reaching 500 wickets.

Speaking on the occasion, Srikkanth said, "If Ashwin has played 100 Tests and taken 500 wickets, one man responsible for that is sitting here as the chief guest - N Srinivasan."

"It is a fantastic achievement for Ashwin. His self-belief is one of the prime



reasons for his success. Well done Ashwin. Congratulations." The legendary Gavaskar too lauded the senior India off-spinner, terming him a "terrific cricketer".

"I congratulate Ashwin on reaching the landmark

of 100 Tests and 500 Test wickets. He's had an absolutely terrific career in all formats of the game, especially in Tests.

"Wishing him all the best for his future. We don't know when he hangs up his boots, but he has

been an absolutely terrific cricketer," said Gavaskar. Ashwin began his IPL career with Chennai Super Kings in 2008 and remained there until 2015, winning two titles.

CSK is owned by India Cements and Srinivasan is the company's managing director.

Ashwin's India and Tamil Nadu teammate Dinesh Karthik too had words of appreciation for the current world No. 1 bowler in Tests and called him an inspiration.

"What a journey it has been! Phenomenal and outstanding, especially the fact that he has become the first Tamil Nadu player to do so. He (Ashwin) will be an inspiration to many other cricketers not only in Tamil Nadu but around the world as well.

Travis Head joins Sunrisers Hyderabad ahead of IPL



Hyderabad, Mar 17 (PTD):

Dashing Australia opener Travis Head has joined the Sunrisers Hyderabad training camp ahead of the upcoming IPL season.

The 30-year-old, who played a vital role in Australia winning the 50-over World Cup in India, will be playing IPL after six years. "I am feeling good. Good to be back. Looking forward to a good season. The team looks good. Hopefully, I can contribute some runs," he said in a video posted by SRH

in 'X' on Sunday. Head last played in the IPL in 2017 for the Royal Challengers Bangalore. "I heard amazing things about the Orange Army, looking forward to playing in front of everyone. We will try to win as many games as possible. Hopefully, we will have a successful season. Can't wait to play in front of the crowd," Head said. The left-handed opener will be playing under his Australian captain Pat Cummins, who has been appointed skipper for the season, replacing Aiden Markram.

India rope in Dutch goalkeeping coach Dennis van de Pol



New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTD):

India have roped in Dutch goalkeeping expert Dennis van de Pol to aid the men's hockey team's preparations for the Paris Olympics.

A well-known hockey goalkeeping coach, Van de Pol has been working with the Indian goalies for nearly four years now, with his first stint in 2019.

He will join the ongoing national coaching camp at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, where he will work closely with PR

Sreejesh, Krishan Pathak and Suraj Karkera.

The 10-day special goalkeeping camp, overseen by chief coach Craig Fulton, will end on March 26, a week before the team leaves for the Australia tour. "This is a very important phase for the Indian men's team. In their quest for another podium finish at the Olympics, Hockey India is ensuring the team is provided with all the necessary support they need to fulfil this dream," Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey was quoted as

saying in a media release. "We have re-emphasised the importance of these specialised coaching camps in goalkeeping and drag flicking.

Van de Pol had conducted two special camps with the Indian team last year in July and September ahead of the Asian Games.

"We are delighted to engage Dennis who has been closely working with this group of goalkeepers for nearly four years now and understands the minor tweaks needed to lift their performance," he added.

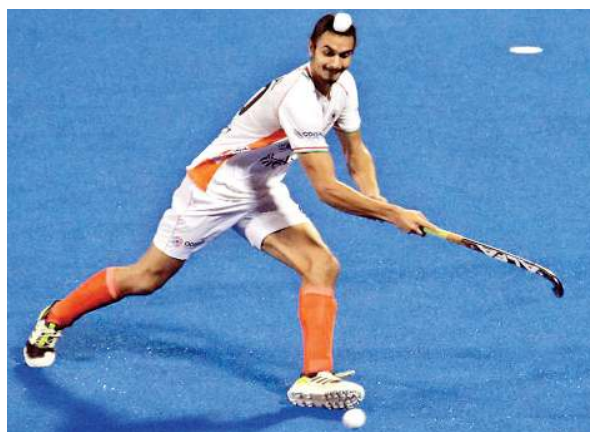
Gulveer shatters 16-year-old national record in 10000m

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTD):

Asian Games bronze medallist athlete Gulveer Singh shattered a 16-year-old national record in the men's 10000m to finish second in his heat at The Ten in San Juan Capistrano in California.

