

## 'No point in voting for Congress candidates, they will join BJP'

**Guwahati, Mar 19 (PTI):**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said that there is no point in voting for Congress candidates as they will ultimately go on to join the BJP.

Several Congress leaders have defected to the BJP recently.

"Whether they win or lose is a different matter but the question is whether the candidate will remain in the Congress", Sarma told reporters after campaigning for the BJP in the two constituencies

of Barak Valley-Silchar and Karimganj.

He said now nobody wants to remain in the Congress but they are eager to join the BJP.

This is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's credit that they want to join the BJP.

"The PM is the Sun and we are all moons around him", the chief minister said.

"Therefore, there is no point in voting for the Congress. Besides, barring one candidate, I can bring all others contesting from the party to BJP", Sarma

**Himanta Biswa Sarma**

claimed.

Several Congress leaders, including its former working president Rana Goswami, left the party to join the BJP while Congress MLAs Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha and Basanta

Das last month said they decided to "support the government" for its developmental works.

Asked about the minority voters who are traditionally Congress supporters, the chief minister said, "There is nothing called minority or majority. People will vote for the PM and his policy of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas". Sarma said, "The minority factor is not an issue. We are working for the minorities and now for the first time, youth from the community are getting jobs without giving money

as a bribe. Did they ever get jobs during Congress rule?"

He claimed the BJP will win the minority-dominated constituencies of Karimganj and Nagaon comfortably. Asked about Lok Sabha Deputy Leader of the Opposition Gaurav Gogoi, contesting from Jorhat, the chief minister said that he would lose by a huge margin. Assam has 14 constituencies with BJP holding nine, and Congress three. The AIUDF and an independent has one seat each in the outgoing Lok Sabha.

### IFTAR PARTY

**Muslim devotees break their fast at Iftar during the holy month of Ramadan, in Jalandhar, Monday.**

### RAILWAY BOARD TO ZONES

## 'Reduce unnecessary paperwork of drivers during train operations'

**New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):**

The Railway Board has asked all its zones to reduce paperwork of drivers and assistant drivers while they are operating trains so that they can focus more on safety aspects and signals.

"Loco pilot and assistant loco pilot have to maintain a memo book and an engine log book. While the memo book is a personal diary in which they note down details such as arrival-departure of each station, speed restrictions at various points, guards' details and all other things which they feel like while operating the train," a senior railway official said.

"The engine log book is an official record which they fill at the time of relieving from the shift. Here, they mention their

shift timings and all other issues which come across during operating the train," the official said.

Loco pilots say that they have to maintain these personal records so that if any dispute comes up later on regarding any issue they can refer to their personal notebook to support their version.

"So many things happen during train operations and we do not remember everything. So while the loco pilot drives the train, the assistant loco pilot makes a note of all these things in the memo book. Normally, he tries to do so when the train stops at any station but sometimes he has to do it during the running of train as well," a loco pilot said.

Experts associated with train operations say that the Railway Board wants

zones to come out with a format in which drivers will have to fill in only the essential information.

"At present there is no fixed format and assistant loco pilots mention a lot of information which are not essential. Of late, many divisions have started the practice of asking the drivers to write down all the station names and scheduled arrival and departure among other things before beginning the shift so that they don't need to waste their time and focus on such things," a retired chief loco inspector from one of the railway divisions said.

The Railway Board had issued a similar instruction two years ago, however, some of the departments' lackadaisical approach prompted it to remind them once again.

**New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):**

With poll fever gathering steam, business is booming for the city's detective agencies as politicians, especially aspiring candidates, are hiring private eyes to spy on their rivals and even colleagues.

Amid defections and switching of camps, detectives are being tasked by political parties to keep a tab on those who are likely to pass on important information to rivals or even switch allegiance in the coming days, industry experts said.

Maresh Chandra Sharma, Managing Director of Delhi-based GDX Detectives Pvt Ltd told PTI that political espionage during the poll season has become an established phenomenon.

"Hiring detectives to know the strategies and information related to hid-

## Private eyes in demand as politicians snoop on rivals, colleagues

den criminal records, scandals, illicit relationships and videos related to that, or cases of corruption that have the potential to hit one's election campaign has always been the main focus," Sharma said.

"But this time, candidates and politicians also want tabs to be kept on their aides and associates to ensure that they are not in for a rude shock due to them colluding with their rivals," Sharma added.

Also, those who were overlooked in the candidate selection process are approaching the detectives to find material that may jeopardise the campaigns of those picked in their place, said Sharma.

And those who haven't got a ticket yet are approaching us to scoop out dirt about their rivals to strengthen their candidature, Sharma added.

Rajeev Kumar,

Managing Director of City Intelligence Private Limited, said the hiring of detectives by parties and candidates begins several months before election dates are announced and includes the filing of RTIs.

"The information received through the RTIs could be minuscule but detectives are asked to build on that information," Kumar told PTI.

Sometimes, the information can be used at a later stage to wreck a successful candidate's chances of securing a portfolio, he said.

Information ranging from booth level data to the "weakness and vulnerabilities" of a candidate is procured by the detectives, Kumar added.

According to Kumar, the detectives are also tasked with finding out a political party's source of cash and liquor, the place where they are being stored and

the methods being adopted to distribute them.

Political parties often distribute cash and liquor through illegal channels to influence the voters ahead of polls.

Naman Jain, managing director of the New Delhi-based detective agency Sleuths India said the role of private detective agencies in election campaigns has evolved significantly in recent times.

"Major political parties now enlist our services to conduct thorough background checks on their own candidates and assess their popularity compared to their opponents in specific areas. "Additionally, parties seek our expertise in identifying the most promising candidates from their pool, aligning with the growing trend of introducing fresh faces into politics," Jain said.

Moreover, we are tasked

with researching diverse regions and predicting electoral outcomes through comprehensive surveys. Our investigations extend to determining the popularity of individual candidates in specific locales and analysing their chances of success in the election results, Jain said. If a spy agency has already been hired by a political party or an individual then according to the broad policy framework, it does not take any assignment from the opponents, Kumar said.

Regarding the budget, industry insiders said that the fees for such investigations can be exorbitant, depending on the type of investigation or follow-ups.

However, they refrained from revealing their charges. "Clients are ready to offer any price for a favourable result," Kumar said.

### HEALTH EXPERTS

## 'Air pollution a major source of lung diseases, needs to be controlled'

**New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):**

Air pollution has become a major source of lung diseases and plays a major part in exacerbating other ailments such as diabetes and sleep apnea, health experts said on Tuesday and called for measures to control it.

There is an urgent need to control it in summer months to ensure air pollution woes do not impact people in the winter, they stated. On the second day of the 'Illness to Wellness' summit organised by ASSOCHAM Foundation for CSR, medical practitioners shared

their views on how air pollution has become a major source of lung diseases and also plays a major part in exacerbating other ailments.

In a session titled 'Depleting Air Quality Index: A Potent Threat to Health and Environment', air pollution's deadly impact was discussed to throw light on the gravity of the situation.

Speaking in the session, Dr G C Khilnani, Chairman, PSRI Institute of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, PSRI Hospital, Delhi, said, "Long-

term effects of air pollution on lungs are very worrying. Around 30 years ago, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) meant nothing."

"Today, COPD is one of the leading causes of deaths and a major reason is air pollution. The number of patients being admitted to emergency due to COPD diseases has also increased by over 20 percent due to air pollution." Household air pollution also causes deaths which not many people are aware of, he said.

"Respiratory diseases have increased due to air

pollution and there is an urgent need to control air pollution in summer months to ensure air pollution woes do not impact people in winter," Dr Khilnani said.

Dr Vivek Nangia, Principal Director and Head, Institute of Respiratory, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine and Chief of Pulmonology, Cluster 1, Max Healthcare, said, "Air pollution also plays a part in aggravating existing ailments. For instance, with diabetes, a correlation has been found with the duration of exposure to air pollution.

## Tanvi Malhara draws parallels between reel and real life

**Mumbai, Mar 19:**

Tanvi Malhara, the former Miss India Multinational, is captivating audiences on Star Bharat's "Savdhaan India Apni Khaki" with her portrayal of Pragati Deshmukh, a determined and fierce sub-inspector. Beyond the screen, Tanvi reveals how her character's resilience mirrors her own life journey.

In a candid confession, Tanvi shares, "When I auditioned for the role, portraying a tough, no-nonsense cop seemed like a far from my expectations. However, my passion for



acting outweighed any doubts." Embracing Pragati's strength meant confronting her own vulnerabilities. "There were moments when I struggled to embody Pragati's unwavering resolve. I found my-

self tearing up during intense scenes. But with perseverance, I stepped into her shoes."

Reflecting on the parallels, Tanvi underscores the importance of pursuing dreams relentlessly. "I've

always aspired to be an actor, despite the obstacles. Similarly, Pragati never shies away from challenges, and that resilience resonates with me," she explains. Her portrayal of Pragati also serves as a beacon of empowerment for young women. "I used to rely on others, particularly men, to make decisions for me. But now, I understand the power of making my own choices and facing the consequences head-on," she adds. "It's liberating and empowering to take control of your life and chase your dreams without regrets."

## Winds of Change: A Transformative Art Exhibition by Nero Art Hub Delhi

**Shilpa Mitra**

In a bustling corner of Delhi's art scene, Nero Art Hub recently unveiled its latest exhibition, "The Winds of Change," at the prestigious Kalamkar Gallery, nestled within the historic Bikaner House. Curated by the esteemed Ranbir Rathi, this captivating showcase brought together a dynamic ensemble of established luminaries and promising newcomers in the realm of contemporary art.

The exhibition's roster boasted an impressive array of talent, featuring the works of renowned artists such as

Jatin Das, Tapan Das, Dharmendra Rathore, Neha Bisht, Ritika Aurora, Prem Lata, Shweta P Raina, Akansha Chaturvedi, Pulakesh Mandal, Dolly Bhansali Chopra, Dipali Deshpande, Sawan Taank, Asmita Patil, Romendra Sagar, Anushree, Nitesh Kushwaha, Danashri, Satadru Sovan Banduri, Mahavir Verma, Rashid Ahamed, Rajkumar,

**Actor Naseer Abdullah with Show Curator Ranbir Rathi.**

Naman, and Nitesh Kushwaha.

Featured works by both established and emerging artists, "The Winds of Change" offered a unique opportunity to explore the evolving landscape of contemporary art. From bold brushstrokes to intricate sculptures, each piece told a compelling story and invited viewers to reflect on the currents of change shaping our world.

Ranbir Rathi, curator of the exhibition, expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "I am thrilled to have organized this show, featuring a blend of renowned and upcoming artists. It's a pleas-

ure to curate such a diverse showcase, and I hope it exceeds all expectations."

Art was ubiquitous, manifesting wherever one chose to perceive it. The world itself was a canvas, reflecting the profound truth that "change is the only constant" in the universe. Societies, seasons, and cosmic energies all flowed in the river of time and evolution, influencing the realm of art as well.

Throughout the timeline of existence, countless changes have occurred. The winds of change have ushered in new horizons, shaping movements, ideologies, and entire civiliza-

tions. Empires have risen and fallen, dynasties have flourished and vanished, and socio-political landscapes have evolved over time.

Society, like climate cycles, has weathered numerous winds of change. From overcoming social stigmas to promoting gender equality and social acceptance of diversity, the collective consciousness has navigated towards a more enlightened and inclusive world.

The evolution of art mirrors the changes in both internal and external environments. Art serves as a mirror reflecting the winds of change in society, capturing the evolving dialogue between individuals and their broader surroundings.

Transitions in art, whether in style, technique, or underlying philosophy, are vital for the growth and evolution of the art world. These shifts provide insights into artists' journeys and the broader cultural and historical contexts in which their work exists.

Art is an ever-evolving

space, adapting to the shifting tides of society and human experience. From classicism to contemporary expressions, art celebrates new ideas and embraces change as an inherent part of its evolution.

Change brings its own set of blessings and lessons, reminding us of the cyclical nature of life. Each season, whether of abundance or adversity, offers opportunities for growth and renewal.

The acceptance of change empowers individuals to navigate challenges with resilience and optimism, recognizing that every hardship is temporary. The exhibition "Winds of Change" celebrates this dynamic trajectory of evolution, offering a toast to the beauty of transformation in society and art alike.

In a world gripped by constant flux, "The Winds of Change" stood as a beacon of creativity and inspiration, reminding us all of the transformative power of art to transcend boundaries and illuminate the path forward.

## BBGBP holds massive mangrove plantation drive



**To protect soil erosion of Mahanadi river**

**Paradip, Mar 19:**

Baba Balunkeshwar Gramya Bikash Parisad (BBGBP), a leading environmental and nature-loving organization of Paradip in Jagatsinghpur district, has been running a massive mangrove and other plantation inside Mahanadi river and its embankment near Balidia, Singitali, Phulbelari, Barei area. More than 5000 saplings have been planted in the vast area. In addition, local residents have been specially sensitized about the need for mangrove forests in coastal areas. It is observed that the river Mahanadi charges its route for different reasons and climate changes. It happens unexpected soil erosion in that particular region for above causes also. This unexpected river behavior can be stopped or protected by this massive mangrove plantation as per informed by BBGBP president

environmentalist Amaresh Naresh Samant. The drive was conducted by two times Prakruti Bandhu awardee Sri Samanta with BBGBP secretary Dillip Palai, senior member Parikshit Samal, member Amulya Das, Biswajit Das, Jitendra Samal, Devendra Samal, Sridhar Samal and others. Devendra Rout, Sarpanch of Nuagarh and local intellectuals have praised such a great social welfare program of BBGBP and Sri Samanta.

### General information

The general public is informed that Mauja Village Sirgiri PH No. 41 R.M.M. And under Tehsil Bilaspur Municipal Corporation Bilaspur District, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Land situated Kharsa no. 685 ms. Area 1204 square feet which was sold by Mr. Prashant Rai Tahalani etc. to Mr. Shyam Sundar Tiwari's father Late. Mahakam resident ward no. 55 Indira Vihar Barkenda Bilaspur Chhattisgarh. The property was sold under registered sale deed dated 01/02/2016, registration number 5293, registration office Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh. It was registered in K.N. which has been lost, in the transfer of the said land to Sri Shyam Sundar Tiwari in K.N. 5835 has been received. The said land has been sold by Mr. Shyam Sundar Tiwari to Mr. Rajgurunandan Lal Verma, the part of the said land has been sold by Mr. Rajgurunandan Lal Verma to Mrs. Aarti Devi's husband Mr. Anun Kumar Ravani resident of Ward no. 15 Sirgiri Bilaspur Chhattisgarh. The one has been sold. Presently the said land is owned and occupied by Mrs. Aarti Devi, the original copy of the said sale deed has been lost somewhere from Mr. Rajgurunandan Lal Verma. Jara Small Finance Bank Bilaspur Chhattisgarh by Mrs. Aarti Devi. Application form has been submitted for obtaining loan. If any person, institution, company, body, financial institution, bank, committee has any objection regarding the said land, they can immediately submit it to my office with the documents within a week. Objections after the time period will be invalid. So know the information: Dated 16/03/2024 Yours sincerely M.L. Yadav Advocate Bilaspur Chhattisgarh Mo. 9300325314

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Chief Manager, GAD, Regional Office, Raipur





### BRIEF



PM Modi with PMK founder S. Ramadoss during a public meeting ahead of Lok Sabha elections, in Salem, Tamil Nadu, Tuesday.