The 25-year-old clocked 27:41.81 on Saturday to better the earlier national mark of 28:02.89 by over 20 seconds that stood in Surendra Singh's name since 2008. However, Gulveer's effort was not enough for Olympic qualification as he missed the Paris Games qualification time of 27:00.00 by over 41 seconds. The other Indian in the heat, Kartik Kumar finished ninth in the race with a timing of 28:01.90, which was also better than Surendra's earlier national record. Avinash Sable, who was competing in the same event, did not finish (DNF) his heat, pulling out of the race in the 15th lap at the 6000m mark. In the women's 10000m, Parul Chaudhary finished a disappointing 20th, clocking 32:02.08. She too missed the Paris qualification, which stands at 30:40.00.

Huge difference between playing hockey at the junior and senior level: Arajjeet Hundal



New Delhi, March 17 (PTI):

Young Indian forward Arajjeet Singh Hundal believes there is a vast difference between playing hockey at the junior and senior level, and that the experienced players in the side had played a big role in making his transition seamless.

Hundal, who is a third generation hockey player in his family - his grandfather, father and three uncles also played the sport at the national level - added that he will leave no stone unturned to secure a place in the Paris Olympic-bound side. "Senior hockey is com-

pletely different from junior hockey. I played junior hockey for three-four years and have also played two (junior) World Cups. I got a chance to play in the FIH Pro League in India against big teams like the Netherlands and Australia. We are lucky to be in the camp ahead of the beginning of our senior career," Hundal told PTI Bhabha.

Hundal, who has seen several family members play hockey at the national level but never don the India jersey, wants to play in the Olympics just for them. He says there would be grand celebrations at

home if he fulfils his family's dream of representing India at Paris.

"If I could do that (represent India in Paris), there would be a festive atmosphere at our house. There will be such happiness on everyone's face that even I have never seen before. I will leave no stone unturned to make that happen," the 20-year-old Hundal, a BA student, said from Bhubaneswar.

"It is the dream of the entire family that I play in the Olympics. Grandfather used to play hockey. Papa and (his) three brothers all played hockey at the national level but no one could find a place in the India team," he said. The drag flicker-cum-forward is a part of the 28-member core group of probables at the national camp in Bhubaneswar. The camp is significant as the team is aiming to fine-tune its preparations ahead of Paris.

Hundal made his senior team debut during the South Africa tour this year after having netted four goals, including a hat-trick against Korea, in the Junior World Cup in Kuala Lumpur last year.

IPL will be entirely held in India: BCCI secretary Jay Shah



New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTD):

BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Saturday dismissed speculation that the IPL would be shifted to the UAE due to the upcoming general elections in the country between April 19 to June 1. There were endless rumours about the IPL being shifted to the Emirates due to the elections which will be held in seven phases with the reports filling social media about players being asked to deposit their passports with respective franchises. However, Shah set the record straight.

"The entire IPL will be held in India. We will be formulating the remaining schedule very soon and announce it," Shah told PTI. The schedule for the first two weeks has been already released with defending champions Chennai Super Kings taking on Royal Challengers Bangalore at home on March 22.

Alcaraz rallies from set down to end Sinner's winning streak



Indian Wells, Mar 17 (AP):

Carlos Alcaraz defeated Jannik Sinner 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 to end the Italian's 19-match winning streak and advance to the BNP Paribas Open final on Saturday night.

Alcaraz retained his world No. 2 ranking with

the victory and extended his winning streak to 11 matches at Indian Wells, where he'll play either Tommy Paul or Daniil Medvedev in Sunday's title match.

Sinner led 2-1 in the first set when the match was suspended for more than three hours because of

rain in the Southern California desert. Rain also affected the women's semifinals on Friday night.

Sinner went on to dominate the first set before Alcaraz changed his tactics. The Spaniard started coming to the net more and moving Sinner up and back.

Sinner could have knocked Alcaraz out of the second spot with a win. He had won 19 matches in a row dating to last year, including 16 straight this year.

Alcaraz earned the only break of the second set in the fourth game with a forehand drop volley winner. He faced a break point on his serve in the seventh game, but shook it off eventually served out the set.

Alcaraz broke Sinner in the third and fifth games of the third. The players were blasting the ball from both sides and attacking the net, which made for several entertaining and sharply angled volley exchanges.

Alcaraz led 40-love on his serve for his first match point when he netted a backhand. Sinner's smash dashed Alcaraz's second match point before the Spaniard closed it out with a forehand cross-court winner.