### Emotional

**Salem:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday turned emotional and paused his speech shortly here while recalling a slain BJP functionary in this district 10 years ago. Addressing a well-attended public rally organised by the BJP, Modi recalled three personalities related to the district, including the late BJP leader KN Lakshmanan.

### Resign

**New Delhi:** Union Minister Pashupati Kumar Paras resigned on Tuesday as he accused the BJP of doing "injustice" with his Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party by excluding it from the seat-sharing deal with allies for the Lok Sabha polls in Bihar.

### Encounter

**Gadchiroli:** Four Naxalites, carrying a collective bounty of Rs 36 lakh, were killed in an encounter with police in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district on Tuesday, a senior official said. The police received information on Monday afternoon that some Naxalites had entered Gadchiroli from neighbouring Telangana by crossing the Pranhita river with an aim to carry out subversive activities amid the model code of conduct in place for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, Superintendent of Police Neelotpal said.

### NIA arrests

**New Delhi:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested Shafeekh, a key accused in the 2022 murder case of RSS leader Srinivasan in Kerala, according to an official statement issued on Tuesday. Shafeekh, who had been absconding since the targeted killing of Srinivasan in Palakkad on April 16, 2022, was traced by the NIA's absconder tracking team in the state's Kollam district, it said.

### Summon

**New Delhi:** A Delhi court on Tuesday summoned Congress MP Karti Chidambaram and others in a money laundering case linked to an alleged Chinese visa scam.

### Suicide

**Nagpur:** A 19-year-old female student of Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) allegedly hanged herself to death at home in Maharashtra's Nagpur after being scolded by father for eating junk food, police said on Tuesday.

**Weather**  
High 28 Low 18

**MARKET**  
NIFTY 21,817.45  
SENSEX 72,012.05

**BULLION**  
GOLD 65,490  
SILVER 75,170

# No stay on CAA, SC asks Centre's response to pleas

By Apr 09

New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Centre to respond within three weeks to applications seeking a stay on implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 till the apex court disposes of the pleas challenging the constitutional validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

The apex court, however, refused to stay the operation of the Rules that would give effect to the CAA, as sought by a battery of senior advocates representing the petitioners.

The Centre, on its part, told the bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud that the



IUML leaders P. K. Kunhaliketty and Sayyid Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal address media as they leave from Supreme Court after a hearing on the CAA, in New Delhi, Tuesday.

CAA does not take away the citizenship of any person.

The bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, issued notice to the Centre on the 20 applications seeking a

stay on the implementation of the Rules returnable within three weeks.

"We are not expressing any prima facie view. We have to hear the petitioners, we have to hear the other side," the bench ob-

served and posted the matter for hearing on April 9.

The Centre had on March 11 paved the way for the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, with the notification of the relevant rules, four years after the contentious law was passed by Parliament to fast-track Indian citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who came to India before December 31, 2014.

During the hearing on Tuesday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said there are over 230 petitions in the matter, and after the rules came into force, 20 application seeking stay have been filed.

"Just to satisfy your lord-

ships' conscience that there is no prejudice to the petitioners because none of the petitioners as such are affected parties, not that I am challenging the locus, it (CAA) does not take away citizenship of anyone. The law which they are seeking stay of, does not take away citizenship of any person," Mehta said, while seeking four weeks to respond to the applications.

Senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for the petitioners, said the Centre should make a statement that pending the hearing, no one will be given citizenship.

"They are entitled to tell us that give us a little time to file a counter. We may give them some time to file response to the applications," the bench said.

### FAKE ENCOUNTER

## 'Ab tak chhappan' cop Pradeep Sharma gets lifer

Mumbai, Mar 19 (PTI):

Mumbai's controversial encounter specialist, former policeman Pradeep Sharma, faced a significant legal blow on Tuesday, as the Bombay High Court convicted and sentenced him to life imprisonment in a 2006 fake encounter of Ramnarayan Gupta, an alleged close aide of gangster Chhota Rajan.

The high court's decision marked a stark contrast to the earlier ruling by the sessions court, which had acquitted Sharma.

A division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Gauri Godse deemed the lower court's order as "perverse and unsustainable", highlighting glaring



irregularities in the previous judgment. "The trial court had overlooked the overwhelming evidence available against Sharma. The common chain of evidence unerringly proves his involvement in the case," the court said.

On November 11, 2006, a police team picked up Ramnarayan Gupta alias Lakkhan Bhaiya from the Vashi area in neighbouring Navi Mumbai, along with

his friend Anil Bheda, and killed him in a staged encounter near Versova in western Mumbai the same evening. The court said Sharma was convicted on all charges, including criminal conspiracy, murder, kidnapping and wrongful confinement, and sentenced to life. The bench directed the former policeman to surrender before the concerned sessions court in three weeks.

Notably, Sharma's legal troubles do not end here, as he is also entangled in a separate case related to the recovery of gelatin sticks outside the residence of billionaire industrialist Mukesh Ambani in 2021 and the killing of businessman Mansukh Hirani.

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## Two Naxalites killed in encounter

With security personnel

Dantewada, Mar 19:

Two Naxalites, including a woman, were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Dantewada district on Tuesday, police said.

The gunfight occurred in the morning in a forest near the villages of Purangal and Gampur under the Kirandul police station

area, where a joint team of security forces was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai said.

The operation was launched based on inputs about the presence of armed Naxalites in the area, he said. Personnel from the District Reserve Guard, Bastar Fighters, both units of the state police, and the Central Reserve Police Force's 111th, 230th, and 231st battalions, were part of the operation, the official said.

## Ex-Indian envoy to US Taranjit Singh Sandhu joins BJP



New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):

Former Indian ambassador to the United States Taranjit Singh Sandhu joined the BJP on Tuesday, amid a possibility that he may be fielded in the Lok Sabha polls from Amritsar in Punjab.

He joined the party in the presence of its general secretaries Tarun Chugh and Vinod Tawde, who highlighted Sandhu's dis-

tinguished family lineage. His father Bishan Singh Samundri was a well-known educationist and founding vice-chancellor of the Guru Nanak Dev University.

Joining the BJP, Sandhu spoke about the growth of the India-US relationship and said development has been its focus area in a host of fields such as the semiconductor industry.

The ties between the two countries have evolved into a partnership that is a win-win situation for both of them, he told reporters, emphasising that its benefits should reach different parts of India like Amritsar in terms of employment opportunities and development.

## Court to hear Gyanvapi mosque cellar plea

On Apr 11

Varanasi (UP), Mar 19 (PTI):

The Varanasi district court has fixed April 11 for hearing a plea seeking to stop Muslim devotees from walking on top of the Gyanvapi mosque's southern cellar, where the court recently allowed Hindu prayers.

According to the counsel for the Hindu side, Madan Mohan Yadav, the Muslim side told the court of in-charge district judge Anil Kumar on Tuesday that they were fasting because it was the month of Ramzan. Therefore, they should be given time to present their side, he said. On this, the

court fixed April 11 as the date of hearing, he said.

The plea filed by the Hindu side has stated that the cellar's roof is very old and weak. It also said the pillars of this basement, also known as 'Vyas Tehkhana', needed repair. The fresh plea was filed days after the Allahabad High Court said Hindu prayers will continue in the 'Vyas Tehkhana' of the Gyanvapi mosque, while dismissing the mosque committee's plea that had challenged the district court's order to this effect.

Yadav had said Muslim devotees walking or offering namaz on top of the cellar is not good for the old structure which should be repaired.

## DRI busts Int'l drug syndicate

Mumbai, Mar 19 (PTI):

The Mumbai zonal unit of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on Tuesday said it has busted an international drug syndicate with the seizure of 9.8 kilograms of cocaine worth around Rs 100 crore from two women passengers from abroad, which led to the arrest of two more persons. The two women passengers - one Thai and another Indonesian - were held following their arrival at the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport here from Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa, it said.

A total of 9.829 kgs of cocaine with a market value of approximately Rs 100 crore was seized from the duo at the airport. During the interrogation, the women told the officials that the drugs were to be delivered to a syndicate operating out of Delhi and nearby areas, an official said.

## 'Absurd': India counters China's claim over Arunachal

New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):

The Ministry of External Affairs on Tuesday said it has noted the comments made by the spokesperson of the Chinese Defence Ministry "advancing absurd claims" over the territory of Arunachal Pradesh and asserted that the state "was, is and will always be" an integral and inalienable part of India.

The response from the MEA comes days after the Chinese military reiterated its claim over Arunachal Pradesh, calling the area an "inherent part of China's territory", in the wake of India rejecting Beijing's objection to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state. "We have noted the comments made by the spokesperson of the

Chinese Defence Ministry advancing absurd claims over the territory of the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh," MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal was quoted as saying in a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs.

The MEA statement said that it was in response to media queries on comments made by the spokesperson of the Chinese Defence Ministry regarding Arunachal Pradesh. "Repeating baseless arguments in this regard does not lend such claims any validity. Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India. Its people will continue to benefit from our development programmes and infrastructure projects," he said.

## PM's '400 paar' claim 'hollow': Baghel

INDIA bloc will get clear majority to form govt

Rajnandgaon, Mar 19:

Termining Prime Minister Narendra Modi's '400 paar' claim as "hollow", senior Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel on Tuesday said the BJP's Ram temple pitch "would not make much of a difference" in the Lok Sabha polls and exuded confidence that the INDIA bloc will get a clear majority to form the next government.

In an interview with PTI, the former



Chhattisgarh chief minister also claimed that the Lok Sabha polls will be Narendra Modi versus the "whole of India".

He expressed confidence that the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) will get a majority to form the government at the Centre, while the Congress would

be victorious in more than half of the 11 Lok Sabha seats in Chhattisgarh.

Asked about whether the INDIA bloc was still strong enough to take on the BJP despite JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar switching over to the NDA and TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee deciding to go solo, Baghel said, "Our natural alliance partners are with us, in fact our alliance has expanded with the likes of Uddhav Thackeray, Prakash Ambedkar along with several small parties joining us."

"So our alliance is strong, in fact there are tensions in the National

Democratic Alliance camp. You can see in Haryana, there is push and pull between uncle and nephew in Bihar (Chirag Paswan and Pashupati Paras), in Uttar Pradesh also (Om Prakash) Rajbhar and Apna Dal faction are also upset with them and more people are leaving their alliance," he claimed. On suggestions that a Ram temple wave was being experienced in north India, Baghel said the BJP is giving the slogan "Jisne Ram ko laya hai, usko hum layenge" but everyone is the son or daughter of God.

### 'GHAR GHAR GUARANTEE'

## Cong's manifesto to focus on 'Paanch NYAY', 'Pachees Guarantee'

New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):

The Congress' manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls would focus on "Paanch NYAY" and "Pachees Guarantee", and the party on Tuesday resolved to take its promises to the people with a "ghar ghar guarantee" mantra.

The party's highest decision-making body Congress Working Committee (CWC), which met during the day, authorised Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge to give the final approval to the manifesto and decide a date for its release.

Addressing a press conference after the CWC meeting, party leaders K C Venugopal and Jai Ram Ramesh said the CWC has



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader Sonia Gandhi during the 'CWC Meeting' at AICC headquarters, in New Delhi, Tuesday.

prepared a roadmap for taking the party's guarantees to the grassroots.

Ramesh said the Congress will release not just a "ghoshna patra (manifesto)" but a "nyay patra" so that people see a bright fu-

ture. The CWC lauded the guarantees released during Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and discussed a roadmap to take these to every household in the country.

Ramesh said the aim is to

## Planet on the brink: UN

As 2014-2023 recorded hottest decade ever

New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):

Greenhouse gas levels, surface temperatures, ocean heat and acidification, and sea level rise all reached record highs in 2023, according to a new report by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released on Tuesday.

The report, titled "State of the Global Climate 2023", confirmed that 2023 was the warmest year in the 174-year observational record, with the global average

near-surface temperature at 1.45 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial baseline (1850-1900). "Sirens are blaring across all major indicators... Some records are not just chart-topping, they are chart-busting. And changes are speeding up," said United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

"Never have we been so close albeit on a temporary basis at the moment to the 1.5 degrees Celsius lower limit of the Paris Agreement on climate change. The WMO community is sounding the red alert to the world... The climate crisis is the defining challenge that humanity

faces," WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo said. "Climate change is about much more than temperatures. What we witnessed in 2023, especially with the unprecedented ocean warmth, glacier retreat, and Antarctic Sea ice loss, is cause for particular concern," she added.

COP28 President Sultan Al Jaber said the world has no time to spare. To limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, countries must deliver enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), economy-wide emissions reductions, and investments in nature and adaptation, he stressed.



# Airways Aviation & International Institute of Aviation announce education alliance

**Bhilai, Mar 19:**

Global Aviation Education and Training provider Airways Aviation Group (AAG) headquartered in Dubai, UAE and International Institute of Aviation (IIA), headquartered in Bangalore, India announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that lays the groundwork for a new education alliance aimed at delivering a series of courses and seminars across India. Designed to address the expanding needs of the industry, offerings will commence with Indian DGCA CPL Theory along with the Airways Aviation Foundation classes at the IIA Pune Academy from April 1st. mAirways Aviation is the largest privately owned group of multidisciplinary aviation academies of its kind offering a range of aviation courses certified by EASA, CASA, ICAO, and IATA to the Civilian and Military markets. With over 45 years of aviation education & training experience the Airways Aviation Group also offers Bachelor's Degrees in Business in English concurrently with their Commercial Pilot License in both Australia and



Europe in conjunction with Griffith University or Southern Cross University in Australia and Montpellier Business School (MBS) in France.

The new academic alliance will deliver its bespoke courses as part of the Airline Pilot Pathway Program developed by Airways Aviation, providing the perfect opportunity for aspiring aviators interested in beginning their studies close to home.

Indian students will benefit from a tailored curriculum developed and delivered by industry professionals, offering a meaningful introduction to both the theoretical and practical aspects of aviation. Students will be guided

through those initial critical steps and will acquire the knowledge needed to the confidently progress to the practical full-flight training phase, initially in Australia or Europe. There are also plans to establish practical flight training facilities in India.