Iyer links up with KKR ahead of IPL

Kolkata, Mar 17 (PTD):

Kolkata Knight Riders captain Shreyas Iyer has joined the team's training camp ahead of the upcoming IPL season.

There had been doubts over Iyer's participation in the initial part of the league due to his back-related issues.

KKR posted pictures of the skipper arriving in the city on Saturday.

The 29-year-old had missed the last season as he underwent a back surgery in April. He returned to action in September but his back continues to cause him discomfort.

He played the opening two Tests against England before complaining of back stiffness following which he was removed for the Indian squad for the last three games.

Iyer skipped Mumbai's Ranji Trophy quarterfinal as well but played the semifinal and final.

However, he was unable to take the field on the last two days of the final against Vidarbha due to back trouble.

KKR open their 2024 IPL campaign against Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Eden Gardens on March 23.



Kane sets scoring records as Bayern routs Darmstadt 5-2 in Bundesliga

Berlin, Mar 17 (AP):

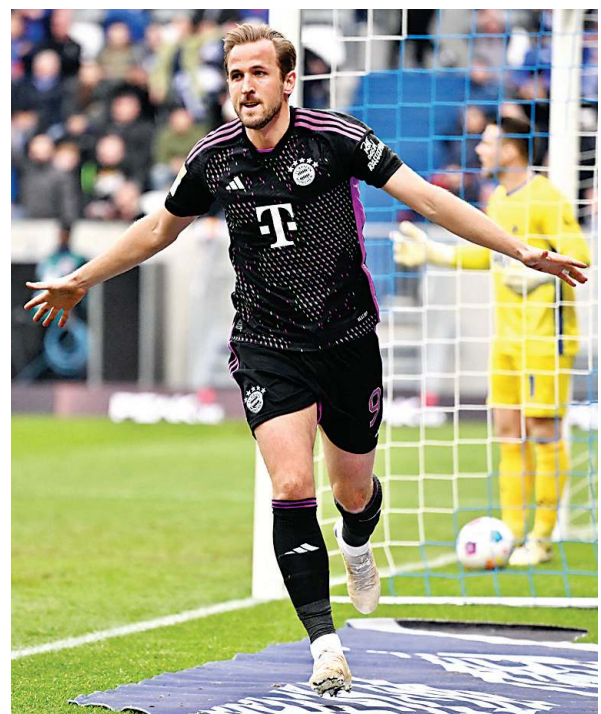
Harry Kane has never scored so many league goals. The England captain claimed his 31st Bundesliga goal on Saturday to help Bayern Munich to a 5-2 win at last-place Darmstadt.

Kane headed in Joshua Kimmich's cross before the break to set the record for goals in a debut Bundesliga season.

Uwe Seeler scored 30 goals for Hamburg in the inaugural Bundesliga in 1963-64. Kane also eclipsed his previous best mark of 30 league goals in a season achieved with Tottenham in the Premier League in 2018 and again last season.

But Kane's afternoon ended in pain with an ankle injury sustained late in the game after he crashed into the post trying to reach the ball. It means his participation in England's upcoming friendlies against Brazil and Belgium is in doubt.

Including the Champions League, where Bayern next faces Kane's familiar foe Arsenal, the 30-year-old forward has 37 goals in 36 appearances for Bayern this season. There are still eight rounds of the Bundesliga remaining for him to chase Robert Lewandowski's record of 41 goals in a single season.



Bayern started in control Saturday but was stunned when Darmstadt's Mathias Honsak set up Tim Skarke to score in the 28th.

Kane inadvertently set up Jamal Musiala to equalize eight minutes later. The 19-year-old Aleksandar Pavlovic made a great run past a host of defenders and cut the ball back for Kane, whose heavy touch set up Musiala to sweep the ball in. Kane scored in first-half stoppage time, though there

was still time before the break for Oscar Vilhelmsson to strike the crossbar at the other end.

Musiala grabbed his second goal and Serge Gnabry added Bayern's fourth in the second half before Kane went off late after his collision with the post.

Pavlovic, who got his first Germany call-up on Friday, had gone off earlier after a clash of heads. He watched the rest of the match with a swollen left eye.

IAF's C-17 aircraft executes precision airdrop in Arabian Sea

● **Helps Navy seize hijacked vessel**

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI):

A C-17 tactical transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) executed a precision airdrop of two combat boats along with marine commandos in the Arabian Sea while assisting the Navy to seize a hijacked cargo vessel from Somali pirates.