India aims to adopt and foster the world's best practices, higher standards, and quality to expand capability and improve industry outcomes through strategic domestic and international education and training collaborations. Emphasising quality and excellence, the goal is to equip students with the essential skills and knowledge needed for a thriving aviation career. Both par-

ties are committed to ensuring the success and impact of this initiative. The recently signed MOU sets forth a framework that outlines the responsibilities of both parties which include the provision of necessary infrastructure, classrooms and facilities along with qualified instructors and study materials etc.

Each will leverage their respective and joint market and industry presence to run campaigns to attract and inform prospective students from across India.

"This new collaboration with the Airways Aviation Group is a testament to a shared vision that will help anticipate and elevate the aviation education

needs in India, with the aim of equipping students with the knowledge and skills required to thrive in the aviation industry well into the future", said Dr Sumeet Suseelan - Chairman of the International Institute of Aviation. "With the world's largest population, India will continue to assert itself as an important market and we are pleased to expand and leverage the Airways Aviation Groups presence beyond our existing and growing global network.

We currently operate in Europe, the Middle East, China, Africa, Australasia and now India providing experienced staff, courses, expertise and know-how to aspiring professionals in collaboration with partners like the International Institute of Aviation" said Romy Hawatt - Airways Aviation Group - Founder and Chairman For more information about courses and enrolment contact: Airways Aviation India contact india@airwaysaviation.com or call +91 83413 02965 or International Institute of Aviation (IIA) contact info@flyiia.com or call +1800 5724885 or visit the centre located at Krishna Talkies Road, above Axis Bank, Risali, Bhilai.

# Swachhta Programme organised at Plate Mill & WMD



**Bhilai, Mar 19:** SAIL- Bhilai Steel Plant's Plate Mill, and Water Management Department (WMD) organized Swachhta programme on March 18, 2024. Chief Guest RK Bisare, CGM (Plate Mill) shared his insights on cleanliness and urged everyone present to keep their workplace and surroundings clean and organised, and also make people aware towards adhering to cleanliness.

Only then shall the Swachh Bharat Mission, or the dream of Clean India be achieved, Bisare said. Utpal Dutta, GM (WMD) in his address stated that It is the responsibility of all Indian Citizens to keep their homes, workplace and the entire environment neat and



clean, along with motivating others to do the same. SK Verma, GM (Plate Mill), Bhaskhar Roy, GM (P Mill-Office), D Sarangi, GM & DSO (P Mill), Suman Mitra, GM (Projects), Sanjay Kumar, DGM (P Mill), Sanjay Tripathi, GM (P Mill), Rajesh Gupta, DGM (P Mill), Kishore Buda, GM (WMD), Pritpal Singh, GM (WMD), SK Pandey, GM (WMD), and Ajay Nath Pillai, AGM (WMD) were present on

this occasion along with Union representatives Anand Pandey, Sanjay Kumar Sakure, Vishnu Ram Sahukar, Tarun Kumar Samuel, Satya Narayan Mehar and departmental employees in large numbers. Vijay Kumar, ASM (P Mills), Sukhchand, Ruhail Singh, Shyamal Banerjee, Neeta Sarvare, Meenu Chauhan, Gurucharan Singh, ALWO contributed for organizing the programme successfully.

## Water supply may be effected in Sectors -1 & 4 on March 21

**Bhilai, Mar 19:** The Town Services Dept (TSD) under SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant executes preventive maintenance plan from time to time, to enhance the reliability of the system to ensure uninterrupted

water supply in the township. Owing to the Maintenance Plan necessary repairs works were made to fix the leakage in the water supply pipeline for Sector-1 and Sector-4, which might effect the

water supply in these sectors on March 21, 2024. All the residents are requested to take note of the same. SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant's Town Services Dept. (TSD) has appealed to residents to cooperate.

# Woman and father-in-law electrocuted

**Bhilai, Mar 19:** A 30-year-old woman and her father-in-law died of electrocution on Tuesday morning in Ganjpara area of Durg. The woman suffered an electric shock while putting wet clothes on an iron wire. Her father-in-law died while trying to rescue her. Police have lodged a case and investigations are on. Family members informed that Manju Sonkar (30) wife of Karan Sonkar suffered an electric shock while putting wet clothes for drying on an iron wire after taking bath on Tuesday morning. Her mother-in-law Kaushalya Sonkar started screaming after witnessing the incident. Her fa-



ther-in-law Shankar Sonkar (55) tried to rescue her using a broom. Meanwhile, he came in contact with the iron wire after he too suffered a strong electric shock.

On information, the local Corporator reached there and contacted the electricity department after which the power supply was shut down in the

entire locality. Manju and her father-in-law Shankar were taken to District Hospital in an ambulance where they were declared brought dead. According to information, the entire family is involved in the business of vegetable vending. Shankar was the father of five children while Manju was the mother of two children.

# Two arrested for heroin smuggling

**Bhilai, Mar 19:**

Durg Police succeeded in arresting two interstate drug smugglers. The accused hailing from Punjab were nabbed with 16 grams of Heroin (chitta) in Kumhari.

On the instructions of SP Jitendra Shukla, the district police are conducting a campaign against illegal drug dealers and smugglers. Under the supervision of ASP (City Bhilai) Sukhmandan Rathore, ASP (City Durg) Abhishek Jha, ASP (Crime) Richa Mishra, DSP (Crime) Hem Prakash Nayak and CSP (Chhawani) Harish Patil,

a joint team of ACCU and Kumhari Police Station led by Inspector Kapil Dev Pandey (I/c ACCU) and Sub Inspector DD Verma (SHO, Kumhari) was deployed for tracing the people involved in this illegal trade.

The team received a tip off that two natives of Punjab - Nishant Singh and Satinder Singh have smuggled Chitta (Heroin) from Punjab and are roaming in Kumhari area for local supply. Acting on the tip off, the joint team took Nishant Singh and Satinder Singh into custody. On searching, police recovered 16 grams of the narcotic substance Heroin



(Chitta) from them. Value of the recovered Heroin is approximately Rs 01 lakh.

The accused Nishant Singh (28) son of Sukhwinder Singh and

Satinder Singh (25) son of Baljeet Singh, both residents of Manakpura, District Tarn Taran, Punjab, were booked under Section 22(a) of NDPS Act and further action is being taken from Police Station Kumhari.

ASI Shमित Mishra, Head Constable Sagir Khan, Chandrashekhar Banjeer, Constable Bhavesh Patel, Rinku Soni, Rakesh Anna, Guneet Kumar, Rakesh Chaudhary, Ajay Gehlot from ACCU and ASI Ajay Singh, Constable Manish Verma, Rajkumar, Kavinder Sahu and Vinesh Sharma played a vital role.

# Shri ShriMatrishakti Mahila Mandal celebrates Foundation Day



**Bhilai, Mar 19:** Shri ShriMatrishakti Mahila Mandal celebrated its Foundation Day and International Women's Day with great enthusiasm. The title of this event was Ramayana. All the women of the group played their roles very well. Some members wrote poetry and expressed their feelings with dance. The

group honoured the women who struggled a lot in their life. The chief guest of the program was Vinita Pandey (daughter-in-law of Prem Prakash Pandey). President of Shri ShriMatrishakti Mahila Mandal Neelima Shukla, media in-charge Urmila Awasthi and all the women members were present.

# Adolescent Health Workshop organised at JLN Hospital & Research Centre

**Bhilai, Mar 19:** The Department of Paediatrics, Jawahar Lal Nehru Hospital, & Research Centre (JLNHRC), Sector-9of SAIL- Bhilai Steel Plant, in association with Chhattisgarh Adolescent Health Academy (CGAHA) and Durg Bhilai Academy of Paediatrics (DBAP), organised a one-day workshop on Adolescent Health on March 17, 2024, at the Hospital Conference Hall.

This workshop aimed at sensitizing the teachers, nursing students and doctors about adolescent health, was organised under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)'s Reproductive and

Child Health (RCH) activity. Dr Ravindranath M, CMO I/c (M&HS) inaugurated the workshop in presence of Dr Vineeta Dwivedi, CMO (M&HS), and respective HODs of various specialities, with e-lamp lighting, as an initiative to reduce carbon footprint.

Various important topics associated with adolescent health, such as nutrition, immunization, social media addiction, substance abuse and adolescent sexuality were discussed during the interactive sessions. Distinguished speakers from across the state including Dr Madhushree Deshpande, Dr AP Savant, Dr Amar Singh Thakur,



Dr Kiran Makhija, and Dr Gyanesh Mishra shared their valuable insights during the sessions at the workshop.

Active participation was seen by the teachers of various senior secondary schools of BSP and post-graduate nursing students of PG College of Nursing. An interesting role play

based on Adolescent health was also staged on this occasion by the nursing students.

The workshop was organised successfully by the team lead by Dr Sambita Panda, HoD (Paediatrics and Neonatology), Dr NS Thakur, ACO (M&HS), Dr Subodh Kumar Saha,

under the guidance of Dr Pramod Binayake, Dr Kaushlendra Thakur, CMOs (M&HS).

At the outset Dr Sambita Panda, HOD Paediatrics & ACO (M&HS) gave the Welcome Address, wherein she emphasized on role of teachers and parents for early addressal of adolescent is-

sues. The Paediatric team comprising Dr Sanjeebani, Dr Meeta, Dr Nootan, Dr Kaushik, Dr Seema, Dr Mala, Dr Subhasmita, Dr Ruchika and Dr Anand along with DNB resident doctors actively participated in the conference.

Dr Mala Choudhary compered the inaugural function of the one-day Adolescent Health Workshop, while Dr NS Thakur proposed the Vote of Thanks.

Adolescence represents a critical juncture of development marked by rapid physiological and psychological changes making role of healthcare providers and educators pivotal for transition into healthy adulthood.

# Obituary Mira Chakrabarty



**B h i l a i :** Hudco resident Mira Chakrabarty, wife of Late M N Chakrabarty, left for heavenly abode at the age of 84 years on Tuesday. Funeral procession will be taken out from her residence situated at MIG2/188, Hudco on March 20 and last rites of the mortal remains will be performed at RamnagarMuktidham. She was the mother of Tarun Chakrabarty, Arun Chakrabarty, Shipra Chakrabarty and Chitra Mukhty.

# Free Health Camps organised at Villages Katro & Umarpoti

**Bhilai, Mar 19:** Bhilai Steel Plant, conducts several public welfare activities as part of its organizational social responsibility towards the community in and around its areas of operations. The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Department of the Plant organized two one-day free Health Camp, at Model Steel Village Katro and Village Umarpoti on March 16 and March 18, 2024, respectively.

A total of 149 villagers from the villages Katro and Umarpoti, availed free health services at the day-long Health Camps. Free medicines were also distributed to villagers at-



tending the camps at both the villages.

The Medical Team from the CSR department, comprising, Dr Rahul Singrol,

Medical Consultant, Rekha Dev, Nurse, for Blood-Sugar and BP examination, Shashi Bhushan Rai, Pharmacist, and

Shambhu Dayal, for registration, volunteered their services for the Medical Camp at Village Katro, while CSR Medical Team



comprising Dr Dheeraj Kumar, Medical Consultant, Rekha Dev, Nurse, for Blood-Sugar and BP examination,

Shashi Bhushan Rai, Pharmacist, and Shambhu Dayal, for registration, volunteered their services for the Medical

Camp at Village Umarpoti. Budhelal from the CSR department was also present during both the Health Camps at villages Katro and Umarpoti.

It is noteworthy that conducting Health Camps is one of the prime initiatives, through which BSP's CSR Department has contributed substantially towards Public Health and medicine. The CSR Department of Bhilai Steel Plant, conducts health camps from time to time in the adjoining areas or mines, with the aim of ensuring adequate Medical and health facilities to the communities within which it works.



## Modi govt made ED, IT, CBI its henchmen: PCC

● Demands BJP's de-recognition over electoral bond



Baij said, adding that government which has the legal responsibility to protect the life and property of the people made the recovery through central agencies. According to him ED, IT, CBI seem to be acting as Modi government's henchmen.

Describing election bond as biggest election donation scam in the country so far he said that information that came out related to electoral bonds made it clear that electoral bonds were brought by the Modi government to benefit the BJP.

He alleged that Modi government intimidated business institutions through central agencies, conducted raids, took wrong action and made re-

### FIR against Bhupesh Baghel, BJP's conspiracy

Raipur: Terming the FIR against former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel in the Mahadev App case as a conspiracy by the BJP, PCC chief Deepak Baij said that even before the assembly elections, BJP adopted various types of propaganda in Chhattisgarh through the ED to win the elections. An FIR was lodged conspiratorially against former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel three days ago, he said. It is clear from such tactics of BJP that it is completely scared in the election battlefield and has accepted its defeat, he said.

covery through electoral bonds.

Modi government also collected bribe through electoral bonds, he said, adding that the companies which gave election donations to BJP received thou-

sands of crores of rupees through contracts.

Modi government stopped the money laundering proceedings against the companies which donated to BJP, he said.

### OSD Awasthi relieved from EOW-ACB charges

Raipur, Mar 19: State Government on Tuesday relieved the former Indian Police Services (IPS) Officer DM Awasthi from the post of Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at Economic Offence Wing (EOW) and Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) after the senior IPS Officer Amresh Mishra as assumed the office as IG ACB and EOW recently returned from central deputation.

General Administration Department (GAD) has issued an order in this regard. Order further stated that retired IPS Officer Awasthi who is currently working as OSD at Police Headquarters on contractual basis after his retirement, was given the additional charge of EOW, ACB Director General of Police (DGP).

However, his posting at ACB-EOW has been relieved after the 2005 batch IPS Officer Amresh Mishra has assumed office on March 12.

### WATERLOGGING



Light to medium showers in city since morning left few places with water logging here on Tuesday.

#### Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 19: Describing ED, IT and CBI as recovery agents of BJP, Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) President Deepak Baij said that Modi government misused central agencies mainly to suppress opposition party leaders. Wherever elections are held, false cases are filed against the leaders of the opposition parties and a conspiracy is hatched by ED, he said while addressing a press conference here today.

ED, CBI, IT raid business houses and industrialists and after conducting raid they create pressure to donate to BJP, Baij said, adding that thousands of crores of rupees were recovered.

There will be no bigger example of government sponsored illegal extortion in the whole world,

BJP has set target to win 11 LS seats from Ch'garh: Nabin

## BJP has set target to win 11 LS seats from Ch'garh: Nabin



### Meeting of Election Management Committee held

Raipur, Mar 19: With the objective to give momentum to the Lok Sabha election campaign, the senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Co in-charge of party affairs in Chhattisgarh Nitin Nabin on Tuesday held meeting of the Election Management committee to chalk out future strategy for the polls.

According to the information received, the BJP would not only highlight the achievements of the Modi government at Centre during the election campaign, but would also launch verbal campaign against the erstwhile Congress government in Chhattisgarh including the former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel who has been fielded as party candidate from Rajnandgaon Lok Sabha constituency.

On his arrival here, the BJP leader Nabin said that

they have chalked out strategy for all the 11 Lok Sabha seats in Chhattisgarh and also claimed that it has set to win all the seats to ensure the party reaches tally of 400 seats in the Lok Sabha elections. He said that the party rank and file are already into election mode which would ensure historic win for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai in Chhattisgarh. State BJP President Kiran Singh Deo, Convenor of Election Management Committee Shivratna Sharma and other senior leaders were also present during the meeting. Talking to section of media persons on his arrival, he also took a dig on the former CM over the recent outburst against him by a Congress leader in his presence during the Congress convention at Rajnandgaon. Nabin said that the Congress workers are expressing their ire against the erstwhile Congress government.

## Commitment towards model code of conduct necessary: Collector

### Information about election procession and rally should be given to the local police station in advance: SP

### Collector, SP hold meeting of representatives of political parties

Raipur, Mar 19: Collector and District Returning Officer Dr Gaurav Singh said that it was necessary for all political parties and candidates to commit to the Model Code of Conduct of the Election Commission. Model Code of Conduct should be followed to ensure free and fair elections, he said, adding that the role of political parties is very important in this process. With everyone's cooperation, the process of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections would be completed successfully, he said at a meeting with representatives of various political parties held in the Red Cross meeting room in the Collectorate premises.

Collector Dr Singh said that at the time of nomination, not more than three vehicles of any candidate and his supporters will come within a radius of 100 meters of the RO or ARO office. On the day of polling, candidates will be allowed to operate only three vehicles - one for themselves, one for election agents and one for workers. Permission letters for these vehicles will be issued by the competent authority and this permission letter will be displayed on the front windshield of the vehicles. Vehicles engaged in campaigning will not, under any circumstances, run in convoys of more than three.



He said that every political party and candidate should promote itself by avoiding caste and religious issues. Religious places or institutions should not be used while appealing for votes. The Collector said that no party or candidate should put up flags, posters, banners etc on anyone's personal property, building, land or premises without his prior permission. Temporary campaign offices will not be allowed on any encroached land or building and in buildings adjacent to educational institutions or hospitals. No office will be allowed within a radius of 200 meters of any polling station. These offices cannot be operated in any religious buildings.

He said that political parties using helicopters and aircraft should apply to the competent authority three days in advance for permission. The Collector said that processions, rallies and meetings should be organized during elections only after obtaining competent approval. Burning of effigy will not be allowed in the rally nor should any inflammatory slogan or language be used during this period.

If any person creates obstruction during the procession etc. then the political

parties themselves should not take action against him and should not take the law into their own hands; they should rather inform the police about it, SP Santosh Singh said at the meeting. Police force present during the procession should ensure this and take action on it, he said. The local police will be informed before organizing an election meeting or procession. If any restrictive provisions are applicable, they should be followed. If loudspeakers etc. are to be used in such a meeting or procession, then permission should be taken for the same. On this occasion, Municipal Corporation Commissioner Mr. Abinash Mishra, ADM Mr. Kirtiman Rathore, Mr. Devendra Patel, Deputy Election Officer Mr. Umashankar Bande, representatives of political parties and related officers were present in the meeting.

## MP Sunil Soni hits back at PCC Chief's allegations

### Says people came forward and gave bonds on the basis of trust

Raipur, Mar 19: Hitting back at the allegations made by PCC Chief Deepak Baij over electoral bond, BJP leader and MP Sunil Soni said that people came forward and gave donations to BJP on the basis of trust. Congress was not worthy of becoming the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha in 2014 and 2019 while BJP got a clear majority at the centre

and formed government in most of the states of the country with people's faith, he said.

Supreme Court has said to make it transparent so that all those who keep secretly giving black money can come forward, Soni said and asked which investigating agency came into this.

Regional parties have received donations from people who belong to the criminal category whom their governments gave protection in states, he said, adding that today donations have become transparent in the country.

## Notification for first phase of LS elections today

Raipur, Mar 19: Notification for the first phase of Lok Sabha elections 2024 will be issued on March 20. In the first phase of Lok Sabha elections 2024 in the state, voting will be held in Bastar Lok Sabha constituency on April 19. Mrs. Kangale said that under the first phase, all necessary preparations are being ensured for fair and peaceful elections in Bastar Lok Sabha constituency.

A total of 1961 polling stations including 4 auxiliary polling stations have been created for the elections in Bastar Lok Sabha constituency. Chief Electoral Officer Mrs. Reena

Babasaheb Kangale said that with the release of the notification, the process of filing nomination for Bastar Lok Sabha constituency will start in the first phase.

For the first phase, candidates can file their nomination papers from 11 am to 3 pm on all working days except government holidays. The last date for filing nomination under the first phase of Lok Sabha elections is March 27, 2024. Scrutiny of nomination papers will take place on March 28, 2024. The date of withdrawal of nomination is March 30, 2024.

## NIT Raipur's Motorsports Club Induction held



#### Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 19: National Institute of Technology (NIT), Raipur's Motorsports Club hosted an induction program recently in the M. Visvesvaraya Hall, drawing a spirited crowd of students eager to explore the world of motorsports.

With a keen focus on domains like power train, suspension, brakes, frames, steering and more, the club ensures its members remain abreast of emerging trends and technologies, leading to commendable achievements in national-level competitions like securing 17th position out of 34 teams in Formula Bharat, clearing all technical inspections

with 55th rank out of 100+ teams in SAE eBAJA and many more. Dr. Naidu elaborated how the club serves as a platform to the students to bring their classroom knowledge into practice by making race cars. He concluded by describing how the students gain invaluable exposure by learning analysis and simulation software like SolidWorks, Ansys, Lotus etc. giving them an extra edge in the industries. Beyond fostering competitiveness, the club prioritises holistic development, offering seminars, workshops, and training sessions led by industry experts. The event focused on explaining the different domains of the club. The present members shared their experiences, pursuing students for maximum participation.

## 2 Players from Ch'garh selected in NCA camp



#### Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 19: Sakshi Shukla and Sejal Verma from Chhattisgarh have been selected in the Under 19 camp at the National Cricket Academy by the All India Women's Selection Committee on the basis of their recent performances at the matches held recently.

Both the players from Chhattisgarh would be at the NCA from April 19 to

May 15 at the Ranchi and Dehradun Zonal Cricket Academy. While Sakshi Shukla would be part of Team A at Ranchi, Sejal Verma would be at Team D in Dehradun Academy.

Sejal is a wicket-keeper batter and has scored 75 runs from 5 matches whereas Sakshi Shukla is a slow spinner and has claimed 13 wickets from 5 matches including a fifer in the recently held Under 19 One Day matches.

## Free HLA Typing camp 'Sankalp' for children with Thalassemia held

Raipur, Mar 19: "Sankalp" - an HLA (Human Leukocyte Antigen) testing camp for children with Thalassemia and consultation for patients with sickle cell disease was organised in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. Over 180 families of thalassemia and sickle cell disease - patients from Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar, and Jharkhand attended the camp to give their buccal swab samples. The camp was organized by Kash Foundation with the support of a team of doctors led by Dr. Sunil Bhat from Narayana Health Bengaluru and DKMS, BMST Foundation India. Dr. Sunil Bhat, Director and Clinical Lead of Pediatric Hematology, Oncology, and Blood and Marrow Transplantation, Narayana Health Network Hospitals, Bengaluru, said: "Thalassemia is widespread in our country, and more than 10,000 children are born with the disease every year. Thalassemia is a



genetic condition in which a defect in the protein hemoglobin reduces the transport capacity for oxygen in the blood. "It is our mission to support blood cancer and other blood disorders, such as Thalassemia patients in India, for which we have launched the DKMS-BMST Thalassemia program. Under this program, DKMS-BMST collaborates with local NGOs and transplantation clinics to organize camps where pediatric thalassemia patients and their families travel from far places, sometimes from very remote places in India, to give buccal swab samples for HLA typing.

Samples from the camps are analyzed in the DKMS laboratory based out of Germany and clinical matching reports of the same are provided. In cases where there is no matching sibling for a sick child, we also support unrelated donor searches for patients", says Patrick Paul, CEO, DKMS-BMST. Thal camp organizer and founder of Koi Apna Sa Ho (KASH) Foundation, Ms. Kajal Sachdev, said, "In 2016, we established Koi Apna Sa Ho foundation with the aim of thalassemia-free Chhattisgarh. In the initial step, we only started the counselling centre."



# AIIMS-ECHS Signs MoA for Health Services to Ex-Servicemen

**More than 30,000 ex-servicemen and their family members will get cashless and cap-less treatment**

**Raipur, Mar 19:**

All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS), Ministry of Defence has signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) for health services to ex-servicemen in AIIMS. The agreement will ensure free-of-cost health services, including emergency care, for ex-servicemen and their family members. It will be beneficial to more than 30,000 ex-servicemen and their family members. Lt Gen Padam Singh Shekhawat, General Officer Commanding, Madhya Bharat Area, expressed his happiness at empathizing with AIIMS-R for ECHS. There are more than 9000 servicemen in Chhattisgarh and more



**Lt Gen Padam Singh Shekhawat, General Officer Commanding, Madhya Bharat Area and Lt Gen Ashok Jindal (Retd), Executive Director exchanging MoA.**

than 21,000 dependents. With the empanelment of AIIMS-R, the ECHS has expanded its services for all 30,000 beneficiaries in Chhattisgarh. AIIMS is an Institute of National Importance equipped with state-of-the-art medical facilities. Ex-servicemen will certainly get treatment with empathy in AIIMS from a dedicated medical fraternity. Now, there are 14 empaneled hospitals in Chhattisgarh, he said. Lt Gen Ashok Jindal (Retd),

Executive Director, said that the AIIMS fraternity is dedicated to providing health services to all in Chhattisgarh. MoA will ensure cashless and cap-less specialty treatment for ex-servicemen through ECHS. It will help reduce the patient load in army hospitals. AIIMS will ensure all facilities for ex-servicemen under ECHS through dedicated staff.

Brig Jitendra Singh, Deputy Managing Director, ECHS, said that



**Lt Gen Ashok Jindal (Retd), Executive Director giving memento to Lt Gen Padam Singh Shekhawat, General Officer Commanding, Madhya Bharat Area during MoA ceremony.**

the ECHS scheme started in April 2003 with 3.5 lakh beneficiaries in the country. Now it has more than 60 lakh beneficiaries with a Rs 10,000 crore reimbursement. Ex-servicemen, including Army,

Navy, Air Force, Indian Coast Guard, and NCC are covered under the scheme. 'Ex-servicemen need more medical facilities after retirement. With empanelment of AIIMS we will certainly provide more op-

# No existence of female witchcraft: Dr Mishra

**Raipur, Mar 19:**

Dr. Dinesh Mishra, Chairman of the Andhashradha Nirmoolan Samiti, condemned the tragic murder of a woman in the village Bardha Kala, Khairagarh district. The incident, steeped in superstition, reflects a disturbing trend that Mishra vehemently opposes.

The victim, Milwanti Bai, fell prey to baseless accusations of practicing witchcraft. Sohan Baghel, a neighbour nursing suspicions that Bai had cast a spell on his ailing sister, resorted to a heinous act of violence, wielding a sickle to fatally assault her.

Dr. Mishra's impassioned plea for rationality echoes amid a rising tide of similar atrocities across the nation. He implores communities to shun archaic beliefs and embrace scientific understanding, emphasizing the need for stringent legal measures against perpetrators.

Highlighting the inherent fallacy of attributing ailments to supernatural causes, Mishra advocates for comprehensive healthcare and education. He underscores the absurdity of blaming individuals for misfortunes that can be addressed through medical intervention,



rather than resorting to witch-hunting. Moreover, Dr. Mishra underscores the grim reality of widespread persecution driven by superstition, urging a collective effort to safeguard human rights. He calls for a paradigm shift towards enlightenment, rejecting the notion of women possessing mystical powers and decrying the injustice inflicted upon them in the name of witchcraft. In the wake of such appalling incidents, Dr. Mishra's clarion call for justice reverberates, demanding unequivocal condemnation and punitive action against the perpetrators. He emphasizes the imperative of eradicating superstition through concerted public awareness campaigns, safeguarding the dignity and rights of all individuals.

# 'Manak Mahotsav' organised by Bureau of Indian Standards

**On the occasion of World Consumer Rights Day**

**Raipur, Mar 19:** Bureau of Indian Standards, Raipur Branch Office on the occasion of World Consumer Rights Day organised 'Manak Mahotsav' at Hotel Samrock Green, Raipur. More than 130 participants including industries, consumer organizations, educational institutions, government departments and other stakeholders participated in the occasion. Sumit Kumar, Head, Raipur Branch Office, Bureau of Indian Standards in his welcome address explained about the various activities of Bureau of Indian Standards. He informed that on the occasion of



World Consumer Rights Day, many programs are being organized in the state by the Bureau of Indian Standards, Raipur.

More than 650 youth volunteers from 18 colleges in the state are creating awareness about quality through youth to youth connect. Sumit Kumar explained about the educational outreach of Bureau of Indian Standards like Standards Club, Memorandum of Understanding with reputed colleges and other activities. Giving information

about the sensitization training for Gram Panchayats by the Bureau of Indian Standards, he said that sensitization training has been provided to more than 6000 chairpersons and secretaries of Gram Panchayats in 20 districts of the state. He also talked about the importance of Bureau of Indian Standards and standards in the protection of consumer rights. On this occasion, Dr. N.K. Dave, Dean, Food Technology College, Raipur; Dr. G. K. Das, Dean, Agricultural College,

Indira Gandhi Agricultural University, Raipur and Dr. Vinay K. Pandey, Dean, SV College of Agricultural Engineering Technology and Research Centre, Raipur were present in the event as special guests. The special guests gave detailed information about the importance of standards and standardized products in agriculture, food and dairy technology.

On this occasion brainstorming was also done on agricultural, food and dairy related standards. On behalf of Bureau of Indian Standards, Mr. Rahul Kumar Gupta, Mr. Rishabh Sinha, Mr. Ashish Agarwala, Mr. Deepak Kumar Sahu, Assistant Director and Scientist were also present in the program and gave a technical presentation.

# LS polls 2024: Collector inspects strong room

**After voting, EVM machines to be kept in Government Engineering College Sejbahar**

**Raipur, March 10:** Collector and District Returning Officer Dr Gaurav Singh today inspected the strong room set up for the Lok Sabha elections-2024 in the Government Engineering College, Sejbahar, Raipur and the Government School, BTI Ground, Shankar Nagar and gave necessary instructions. The Collector inspected the arrangements made for distribution of election materials.