The IAF described the airdrop of the Combat Rubberised Raiding Craft (CRRC) boats and the MARCOS commandos as a "remarkable display" of "jointness" between the two forces.

The Navy on Saturday captured 35 pirates and freed 17 hostages held by them after seizing the former Maltese-flagged merchant vessel around 2,600 km from the Indian coast in a well-calibrated operation.

The nearly 40-hour oper-



Indian Navy personnel carry out an anti-hijacking operation.

ation saw the Navy deploying its stealth-guided missile destroyer INS Kolkata, patrol vessel INS Subhadra, long-endurance Sea Guardian drones besides airdropping of the elite marine commandos - MARCOS - using the C-17 aircraft.

The merchant vessel Ruen was seized by the Somali pirates in December off the coast of Somalia.

"In a remarkable display of #Jointness & #Integration, an IAF C-17 aircraft executed a preci-

sion Airborne Drop of two Combat Rubberised Raiding Craft (CRRC) boats, along with Indian Navy MARCOS in Arabian Sea in support of ongoing anti piracy Op Sankalp," the IAF posted on 'X'. "Flying for almost 10 hrs to an area 2600 kms off the Indian Coast, the Op was carried out to rescue crew of bulk carrier vessel MV Ruen. The ship was hijacked by Somali pirates near Yemeni island of Socotra recently," it said.

"Working seamlessly with @indiannavy, the

mission was successful with all the 17 crew on-board recovered safely," the IAF added.

In a statement, the Navy said the seaworthiness of MV Ruen is being assessed and the vessel carrying approximately 37,800 tonnes of cargo worth around USD 1 million will be brought safely to India.

"The culmination of the ongoing anti-piracy operation involving pirate ship Ruen in the Southern Indian Ocean Region highlights the commitment of the Indian Navy towards reinforcing peace and stability, and also to thwart the resurgence of piracy in the region," it said.

The Indian Navy deployed over 10 warships to keep a vigil over the strategic waterways following increasing attacks on cargo vessels in the Red Sea by Iran-backed Houthi militants. In the midst of rising global concerns over the Houthi attacks, the Indian Ocean saw rising incidents of piracy.

'No change in CUET-UG schedule in view of LS polls'

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI):

The Common University Entrance Test (CUET)-UG will be conducted between May 15 and May 31, 2024, as announced earlier, and there will be no change in view of the Lok Sabha election schedule, according to UGC Chairman Jagadesh Kumar.

The date sheet will be released after the registration process is completed.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) chief had earlier this month said the exam dates could change depending on the schedule of the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls.

The Election Commission on Saturday announced that polling for the 543 Lok Sabha con-



Jagadesh Kumar

stituencies will be held in seven phases, starting with 102 seats in the first phase on April 19. The votes will be counted on June 4.

"The National Testing Agency (NTA) will conduct CUET-UG, as announced earlier, between

May 15 and May 31, 2024. In this period, two dates overlap with the election dates on the 20th and 25th of May.

"After the last date for filling out applications on March 26, 2024, we will know the number of students registered for CUET-UG and their geographical distribution," Kumar told PTI.

"Based on this data and the election dates, NTA will announce the date sheet for CUET-UG. But the dates will not change," Kumar added.

Prospective candidates have until March 26 to complete the application process for CUET-UG, which was introduced in 2022.

This standardised test streamlines admission

processes across central, state, deemed and private universities nationwide.

A notable departure from tradition, the NTA has outlined a hybrid examination format for CUET-UG 2024, including both Computer Based Testing and pen-and-paper modes for different subjects.

Officials have indicated that subjects witnessing high registration volumes will adopt a pen-and-paper format using optical mark recognition (OMR), while others will remain computer-based.

In the previous cycle, approximately 14.9 lakh registrations were recorded for CUET-UG, highlighting its significance in the higher education landscape.

EC promotes inclusivity and voter education thru cricket match, voters' guide

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI):

In an initiative aimed at fostering voter education and inclusivity, the Election Commission of India organised an exhibition cricket match here between the Indian Deaf Cricket Association (IDCA) and the Delhi & District Cricket Association (DDCA) teams.

The match, held at the Karnail Singh Stadium, drew attention to the importance of accessibility and participation in the

electoral process, according to an official statement. During the event, Sheetal Devi, a para-archer and Arjuna awardee, was announced the "national icon" in the persons with disabilities (PwD) category by the Election Commission.