The Collector said that all arrangements regarding postal ballot should be ensured. A final list of officers and employees to whom postal ballots are to be given should be prepared and distributed



within the time limit, he said. The Collector said that arrangements should be ensured by making a

time table regarding second randomization, commissioning, distribution of postal ballots and voter

sleep. Dr Singh said that commissioning of EVMs will be done at the venue of counting of votes and that adequate arrangements should be made in this direction. Apart from security, the police department should organize the traffic system on the route to Sejbahar, he said and added that CCTVs should be installed at appropriate places.

Three layers of barricading have to be done in the strong room and this should be done in a proper manner so that the election work is conducted smoothly, SP Santosh Singh said. He asked to strengthen the security arrangements of the strongroom.

# Vanvasi Vikas Samiti distributes awards to achievers

**Raipur, Mar 19:**

In February, a stirring celebration of tribal heroism unfolded across the colleges of Raipur city as they hosted a captivating general knowledge competition in two phases. Under the esteemed patronage of Cabinet Minister Kedar Kashyap from the Chhattisgarh Government, the Vanvasi Vikas Samiti conducted a grand award distribution ceremony to honour the winners. The ceremony commenced with a radiant display of tradition, as the lamp was lit and Bharat Mata was worshipped. Among the triumphant candidates, Mona Sahu from Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla University claimed a lap-



top, the prestigious first prize. Dev Charan Nagesh from Science College proudly secured the second prize, while the third prize found a deserving recipient in Manas Ranjan Haiburu from NIT.

After formally welcoming all the guests, Raipur Metropolitan Secretary Rajeev Sharma took the stage to share his insights on the outline and intro-

duction of the program. Following his address, the special guest, Director of IIT Bhubaneswar, Rajeev Prakash, shed light on the extensive efforts being undertaken by IIT Bhubaneswar through approximately 50 projects focused on various aspects of tribal communities. He emphasized that the pride of the tribals has been deeply rooted since well before the era of

the freedom struggle.

In his address, Cabinet Minister Kedar Kashyap emphasized the profound lack of documented history regarding the lifestyle, civilization, and culture of tribal communities. He highlighted the necessity of firsthand experience by visiting tribal areas to gain authentic insights and understanding. Former IAS Neelkanth

Tekam highlighted the simplicity and easy-going nature of tribal communities, noting that historically, individuals from various sects have taken advantage of this trait, attempting to draw them into their own civilizations. He emphasized ongoing efforts by both state and central governments to raise awareness among tribal populations through the implementation of various rules and the provision of assistance. On this occasion, an exhibition was organized about the major tribal heroes of Chhattisgarh state and India. Cultural programs were presented by the students of Gracious College, Abhanpur and Government Dental College, Raipur.

# ED of UCO Bank reviews branch-wise business

**Raipur, Mar 19:**

Executive Director of UCO Bank, Rajendra Kumar Sabooji visited in Raipur on March 13 on a two-day tour. During this visit, he reviewed the branch-wise business of Raipur zonal office and branch managers of all the Branches of the zone.

Executive Director Sabooji had one-to-one discussion with the in-charges of all the departments of the zonal office and provided guidance to improvise their assigned work. He received feedback and also directed all the departments in charge to give their 100 percent contribution.



During the review meeting of branch managers, Sabooji advised all the branch Heads to achieve their respective target of March 2024 and encourage for digital Banking. He further em-

phasized focusing on the USP of the bank and prioritizing top 50 customers. He highlighted the importance of excellent customer service and customer connect for the progress of the bank and providing best financial services to each and every strata of the society.

Sabooji met with renowned clients of UCO Bank and received feedback to further strengthen the relationship. On this occasion, Zonal Head Lucky Nayak, Deputy Zonal Head N.P. Singh, Assistant General Manager and MSME Head Palash Halder and all UCOites were present.

# Accused gets benefit of doubts due to investigation chain break: Dangi

**Raipur, Mar 18:** During investigation into a case pertaining to women safety and crime against women the investigating officer should make sure that chain of investigation does not break, said Ratan Lal Dangi, Director of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose State Police Academy, Chandkhuri while addressing the police officers at a workshop today. Police officers from various districts of Chhattisgarh attended the five-day workshop being organised from 18th March to 22nd March at the Academy under the direction of Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD).



Sharing information about five pillars of investigation Dangi said that in-

vestigating officer and that there should not be any mistake on part of investigating officer, he said. Acquittal due to mistake in investigation boosts morale of accused and that victim does not get justice, he said. Academy SP Jayant Vaishnav, ASP Pankaj Shukla, DSP Rupa Khes, ADPO Shubham

Tomar and all academy training staff were present during inauguration of the workshop. All the police officers are being made aware of process of scientific investigation and latest amendments in the legal provisions pertaining to women, at the five-day workshop. They will also be made aware of the guidelines issued by the courts.

# Sickle cell patient undergoes total hip replacement surgery

**In Orthopaedics Department of Ambedkar Hospital**

**Raipur, Mar 19:** Doctors of the Orthopaedics Department of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar Memorial Hospital, affiliated to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial Medical College, Raipur, have successfully performed total hip replacement surgery on a 37-year-old patient suffering from sickle cell anemia. The surgery was conducted under the leadership of Dr (Prof) Rajendra Ahire of the Department of Orthopaedics.

According to Dr Ahire the hip of the patient, a resident of Jashpur, Kunkuri, was completely worn out due to sickle cell anemia. After successful surgery, the patient is now walking like before. Giving information regarding the operation, Dr.



Rajendra Ahire said that the patient had been suffering from sickle cell anemia since childhood. This genetic disease affects the structure of red blood cells present in the body which transport oxygen throughout the body. Due to this disease of the patient, the bones on both sides of his waist had worn out and got damaged. The patient had trouble walking since 2014, so he visited a private hospital in Ambikapur where he was asked

to go to Raipur. Due to gradual increase in pain patient was unable to walk. The patient then reached OPD in Ambedkar Hospital, where he was admitted and his blood, MRI, X-ray and all other types of tests were done. On the basis of test report he was advised to undergo total hip replacement surgery. Accordingly he was admitted to Ambedkar Hospital on 19 February 2024 and the surgery was performed successfully on



him. The patient is now completely walking. According to Dr. Rajendra Ahire, if this operation had been done in a private hospital, it would have cost lakhs of rupees, but in Ambedkar Hospital this operation was done free of cost with the help of Ayushman Yojana.

While sharing his experience after the operation, the patient said that he was very worried due to sickle cell disease. He said that it had become difficult

for him to walk due to wear and tear of the bones in his hip joints. After the operation, a ray of hope has returned that now he can walk again like before, he said. The team that carried out this complex operation comprised Dr. (Prof.) Dr. Rajendra Ahire, an orthopaedic surgeon at Ambedkar Hospital, Dr. Atin Kundu, Dr. Saurabh Jindal, PG Dr. Pritam Prajapati, Dr. Intezar, Dr. Shyam Dhar and Dr. Sonali Sahu from Anesthesia.



## 'No point in voting for Congress candidates, they will join BJP'

**Guwahati, Mar 19 (PTI):**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said that there is no point in voting for Congress candidates as they will ultimately go on to join the BJP.

Several Congress leaders have defected to the BJP recently.

"Whether they win or lose is a different matter but the question is whether the candidate will remain in the Congress", Sarma told reporters after campaigning for the BJP in the two constituencies

of Barak Valley-Silchar and Karimganj.

He said now nobody wants to remain in the Congress but they are eager to join the BJP.

This is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's credit that they want to join the BJP.

"The PM is the Sun and we are all moons around him", the chief minister said.

"Therefore, there is no point in voting for the Congress. Besides, barring one candidate, I can bring all others contesting from the party to BJP", Sarma

**Himanta Biswa Sarma**

claimed.

Several Congress leaders, including its former working president Rana Goswami, left the party to join the BJP while Congress MLAs Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha and Basanta

Das last month said they decided to "support the government" for its developmental works.

Asked about the minority voters who are traditionally Congress supporters, the chief minister said, "There is nothing called minority or majority. People will vote for the PM and his policy of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas". Sarma said, "The minority factor is not an issue. We are working for the minorities and now for the first time, youth from the community are getting jobs without giving money

as a bribe. Did they ever get jobs during Congress rule?"

He claimed the BJP will win the minority-dominated constituencies of Karimganj and Nagaon comfortably. Asked about Lok Sabha Deputy Leader of the Opposition Gaurav Gogoi, contesting from Jorhat, the chief minister said that he would lose by a huge margin. Assam has 14 constituencies with BJP holding nine, and Congress three. The AIUDF and an independent has one seat each in the outgoing Lok Sabha.

### IFTAR PARTY

**Muslim devotees break their fast at Iftar during the holy month of Ramadan, in Jalandhar, Monday.**

### RAILWAY BOARD TO ZONES

## 'Reduce unnecessary paperwork of drivers during train operations'

**New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):**

The Railway Board has asked all its zones to reduce paperwork of drivers and assistant drivers while they are operating trains so that they can focus more on safety aspects and signals.

"Loco pilot and assistant loco pilot have to maintain a memo book and an engine log book. While the memo book is a personal diary in which they note down details such as arrival-departure of each station, speed restrictions at various points, guards' details and all other things which they feel like while operating the train," a senior railway official said.

"The engine log book is an official record which they fill at the time of relieving from the shift. Here, they mention their

shift timings and all other issues which come across during operating the train," the official said.

Loco pilots say that they have to maintain these personal records so that if any dispute comes up later on regarding any issue they can refer to their personal notebook to support their version.

"So many things happen during train operations and we do not remember everything. So while the loco pilot drives the train, the assistant loco pilot makes a note of all these things in the memo book. Normally, he tries to do so when the train stops at any station but sometimes he has to do it during the running of train as well," a loco pilot said.

Experts associated with train operations say that the Railway Board wants

zones to come out with a format in which drivers will have to fill in only the essential information.

"At present there is no fixed format and assistant loco pilots mention a lot of information which are not essential. Of late, many divisions have started the practice of asking the drivers to write down all the station names and scheduled arrival and departure among other things before beginning the shift so that they don't need to waste their time and focus on such things," a retired chief loco inspector from one of the railway divisions said.

The Railway Board had issued a similar instruction two years ago, however, some of the departments' lackadaisical approach prompted it to remind them once again.

**New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):**

With poll fever gathering steam, business is booming for the city's detective agencies as politicians, especially aspiring candidates, are hiring private eyes to spy on their rivals and even colleagues.

Amid defections and switching of camps, detectives are being tasked by political parties to keep a tab on those who are likely to pass on important information to rivals or even switch allegiance in the coming days, industry experts said.

Maresh Chandra Sharma, Managing Director of Delhi-based GDX Detectives Pvt Ltd told PTI that political espionage during the poll season has become an established phenomenon.

"Hiring detectives to know the strategies and information related to hid-

## Private eyes in demand as politicians snoop on rivals, colleagues

den criminal records, scandals, illicit relationships and videos related to that, or cases of corruption that have the potential to hit one's election campaign has always been the main focus," Sharma said.

"But this time, candidates and politicians also want tabs to be kept on their aides and associates to ensure that they are not in for a rude shock due to them colluding with their rivals," Sharma added.

Also, those who were overlooked in the candidate selection process are approaching the detectives to find material that may jeopardise the campaigns of those picked in their place, said Sharma.

And those who haven't got a ticket yet are approaching us to scoop out dirt about their rivals to strengthen their candidature, Sharma added.

Rajeev Kumar,

Managing Director of City Intelligence Private Limited, said the hiring of detectives by parties and candidates begins several months before election dates are announced and includes the filing of RTIs.

"The information received through the RTIs could be minuscule but detectives are asked to build on that information," Kumar told PTI.

Sometimes, the information can be used at a later stage to wreck a successful candidate's chances of securing a portfolio, he said.

Information ranging from booth level data to the "weakness and vulnerabilities" of a candidate is procured by the detectives, Kumar added.

According to Kumar, the detectives are also tasked with finding out a political party's source of cash and liquor, the place where they are being stored and

the methods being adopted to distribute them.

Political parties often distribute cash and liquor through illegal channels to influence the voters ahead of polls.

Naman Jain, managing director of the New Delhi-based detective agency Sleuths India said the role of private detective agencies in election campaigns has evolved significantly in recent times.

"Major political parties now enlist our services to conduct thorough background checks on their own candidates and assess their popularity compared to their opponents in specific areas. "Additionally, parties seek our expertise in identifying the most promising candidates from their pool, aligning with the growing trend of introducing fresh faces into politics," Jain said.

Moreover, we are tasked

with researching diverse regions and predicting electoral outcomes through comprehensive surveys. Our investigations extend to determining the popularity of individual candidates in specific locales and analysing their chances of success in the election results, Jain said. If a spy agency has already been hired by a political party or an individual then according to the broad policy framework, it does not take any assignment from the opponents, Kumar said.

Regarding the budget, industry insiders said that the fees for such investigations can be exorbitant, depending on the type of investigation or follow-ups.

However, they refrained from revealing their charges. "Clients are ready to offer any price for a favourable result," Kumar said.

### HEALTH EXPERTS

## 'Air pollution a major source of lung diseases, needs to be controlled'

**New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):**

Air pollution has become a major source of lung diseases and plays a major part in exacerbating other ailments such as diabetes and sleep apnea, health experts said on Tuesday and called for measures to control it.

There is an urgent need to control it in summer months to ensure air pollution woes do not impact people in the winter, they stated. On the second day of the 'Illness to Wellness' summit organised by ASSOCHAM Foundation for CSR, medical practitioners shared

their views on how air pollution has become a major source of lung diseases and also plays a major part in exacerbating other ailments.

In a session titled 'Depleting Air Quality Index: A Potent Threat to Health and Environment', air pollution's deadly impact was discussed to throw light on the gravity of the situation.

Speaking in the session, Dr G C Khilnani, Chairman, PSRI Institute of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, PSRI Hospital, Delhi, said, "Long-

term effects of air pollution on lungs are very worrying. Around 30 years ago, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) meant nothing."

"Today, COPD is one of the leading causes of deaths and a major reason is air pollution. The number of patients being admitted to emergency due to COPD diseases has also increased by over 20 percent due to air pollution." Household air pollution also causes deaths which not many people are aware of, he said.

"Respiratory diseases have increased due to air

pollution and there is an urgent need to control air pollution in summer months to ensure air pollution woes do not impact people in winter," Dr Khilnani said.

Dr Vivek Nangia, Principal Director and Head, Institute of Respiratory, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine and Chief of Pulmonology, Cluster 1, Max Healthcare, said, "Air pollution also plays a part in aggravating existing ailments. For instance, with diabetes, a correlation has been found with the duration of exposure to air pollution.

## Tanvi Malhara draws parallels between reel and real life

**Mumbai, Mar 19:**

Tanvi Malhara, the former Miss India Multinational, is captivating audiences on Star Bharat's "Savdhaan India Apni Khaki" with her portrayal of Pragati Deshmukh, a determined and fierce sub-inspector. Beyond the screen, Tanvi reveals how her character's resilience mirrors her own life journey.

In a candid confession, Tanvi shares, "When I auditioned for the role, portraying a tough, no-nonsense cop seemed like a far from my expectations. However, my passion for



acting outweighed any doubts." Embracing Pragati's strength meant confronting her own vulnerabilities. "There were moments when I struggled to embody Pragati's unwavering resolve. I found my-

self tearing up during intense scenes. But with perseverance, I stepped into her shoes."

Reflecting on the parallels, Tanvi underscores the importance of pursuing dreams relentlessly. "I've

always aspired to be an actor, despite the obstacles. Similarly, Pragati never shies away from challenges, and that resilience resonates with me," she explains. Her portrayal of Pragati also serves as a beacon of empowerment for young women. "I used to rely on others, particularly men, to make decisions for me. But now, I understand the power of making my own choices and facing the consequences head-on," she adds. "It's liberating and empowering to take control of your life and chase your dreams without regrets."

## Winds of Change: A Transformative Art Exhibition by Nero Art Hub Delhi

**Shilpa Mitra**

In a bustling corner of Delhi's art scene, Nero Art Hub recently unveiled its latest exhibition, "The Winds of Change," at the prestigious Kalamkar Gallery, nestled within the historic Bikaner House. Curated by the esteemed Ranbir Rathi, this captivating showcase brought together a dynamic ensemble of established luminaries and promising newcomers in the realm of contemporary art.

The exhibition's roster boasted an impressive array of talent, featuring the works of renowned artists such as

Jatin Das, Tapan Das, Dharmendra Rathore, Neha Bisht, Ritika Aurora, Prem Lata, Shweta P Raina, Akansha Chaturvedi, Pulakesh Mandal, Dolly Bhansali Chopra, Dipali Deshpande, Sawan Taank, Asmita Patil, Romendra Sagar, Anushree, Nitesh Kushwaha, Danashri, Satadru Sovan Banduri, Mahavir Verma, Rashid Ahamed, Rajkumar,

**Actor Naseer Abdullah with Show Curator Ranbir Rathi.**

Naman, and Nitesh Kushwaha.

Featured works by both established and emerging artists, "The Winds of Change" offered a unique opportunity to explore the evolving landscape of contemporary art. From bold brushstrokes to intricate sculptures, each piece told a compelling story and invited viewers to reflect on the currents of change shaping our world.

Ranbir Rathi, curator of the exhibition, expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "I am thrilled to have organized this show, featuring a blend of renowned and upcoming artists. It's a pleas-

ure to curate such a diverse showcase, and I hope it exceeds all expectations."

Art was ubiquitous, manifesting wherever one chose to perceive it. The world itself was a canvas, reflecting the profound truth that "change is the only constant" in the universe. Societies, seasons, and cosmic energies all flowed in the river of time and evolution, influencing the realm of art as well.

Throughout the timeline of existence, countless changes have occurred. The winds of change have ushered in new horizons, shaping movements, ideologies, and entire civiliza-

tions. Empires have risen and fallen, dynasties have flourished and vanished, and socio-political landscapes have evolved over time.

Society, like climate cycles, has weathered numerous winds of change. From overcoming social stigmas to promoting gender equality and social acceptance of diversity, the collective consciousness has navigated towards a more enlightened and inclusive world.

The evolution of art mirrors the changes in both internal and external environments. Art serves as a mirror reflecting the winds of change in society, capturing the evolving dialogue between individuals and their broader surroundings.

Transitions in art, whether in style, technique, or underlying philosophy, are vital for the growth and evolution of the art world. These shifts provide insights into artists' journeys and the broader cultural and historical contexts in which their work exists.

Art is an ever-evolving

space, adapting to the shifting tides of society and human experience. From classicism to contemporary expressions, art celebrates new ideas and embraces change as an inherent part of its evolution.

Change brings its own set of blessings and lessons, reminding us of the cyclical nature of life. Each season, whether of abundance or adversity, offers opportunities for growth and renewal.

The acceptance of change empowers individuals to navigate challenges with resilience and optimism, recognizing that every hardship is temporary. The exhibition "Winds of Change" celebrates this dynamic trajectory of evolution, offering a toast to the beauty of transformation in society and art alike.

In a world gripped by constant flux, "The Winds of Change" stood as a beacon of creativity and inspiration, reminding us all of the transformative power of art to transcend boundaries and illuminate the path forward.

## BBGBP holds massive mangrove plantation drive



**To protect soil erosion of Mahanadi river**

**Paradip, Mar 19:**

Baba Balunkeshwar Gramya Bikash Parisad (BBGBP), a leading environmental and nature-loving organization of Paradip in Jagatsinghpur district, has been running a massive mangrove and other plantation inside Mahanadi river and its embankment near Balidia, Singitali, Phulbelari, Barei area. More than 5000 saplings have been planted in the vast area. In addition, local residents have been specially sensitized about the need for mangrove forests in coastal areas. It is observed that the river Mahanadi charges its route for different reasons and climate changes. It happens unexpected soil erosion in that particular region for above causes also. This unexpected river behavior can be stopped or protected by this massive mangrove plantation as per informed by BBGBP president

environmentalist Amaresh Naresh Samant. The drive was conducted by two times Prakruti Bandhu awardee Sri Samanta with BBGBP secretary Dillip Palai, senior member Parikshit Samal, member Amulya Das, Biswajit Das, Jitendra Samal, Devendra Samal, Sridhar Samal and others. Devendra Rout, Sarpanch of Nuagarh and local intellectuals have praised such a great social welfare program of BBGBP and Sri Samanta.

### General information

The general public is informed that Mauja Village Sirgiri PH No. 41 R.M.M. And under Tehsil Bilaspur Municipal Corporation Bilaspur District Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Land situated Kharsa no. 685 ms. Area 1204 square feet which was sold by Mr. Prashant Rai Tahalani etc. to Mr. Shyam Sundar Tiwari's father Late. Mahakam resident ward no. 55 Indira Vihar Barkenda Bilaspur Chhattisgarh. The property was sold under registered sale deed dated 01/02/2016, registration number 5293, registration office Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh. It was registered in K.N. which has been lost, in the transfer of the said land to Sri Shyam Sundar Tiwari in K.N. 5835 has been received. The said land has been sold by Mr. Shyam Sundar Tiwari to Mr. Rajgurunandan Lal Verma, the part of the said land has been sold by Mr. Rajgurunandan Lal Verma to Mrs. Aarti Devi's husband Mr. Anun Kumar Ravani resident of Ward no. 15 Sirgiri Bilaspur Chhattisgarh. The one has been sold. Presently the said land is owned and occupied by Mrs. Aarti Devi, the original copy of the said sale deed has been lost somewhere from Mr. Rajgurunandan Lal Verma. Jara Small Finance Bank Bilaspur Chhattisgarh by Mrs. Aarti Devi. Application form has been submitted for obtaining loan. If any person, institution, company, body, financial institution, bank, committee has any objection regarding the said land, they can immediately submit it to my office with the documents within a week. Objections after the time period will be invalid. So know the information: Dated 16/03/2024 Yours sincerely M.L. Yadav Advocate Bilaspur Chhattisgarh Mo. 9300325314

**Indian Overseas Bank**  
इण्डियन ओवरसीज बैंक

Regional Office : LIC Investment Building, Phase-II, Jeevan Beema Marg, Pandri, Raipur-492004 (C.G.). Ph. : 0771-2583916/2583917, Fax : 0771-2583915

**EMPANELMENT OF CONSULTANT (ARCHITECT) AND CONTRACTORS (INTERIOR & ELECTRICAL FURNISHING)**

Indian Overseas Bank invites applications for the empanelment of Consultant (Architect) & Contractors (Interior & Electrical Furnishing) from experienced contractor firms for the branches/offices for the state of Chhattisgarh. Eligible firms should submit the proposal in the prescribed format in sealed envelope at the above mentioned address on or before 03:00 pm, 09.04.2024.

Application form can be downloaded from [www.ioeb.in](http://www.ioeb.in) under Tenders Section and should be submitted along with demand draft of Rs. 500/- to Indian Overseas Bank, Regional Office, Raipur. For detailed information, please visit to our site [www.ioeb.in](http://www.ioeb.in) or contact at the above mentioned address. The Bank reserves the right to accept/reject the offer(s) without assigning any reason.

Chief Manager, GAD, Regional Office, Raipur



## Collector chairs press conference for LS 2024

**Bijapur, Mar 19:**

To conduct free and fair elections, the Election Commission of India has announced the date of Lok Sabha elections 2024 to be held in Chhattisgarh along with the entire country. With this, the Model Code of Conduct has become effective in the district and all hoardings, posters, banners etc. put up with public money have been removed from public places/buildings in the district. Collector and District Election Officer Anurag Pandey shared the above information with media representatives during the press conference. According to the Lok Sabha General Elections 2024; the date of voting in the first phase has been fixed for Friday, April 19, 2024. The notification will be published on March 20 as per the Lok Sabha general election schedule issued by the Election Commission of India. The last date for nomination is March 27 and similarly, the date of scrutiny of nominations has been fixed for 28th March and

withdrawal of nominations of candidates for 30th March 2024 and the date of voting has been fixed for 19th April 2024, Friday. Similarly, counting of votes will take place on June 04, 2024 and the total number of polling stations in parliamentary constituency number 10 Bastar, the only assembly constituency number 89 Bijapur in the district, is 245, of which 22 are urban and 223 are rural polling stations. The final publication of the voter list has been done on 8 February 2024 and a copy of it has been made available to recognized political parties. In assembly constituency number 89 Bijapur, total male voters are 81981, female voters are 88460 and there are total 170449 voters including 08 other voters. The sex ratio of voters of the district is 1078 and there are 246 service voters as on March 15, 2024.

The total number of disabled voters is 1603 and there are 59 polling stations selected for webcasting and videography will be done in 64 polling stations. Same way there is 01



polling station run by disabled people. Similarly, there are 05 youth polling stations, 05 model polling stations and 10 Sangwari polling stations (pink booths) run by women, 99 polling stations are shifting. After the Model Code of Conduct came into effect, the control room has become effective in the

District Election Office which will remain functional for 24 hours every day. During general meetings for election purposes, the use of loudspeakers or any type of sound amplifying devices installed in any condition or in any type of vehicles will be completely prohibited from 10 pm to 6 am.

As soon as the Model Code of Conduct comes into force, complete certification of broadcast of any political campaign material in electronic media will be necessary. All types of rallies and processions will require prior permission. Information was given that C-Vigil, Suvidha and other apps will become functional with the implementation of Model Code of Conduct. Formation of Media Certification and Monitoring Committee for continuous monitoring of political activities and advertisements issued by political parties on TV cable networks for the smooth conduct of Lok Sabha Elections 2024 has been formed. In the said press conference, Joint Collector Mr. Kailash Verma, SDM Bijapur and Assistant Returning Officer Mr. Jageshwar Kaushal, Deputy District Election Officer Mr. Narayan Gavel, Deputy Collector and Nodal Officer Mr. Uttam Singh Panchari and Mr. Dilip Uike and representatives of print and electronic media were present.

## Ullas Navbharat Literacy Program empowers 4,000 newly literate individuals

- In District Assessment Initiative
- Enthusiastic Participation Highlights Success of District's Educational Endeavors

**Sukma/Konta, Mar 19:**

A significant milestone was achieved in the Ullas Navbharat Literacy Program as 4,000 recently literate individuals actively participated in the Mahapariksha Abhiyan assessment initiative held in District Sukma. Under the leadership of Collector and Chairman of the District Literacy Mission Authority, Haris S, and guidance from Chief Executive Officer of District Panchayat Sukma, Laxman Tiwari, the assessment test for basic literacy and numeracy was meticulously organized on Sunday, March 17. Candidates were provided with a three-hour window to undertake the examination, ensuring flexibility and



convenience.

The initiative targeted students who had previously participated in the Padhna-Likhna Abhiyan examination but were yet to receive certification. With 218 examination centers established across Sukma district, the program aimed to assess and validate the newfound literacy skills of participants.

A comprehensive monitoring framework, comprising district, development block, and Sankul level teams, ensured the smooth execution of the assessment. District Education Officer GR

Mandavi, District Project Officer SS Chauhan, District Principal Shailesh Singh, alongside district-level teams and Sankul coordinators, played pivotal roles in overseeing operations.

The diligent efforts extended to the establishment of examination control rooms at both district and block levels, facilitating real-time communication with examination centers. Village in-charges also played an integral role in ensuring the seamless organization of examination centers at the grassroots level.

## Department of Telecommunications seized illegal booster during raid

**Raigarh, Mar 19:**

The Wireless Monitoring unit of the Department of Telecommunications (DOT) which is a field unit of the WPC Wing has carried out raids in the Ghandhi Chowk, Anathalay Colony Raigarh and Sultaniya Gali area of Bilaspur against installation of illegal repeaters and boosters.



Bhanu Bhai Richariya [Officer in charge] and assisted by Junior Wireless Officers Mr. Awdesh Dixit and Mr. B. S Rajpoot Tiwari have made a seizure of 02 Illegal boosters in Bilaspur and 02 in Raigarh. In addition to the above notices were also served to the miscreants. Most people are not

aware that installing & selling telecom network booster is an illegal activity in India. The notices served by the office of WMO Chhattisgarh in the area of Bilaspur and Raigarh will work as a warning and deterrent to the people involved in selling these devices as well as the customers who purchase and install it.

These illegal radiating devices are mainly procured from China and other grey markets by unlicensed vendors and sold door to door to unsuspecting buyers. Further, the buyers are also not provided an invoice for the purchase which makes it even more difficult to trace these vendors."

## Chief Minister School Safety Program organized

- In Chhadia School

**Kharora, Mar 19:**

Chief Minister School Safety Program was organized at Government Pre-Secondary School Chhadia under Cluster Center Pachari, on the topic "Information regarding the danger of fire". Students Diya Verma, Bharti Verma, Gajendra Yadav Gautam Yadav, Lily Mahilang, Chetna Banjare,

Lucky Ratre, Dameshwari Sahu, Madhuri Sahu, Santoshi Sahu staged a drama and told that lanterns and lamps should be kept at safe places and should not be used when not in use.

They also advised to extinguish it properly and to make the roof of the kitchen with tin or asbestos sheet, if made with thatched roof then apply mud on the inside.