The match, attended by Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, saw a spirited performance from both the teams, entertaining around

2,500 spectators, including PwDs and young voters. The event underscored the Election Commission's commitment to inclusivity and empowerment, inspiring fellow voters with disabilities to enrol and participate in the electoral process. It also marked the launch of a dedicated voters' guide for PwDs and senior citizens, providing essential information on provisions available at polling stations to facilitate a smooth voting experience, the statement said.

CWC to meet on Mar 19 to give nod to manifesto

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI): The Congress Working Committee (CWC) will discuss the party's manifesto for the Lok Sabha **LOK SABHA POLLS** elections at its meeting on March 19 and give the final shape to it. The Congress' central election committee (CEC) chaired by party chief Mallikarjun Kharge is also likely to meet on March 19 to 20 to finalise the remaining candidates of the party for the seven-phase polls beginning April 19. AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said that the

CWC, its top decision-making body, would meet on March 19 and give its nod to the draft manifesto which for the Lok Sabha **LOK SABHA POLLS** carries the five 'guarantees' for justice. He said the party will fight the elections on the issue of 'five nyay' (justice) - 'Bhagidari Nyay', 'Kisan Nyay', 'Nari Nyay', 'Shramik Nyay' and 'Yuva Nyay' -- with 25 guarantees, five for each nyay, which have already been announced by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former president Rahul Gandhi.

IIT Guwahati, Int'l scientists shed light on dark matter's crucial role

● **In shaping Universe**

New Delhi, Mar 17 (PTI): Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati in collaboration with international scientists have proposed a novel scenario to explain the matter-antimatter imbalance in the Universe.

A study by the researchers sheds light on one of the long-standing mysteries in the field of cosmology surrounding dark matter and Baryon Asymmetry in the Universe (BAU). The research which has been fund-

ed by the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), has been published in Physical Review D. According to officials, only about 5 per cent of the Universe comprises visible or baryonic matter, such as stars and galaxies. The remaining approximately five times this visible matter is composed of dark matter, a substance that does not emit light.

While the origin of dark matter remains elusive, visible matter is known to consist of baryons (matter) and a minimal amount of antibaryons

(antimatter). "The Universe was expected to have an equal amount of matter and antimatter in the beginning. Any initial imbalance should have been rectified during the rapid expansion phase known as inflation. But today we observe surplus matter. ystery, known as the baryon asymmetry in the Universe (BAU) contradicts our predictions and remains unsolved, challenging our understanding of the early Universe," said Debasish Borah, Associate Professor, Department of Physics, IIT Guwahati.

Gangetic plains, Midnapore hold key to LS polls in Bengal

Kolkata, Mar 17 (PTI):

The Jalpaiguri region in North Bengal and the Matua belt in south Bengal are also important in the political landscape of the state. The Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal, comprising 42 seats, will take place in seven phases, from April 19 to June 1. Counting is on June 4. Out of the 42 seats, 10 are reserved for

SC candidates and two for ST. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the TMC won 22 seats, the Congress (2) and the BJP (18). The Gangetic-plain region, which comprises five districts of North and South 24 Parganas, Kolkata, Howrah, and Hooghly, has 16 Lok Sabha seats out of which the BJP had won just three in the

last Lok Sabha polls. The TMC, which is known for its political dominance of this region, sensing anti-incumbency and non-performance of its candidates, this time has brought in new aspirants in six seats - three, two, and one respectively from North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, and Hooghly.

EXCHANGE OF COLOURS



Young women play Holi with colours ahead of Basant Utsav festival, at Maidan area in Kolkata, Sunday.

1992 RIOTS AND 1993 BLASTS Maha initiates steps to trace kin of victims for compensation

Mumbai, Mar 17 (PTI): Three decades after the 1992 communal riots and the 1993 serial bomb blasts in Mumbai, the Maharashtra government has initiated steps to compensate the legal heirs of persons who were killed or went missing during the tragic events. The government issued an appeal letter

on March 14, urging the legal representatives or heirs of those who lost their lives or went missing in the aftermath of the riots and blasts to approach offices of the city and suburban collectors within the next month. The move was prompted by a Supreme Court order of November 2022, direct-

ing the Maharashtra government to locate the legal heirs of the deceased or missing individuals from the period between the communal riots in December 1992 and the bomb blasts in March 1993 in Mumbai, and provide them with compensation and interest arrears.

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