Principal of the school SK Dewangan said that adequate availability of water should be ensured and the fire of beedi pieces etc. completely extinguished. Keep piles of straw and tubers at a distance and also keep lanterns and lamps in safe places and extinguish them properly when not in use, he advised. School teacher Dharendra Kumar Verma, while explaining about the control measures, said that for this you can keep a wet blanket at the place of fire or on the person who is burning, apart from this, water, sand and soil or gravel powder can be used to extinguish the fire. You can do this until the fire brigade arrives.

## SP leads review meeting for crime prevention



**Jagdalpur, Mar 19:** To ensure community safety ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, Bastar Police, led by Superintendent of Police, conducted a comprehensive review meeting involving sub-divisional officers and police station in-charges. The gathering, convened under the directive of the Superintendent of Police, emphasized the swift enforcement of legal measures against minor offenses and those violating restrictive sections, alongside efforts to apprehend wanted criminals. Following this, a

subsequent meeting was held at the Superintendent of Police office, reaffirming the commitment to maintaining law and order during the electoral process. With a focus on promoting peaceful and fair elections, stringent instructions were issued to address minor offenses and enforce restrictive measures diligently. This proactive approach underscores the dedication of law enforcement authorities in safeguarding the democratic process and ensuring public safety throughout the election period.

## Rekhchand Jain urges solidarity in electoral efforts



**Jagdalpur, Mar 19:** In a display of unwavering commitment to electoral success, former MLA and Chitrakote assembly constituency coordinator, Rekhchand Jain, orchestrated a pivotal gathering of party officials at the Lohandiguda Congress office. With Bastar District Committee

Rural President Balram Maurya at his side, Jain convened representatives from booths, sectors, and zones to strategize for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. Embracing a collective approach, opinions were solicited from booth presidents, emphasizing the imperative of extensive publicity campaigns

to bolster party interests. Addressing the assembly, Jain underscored a crucial message of solidarity, asserting that regardless of the Congress nominee, victory must be a collective endeavour. Recognizing the pivotal role of grassroots workers, Jain urged steadfast dedication, highlighting their

indispensable role in the party's triumph. Dispelling rumors and distractions, emphasis was placed on amplifying the Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra led by former National President Rahul Gandhi and championing the party's promises to diverse societal segments. With the Bastar parliamentary seat slated for April 19, time is of the essence, Jain stressed, urging a singular focus on securing victory for the Congress. The meeting witnessed impassioned addresses from key figures including Congress Rural District President Balram Maurya and Block President Laxman Kashyap, underscoring a resolute commitment to lead the party to success in the impending elections.

## Mayor's caste certificate declared void

- Another blow to Congress before Lok Sabha elections

**Korba, Mar 19:**

The caste certificate presented by Mayor Rajkishore Prasad during the municipal elections has been declared void. The said decision was welcomed by Korba Municipal Corporation Leader of Opposition Hitanand Agarwal.

Leader of Opposition Hitanand Agarwal said that in the order issued by the Sub-Divisional Officer Revenue. It is mentioned that due to prima facie suspicious and fraudulent obtaining of the temporary caste certificate approved by



Tehsildar Korba on December 5, 2019, it has been suspended for Other Backward Classes till the final investigation and non-applicant Rajkishore Prasad has been suspended for any kind of benefit. Instructions have been given to the competent authority to issue orders regarding non-use.



It may be informed that under the said order, Rajkishore Prasad has been banned from using the temporary caste certificate for any kind of

benefit. You should also know that the temporary caste certificate of Other Backward Class of Rajkishore Prasad was challenged by BJP councillor Ritu Chaurasia. On the other hand, Leader of Opposition Hitanand Agarwal welcomed this order and said that ultimately truth has prevailed.

The Mayor has been sitting on the Mayor's chair for more than 4 years and has been destroying the rights of backward class people through fake caste certificates. Corporation Leader of Opposition Hitanand has also demanded recovery of the benefits received by the Mayor from the government.

## Collector inspects strong room security



**Jagdalpur, Mar 19:** In preparation for the forthcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2024, Collector and District Election Officer Vijay Dayaram K spearheaded an inspection of the strong room situated at Model College Building, Dharampura. His thorough assessment encompassed not only security arrangements but also critical logistical preparations essential for a seamless voting process. Among the directives issued were instructions to fortify the perimeter of the strong room, ensure timely distribution of voting materials,

and maintain constant surveillance to guarantee maximum security. The occasion also saw a comprehensive review of parking arrangements crucial for the efficient deployment of resources to polling stations across the district. Present at the inspection were key officials including Superintendent of Police Shalabh Sinha, CEO District Panchayat Prakash Sarve, and Additional Superintendent of Police Maheshwar Nag, signifying a collective commitment to facilitating fair and secure elections.

## Bright Sparks Academy celebrates graduation day

**Khairagarh, Mar 19:**

Bright Sparks Academy School witnessed a vibrant celebration as it hosted its graduation day ceremony, marking a significant milestone for its students and the institution itself. Amidst the festivities, Mohammad Yahia Niazi, Vice President of Khairagarh District Journalist Association and Secretary of the service-oriented organization Iqra Foundation, graced the occasion as the chief guest, commending the noble endeavors undertaken by the academy in the realm of education. Presided over by Harpreet Kaur Suri, Operator and Director of Bright Sparks Academy

Khairagarh, the ceremony showcased the school's commitment to nurturing young minds and fostering educational excellence in Khairagarh and its surrounding areas. Traditionally, graduation day ceremonies are reserved for students progressing to higher education following their graduation examinations. However, recognizing the importance of educational development at all levels, Bright Sparks Academy Khairagarh embarked on a unique initiative to bid farewell to its pre-primary class, PP-2, and wish them well in their continued journey of learning and growth.

The event commenced with the ceremonial garlanding of the oil painting of Ma Saraswati, followed by the lighting of the lamp by esteemed guests. Students of PP-2 captivated the audience with a mesmerizing group dance



of Ma Saraswati, followed by the lighting of the lamp by esteemed guests.

Students of PP-2 captivated the audience with a mesmerizing group dance

performance, embodying the theme of graduation day with their adorned gowns. Praising the endeavours of Bright Sparks Academy, Chief Guest Mohd. Niazi lauded the institution's pivotal role in reshaping the educational landscape of Khairagarh and its environs. He hailed the academy's efforts as a commendable and noble initiative in the field of education. As a gesture of encouragement and support, Niazi presented study materials to all the graduating students, marking the beginning of their journey into Class 1. Niazi and Academy Director Harpreet Kaur Suri conferred graduation certificates upon the students of PP-2, recog-

nizing their achievements and inspiring them to continue their pursuit of knowledge and excellence. Prior to the certificate distribution, students of PP-2 solemnly pledged to uphold the values of education, lead disciplined lives, and bring honour to their families, teachers, community, and nation. The ceremony was attended by the proud parents of the graduating students, as well as Bright Sparks Academy Khairagarh Principal Amita Srivastava, teacher Latika Shastri, and other dedicated staff members. Tejaswini Sharma skillfully conducted the proceedings, ensuring a seamless and memorable event for all in attendance.



## UN chief decries violence in west Myanmar

## DESTROYED BUILDINGS



Destroyed buildings stand inside Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel, Tuesday, March 19.



General Antonio Guterres expressed deep concern over "the deteriorating situation and escalation of conflict in Myanmar," according to a spokesperson. The UN chief "condemns all forms of violence and reiterates his call for the protection of civilians, including aid workers in accordance with international humanitarian law, for the cessation of hostilities, and humanitarian access," said Guterres' deputy spokesperson, Farhan Haq, in a statement on Monday.

Myanmar's military is increasingly using airstrikes to counter the widespread armed struggle against its rule since its seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021.

A report issued at the end of last year by Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica, a Myanmar research and advocacy organization, said that since the military's 2021 takeover, 936 civilians had been killed and 878 wounded in 1,652 airstrikes. It said 137 religious buildings, 76 schools and 28 hospital and dispensaries had been damaged by aerial attacks.

The Rohingya village of Thada is about 340 km (120 miles) southwest of Mandalay, the country's second largest city. However, almost 90% of Myanmar's people are Buddhist, especially the

Burman majority, which constitutes the Southeast Asian nation's ruling class.

Two villagers from the Thada village told The Associated Press late on Monday that a jet fighter dropped two bombs on the village at around 1:30 am. Six children were among the 25 killed, they said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fears of arrests and reprisals.

The victims included those who had fled fighting in nearby villages, the villagers said.

Independent media including Myanmar Now, The Irrawaddy and Rakhine-based outlets also reported about the incident, giving death tolls between 21 and 23 on Monday and Tuesday. Different casualty tolls are common in areas of Myanmar that are difficult to access.

As two dozen villagers are reported killed in airstrikes

Pic: Antonio Guterres Bangkok, Mar 19 (AP):

Military airstrikes in western Myanmar killed at least 25 members of the country's Muslim Rohingya minority, including children, local media reported, prompting the UN chief to express concerns over the escalating violence.

According to the reports, the airstrikes took place early on Monday morning and targeted the village of Thada, north of Minbya township in Rakhine state. The strikes also left another 25 people wounded. The military government had no immediate comment on the reports. UN Secretary-

## Pak court acquits Imran Khan in two cases related to vandalism during his anti-govt march

Islamabad, Mar 19 (PTI):

In some relief to Imran Khan, a court in Pakistan on Tuesday acquitted the jailed former prime minister in two different cases related to the incidents of vandalism during his anti-government long march in March 2022.

District and Sessions Court Judicial Magistrate Shaista Kundi accepted Khan's petitions and acquitted him in cases registered at Islamabad's Lohi Bhair and Sahala police stations, Geo News reported.

"Several cases were registered in a single day, PTI's founder was [framed] in the same role," Khan's lawyer, Advocate Naeem Panjotra, argued.

He added that neither a notification was issued nor the party was informed regarding the enforcement of a prohibitory order under Section 144. The lawyer maintained that the plaintiff is the Station House Officer (SHO), who has no jurisdiction to register the case.



"There are no witness statements in the cases filed against the PTI founder," he further argued. The judicial magistrate asked the counsel if Khan had been acquitted in cases before, responding to which he said:

"Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder had been acquitted in several cases even earlier." Following the arguments by the former premier's counsel, the court reserved the verdict, which was announced later.

## UN reports 35% increase in people affected by violence in South Sudan

Juba, Mar 19 (API):

The number of people affected by violence in South Sudan surged by 35% in the last three months of 2023, the United Nations reported.

The UN Mission in South Sudan, or UNMISS, documented 233 incidents of violence affecting 862 people. Of that, 406 were killed, 293 were injured, 100 were abducted and 63 subjected to conflict-related sexual violence, it said in a report released Monday. It was a 35% increase in the number of victims reported from the previous quarter.

South Sudan is to hold elections later this year, the first since a 2018 peace deal between President Salva Kiir and his former rival, Riek Machar, that ended a five-year conflict that killed hundreds of thousands.

Violence caused by ethnic tensions and disputes over resources such as

land has increased in various parts of the country in recent months, particularly in the oil-rich region of Abyei.

The head of UNMISS, Nicholas Haysom, said it is "doing all it can to prevent violence and build peace in the affected areas" and urged the South Sudan government to intervene and "resolve underlying grievances and build peace."

It said it has conducted at least 10,000 peacekeeping patrols by land, air and boat over the past year.

South Sudan, one of the world's youngest nations, also suffers from drought and flooding, making living conditions difficult for residents. The World Food Programme in its latest country brief said South Sudan "continues to face a dire humanitarian crisis" due to violence, economic instability, climate change and an influx of people fleeing the conflict in neighbouring Sudan.

## Sri Lanka moves for electoral reforms in election year

Colombo, Mar 19 (PTI):

Sri Lanka's cabinet has approved a proposal to reform the parliamentary election system in the island nation ahead of the presidential election likely to be held later this year.

A note from the cabinet meeting held Monday released here on Tuesday said that a cabinet subcommittee has been appointed to formulate a hybrid system for parliament representation 160 members to be appointed by first past the post system while 65 members would be elected under the proportional representation system while retaining the total number of MPs at 225. Presently, 196 members are elected under districts-based proportional representation while 29 members are appointed on the cumulative votes polled from the nationwide vote. The cabinet note added that the Justice Minister Dr. Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe was advised to work out a draft election law accordingly.

## Artificial intelligence among topics covered in Obama-Sunak informal talks

London, Mar 19 (PTI):

Artificial intelligence (AI), one of British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's pet subjects, was among the topics on the agenda of the "informal" meeting he had with former US president Barack Obama, Downing Street has said.

Obama was seen unexpectedly walking up to 10 Downing Street on Monday, with surprised reporters and photographers shouting questions about the purpose of his visit, believed to be the first for the two leaders. While he just smiled and waved, Sunak's spokesperson later described the visit as a "courtesy drop-in" as the 62-year-old Democrat was in London for work associated with his Foundation.

"The Prime Minister welcomed Barack Obama to No. 10 this afternoon for an informal meeting, as part of the former president's visit to London with the Obama Foundation," a Downing

Street spokesperson said later on Monday.

"They discussed a range of issues, including international affairs and AI," the spokesperson said.

Obama was seen cheerily waving at photographers as he entered the famous black door for the discussions that took place in the Downing Street study.

"He was making an informal courtesy drop-in as part of his trip to London, where he is conducting work of the Obama Foundation. I think President Obama's team made contact and obviously the Prime Minister was very happy to meet with him and discuss the work of the Obama Foundation," Sunak's spokesperson told reporters. The meeting is believed to be the first time the British Indian leader has met Obama, who was on his first visit to Downing Street since he left the White House after his two terms as US President, between 2009 and 2017.

## Nawaz Sharif courts controversy as he chairs Punjab govt meetings

Lahore, Mar 19 (PTI):

Nawaz Sharif, the supreme leader of the PML-N, assumed a "de-facto" role of Punjab chief minister, a post officially held by his daughter Maryam Nawaz, and presided over three administrative meetings of the provincial government, raising many eyebrows.

Maryam Nawaz took over as the first woman chief minister of Punjab province last month.

However, her father Sharif, 74, assumed a "de-facto CM role" and issued directions to the authorities concerned and ministers regarding different projects in the province, which used to be the bastion of his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party.

An official handout issued after the meeting said the three-time former prime minister issued directions to ministers and officials regarding different infrastructure projects, including the underground train and metro bus, farmers' plight, electric bikes for students and Ramzan relief package.

However, the veteran leader chairing the meetings raised many questions since he holds no official position in either the provincial or federal gov-



ernment and is officially only a National Assembly member.

Sharif was elected from Lahore on a National Assembly seat in February 8 polls, which were marred by allegations of rigging. Jailed former premier Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has alleged that its mandate was stolen by the PML-N.

Independent candidates backed by jailed former prime minister Khan's PTI won the maximum number of seats in the National Assembly.

He was the party's candidate for the prime minister slot, but his dream to don the premier's cap for the fourth time was shattered as his party couldn't secure a simple majority in the lower house; thus, his younger brother Shehbaz Sharif emerged as favourite of the military establishment to lead a six-party coalition government in the Centre.

## HAWAN FOR MODI'S WIN



Organized by the Overseas Friends of BJP-USA San Francisco Bay Area Chapter, Indian American technology professionals from the Silicon Valley conducted a Hawan for the victory of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

## UN weather agency issues 'red alert' on climate change after record heat

Ice-melt increases in 2023

Geneva, Mar 19 (API):

The UN weather agency is sounding a "red alert" about global warming, citing record-smashing increases last year in greenhouse gases, land and water temperatures and melting of glaciers and sea ice, and warning that the world's efforts to reverse the trend have been inadequate. The World Meteorological Organisation, in a "State of the Global Climate" report released Tuesday, ratcheted up concerns that a much-vaunted climate goal is increasingly in jeopardy: That the world can unite to limit planetary warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) from pre-industrial levels.

"Never have we been so close albeit on a temporary basis at the moment to the 1.5C lower limit of the Paris agreement on climate change," said Celeste Saulo, the agency's secretary-general. "The WMO community is sounding the red alert to the world."

The 12-month period from March 2023 to February 2024 pushed be-

yond that 1.5-degree limit, averaging 1.56 C (2.81 F) higher, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Service. It said the calendar year 2023 was just below 1.5 C at 1.48 C (2.66 F), but a record hot start to this year pushed beyond that level for the 12-month average.

"Earth's issuing a distress call," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. "The latest State of the Global Climate report shows a planet on the brink. Fossil fuel pollution is sending climate chaos off the charts."

The latest WMO findings are especially stark when compiled in a single report. In 2023, over 90% of ocean waters experienced heat wave conditions at least once. Glaciers monitored since 1950 lost the most ice on record. Antarctic sea ice retreated to its lowest level ever. "Topping all the bad news, what worries me the most is that the planet is now in a meltdown phase literally and figuratively given the warming and mass loss from our polar ice sheets," said Jonathan Overpeck, dean of the University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability, who wasn't involved in the report.





# CENTRAL Chronicle

Since 1974 Volume 11 No. 351

## Transparency Imperative

The Supreme Court's recent directive to the State Bank of India (SBI) carries profound significance in safeguarding the essence of our democratic process. With a resolute call to cease selectivity and unveil all conceivable details concerning electoral bonds, the apex court underscores a pivotal principle: transparency is not negotiable in the realm of electoral financing. The crux of the matter lies in the revelation of alphanumeric identities corresponding to each electoral bond, thereby illuminating the intricate nexus between purchasers and beneficiary political entities. This mandate, issued by a distinguished Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, resonates with the core ethos of democratic governance - accountability and transparency. In its unambiguous decree, the Bench unequivocally tasks the SBI with comprehensive disclosure, extending to both the acquisition and redemption phases of these bonds. Such disclosure is not a mere administrative formality; it is a manifestation of judicial vigilance aimed at fortifying the foundations of electoral integrity. Crucially, the Court's directive transcends the confines of a mere procedural order. It serves as a potent reminder of the judiciary's unwavering commitment to upholding constitutional values. By stipulating a deadline of March 21, the Bench underscores the urgency of the matter, leaving no room for ambiguity or procrastination. The significance of this mandate becomes even more pronounced against the backdrop of recent controversies surrounding electoral funding. The electoral bond system, ostensibly introduced to enhance transparency, has been mired in ambiguity and skepticism. The lack of transparency in donor identities has fueled apprehensions regarding the sanctity of our electoral process. The Court's refusal to entertain pleas for retrospective disclosure underscores a judicious balance between accountability and practicality. While acknowledging the imperative of transparency, the Bench demonstrates prudence by delineating a temporal boundary that ensures legal clarity and procedural coherence. In rebuffing attempts to impede transparency under the guise of procedural technicalities, the Court reaffirms its commitment to the broader principles of justice and equity. The admonition directed towards the SCBA president serves as a poignant reminder that the judiciary remains impervious to extraneous influences and steadfast in its pursuit of truth and justice. The assertions made by various stakeholders, including the petitioner Association for Democratic Reforms and the Solicitor General representing the Centre, underscore the divergent perspectives surrounding electoral funding. However, amidst the cacophony of competing interests, the Court's mandate stands as a beacon of clarity, guiding our collective endeavor towards a more transparent and accountable electoral landscape. By demanding unfettered transparency, the Court reiterates its role as a custodian of constitutional values and a guardian of democratic integrity. It is incumbent upon all stakeholders to heed this clarion call for transparency and collectively strive towards a more accountable and equitable democratic paradigm.

## Global Happiness

### Celebrating the International Day of Joy

Dr Krishna Kumar Vepakomma



In a world often tumultuous and uncertain, the pursuit of happiness stands as a beacon of hope, guiding humanity towards a brighter tomorrow. As we commemorate the International Day of Happiness, established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012, let us pause to reflect on the profound significance of this occasion. At its core, the International Day of Happiness encapsulates a universal aspiration—an acknowledgment that happiness transcends geographical boundaries, cultural divides, and socio-economic disparities. It symbolizes our collective yearning for a life filled with joy, purpose, and fulfillment. Rooted in the visionary ethos of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness index, this day underscores a paradigm shift in our understanding of progress. No longer confined to narrow economic metrics, such as GDP growth, true prosperity is now measured by the holistic well-being of individuals and communities. Central to the ethos of the International Day of Happiness is the recognition that happiness is not merely a personal pursuit but a societal imperative. It is a call to action for policymakers, leaders, and citizens alike to prioritize the creation of environments conducive to well-being. Scientific inquiry affirms what intuition has long suggested: happiness is not just a fleeting emotion but a powerful determinant of individual and collective flourishing. Studies consistently demonstrate the myriad benefits of happiness, from bolstering physical health and resilience to fostering social cohesion and innovation. Yet, achieving widespread happiness requires more than mere rhetoric or fleeting gestures. It demands concerted effort and unwavering commitment to fostering equitable societies, where all individuals have the opportunity to thrive. On this auspicious occasion, let us reaffirm our dedication to building a world where happiness knows no bounds—a world where access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunity is not a privilege but a birthright. Moreover, let us recognize the interconnectedness of our global community and the profound impact of our collective actions. In an increasingly interconnected world, the pursuit of happiness transcends national borders, requiring collaboration and solidarity across continents and cultures. As we celebrate the International Day of Happiness, let us recommit ourselves to the values that unite us: empathy, compassion, and a shared vision of a better future. Let us strive to create societies that prioritize the well-being of all their members, leaving no one behind. In the words of the Dalai Lama, "Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions." On this day and every day, let us choose actions that uplift, inspire, and bring joy to ourselves and others.

(Writer is Professor &amp; Principal (Rtd) and newspaper columnist.)

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 email to editorcentralchronicle@gmail.com.

## TRAINING PROGRAMME



Polling officials during a training programme to learn the functioning of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), ahead of Lok Sabha elections, in Guwahati, Tuesday, March 19.

## How rising dengue burden is costing India and Sri Lanka billions

SHAKOOR RATHER



The increasing incidence of dengue in India and Sri Lanka is not just a significant health concern but also exacts a hefty economic toll on these South Asian countries, say experts who estimate the annual losses to be in billions. Researchers highlight the dire economic consequences of this affliction caused by a virus spread through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito species, reinforcing the benefits that the region would realise if the neglected tropical disease was substantially controlled.

As the sweltering heat swept across Colombo in June, Seetha, a 60-year-old daily wageer found herself in the grips of dengue hemorrhagic fever, a severe and sometimes fatal form of the disease.

"I had a fever, body aches, and a relentless headache for four days before being admitted to the hospital. I was catheterised and not even allowed to go to the toilet," she told PTI.

Seetha's work involved providing care to a 5-year-old child until the mother returned from work. The onset of dengue, however, disrupted her livelihood.

"I was bedridden for seven days in the hospital, unable to move, and the impact on my work was severe. It took me almost a month to recover," she recalls.

As the sole breadwinner following her husband's death, Seetha faced a financial quandary during her illness.

"My children were not working and there was no money. My brother and another relative had to step in and provide us with financial support for survival," the woman explained.

Seetha's narrative underscores the broader economic challenges faced by South Asian countries that grapple with the relentless onslaught of dengue every year.

In 2023, India officially recorded nearly 95,000 cases and 91 deaths by September 17. In 2022, the figure was 2.33 lakh with 303 deaths.

Sri Lanka had reported more than 80,000 dengue cases by the first week of December last year and 47 deaths, according to the National Dengue Control Unit (NDCU).

Dr Nayani P Weerasinghe, a consultant microbiologist and senior lecturer at the University of Ruhuna in Galle, Sri Lanka, noted the economic burden of dengue in the two countries is substantial, with significant strains on health-care systems and families, especially those reliant on daily wages.

"Both agricultural and industrial sectors suffer due to the disabling nature of dengue and absenteeism from work, particularly in labour-intensive industries, adversely affecting productivity," Weerasinghe told PTI.

Echoing Weerasinghe, epidemiologist and economist Ramanan Laxminarayan noted that although dengue rarely kills, it causes significant health burdens and costs.

"When hospitalisation is required, it drives many families into poverty. I recently had a coworker in India suffering from dengue. Fortunately, he survived but the hospital bills were over Rs 14 lakh," Laxminarayan, founder and director of One Health Trust, told PTI.

Most people with dengue have mild or no symptoms and get better in up to two weeks. Symptoms include high fever, severe headache, muscle and joint pains, swollen glands, and rash.

However, severe symptoms such as shooting abdominal pain, bleeding gums or nose, and blood in vomit or stool, often come after the fever has gone, and can be fatal. What makes matters worse is that there are no effective drugs to treat the disease.

The economic impact of dengue is multifaceted.

A cost analysis study in southern Sri Lanka estimated direct medical costs per hospitalised dengue patient at USD 233.76 (around Rs 20,000) in 2017-18. For complications requiring intensive care arise, the cost soars to USD 733.46 (over Rs 61,000).

The burden extends beyond direct medical expenses to indirect costs, with households bearing 77.29 per cent of the monthly income on average, the expert said.

Weerasinghe also highlighted variations across South Asian countries, citing a systemic analysis in India which indicates a cost of USD 5.71 billion from 2013 to 2016, substantially higher than in Sri Lanka.

The direct costs were for seeking

medical care for the illness -- channelling fees, costs of laboratory investigations, medications, travel expenses for seeking medical care and for visiting the admitted family members, among others.

Direct household cost per patient was 16.29 USD, almost 4 per cent of a person's average monthly income in the island nation.

Indirect costs for the families affected by dengue resulted in absenteeism from work, thereby leading to loss of family income. People with informal employment and daily wage jobs are more likely to be affected by this, the experts said.

A considerable proportion of families in the South Asian region have only one member working. An average of 22 days of absenteeism from work has been reported due to dengue in the countries here, according to a 2019 study published in the journal International Journal of Infectious Diseases.

"When we add both direct and indirect costs to the household, it accounts for 77.29 per cent, which is almost three-fourths of the monthly household income in Sri Lanka," Weerasinghe said.

In Thailand, another South Asian country with high dengue prevalence, the economic impact of the disease is 600 million Baht (over Rs 138 crore) per year for just treatment, noted Darin Areechokchai, from the Bureau of Vector-Borne Diseases, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health.

"The epidemiology of the disease has changed and is now equal in both children and adults, so the economic impact in South Asia will be higher in the future than in the past," Areechokchai told PTI.

Weerasinghe warned of long-term consequences of dengue, especially in the case of pediatric infections leading to school absenteeism, potentially impacting future earnings.

"If people develop severe dengue, hospitalisation becomes unavoidable -- and that's where the expenses add up both for the individual and the healthcare system," said Neelika Malavige, DNDI's Head of Dengue Global Programme and Scientific Affairs, South Asia.

"However, the costs are huge even when patients are not hospitalised, as they have to visit their doctor daily if they are suspected to have dengue, as we don't have a test to find out who will develop plasma leakage leading to severe dengue and who will have mild symptoms," she told PTI.

As global changes in urbanisation, mobility, and climate contribute to the spread of dengue, Laxminarayan foresees an increased incidence of cases.

"Climate change increases the range for the main vector for dengue - Aedes aegypti. The expansion of water tanks and storage containers where this mosquito usually breeds is likely to increase dengue cases in coming years, expand the season during which the disease is transmitted, and cost us even more money," he explained.

To reduce the economic impact of dengue, experts say it is necessary to control the number of such cases, educate the general public, and implement policies for disease control.

Weerasinghe stressed the importance of preventive measures, including health education programmes and legal actions for environmental cleanliness.

International collaboration is deemed crucial for sharing knowledge and resources to address the economic burden effectively.

Studies are being conducted in South Asian countries on dengue, with the research teams providing information for the policymakers on effective control and effective management measures for the disease, Weerasinghe said.

For instance, the US, Australia, and even countries in Southeast Asian regions like Singapore have used Aedes mosquitoes with Wolbachia bacteria to successfully reduce the number of mosquitoes in regions with dengue epidemics.

Certain strains of Wolbachia can reduce the capacity of mosquito species to transmit diseases like dengue fever, either by directly inhibiting the pathogen or by shortening the mosquito's lifespan.

"Unfortunately, currently there's no drug that can prevent dengue from spiralling into a severe state. This is a gaping hole in research and development that we urgently need to fill," Neelika added.

As Seetha reflects on her harrowing experience, she admits, "I am very scared of getting dengue again."

"I can't imagine going through that again. It was terrible for the whole family," she added.

(Reporting for this story was supported by the MSF-DNDI Grant on Neglected Tropical Diseases as part of MSF's Without Borders Media Fellowship. The fellowship encourages independent, impartial, and neutral reporting on health and humanitarian crises.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Happiness is a state of mind

Definition of "happiness" varies from person to person. Common knowledge says happiness is a state of mind. Propagating and promoting global happiness on a large scale is of utmost importance, and world leaders are up to it. The then UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was convinced by special advisor Jayme Ilien to mark a day for happiness that culminated in the announcement of twentieth day of March as the Universal Happiness Day. Happiness encompasses a wide gamut of physical and mental emotions. A Finnish proverb has aptly put happiness as "something between too much and too little". No medicine can make a person happy since there is no panacea for happiness. What makes an individual contented perhaps is the key to happiness. Quite often we fail to count our happiness, and dwell on unhappiness, forgetting only a past unhappiness will make the present happiness sound real. Perhaps, the best definition of happiness is "not getting what you want but wanting what you get".

Dr Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

### Misconceptions on CAA

The recent discourse surrounding the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) warrants clarity amidst rampant misconceptions. Criticism from foreign entities, notably the United States, seems misguided and unwarranted. The CAA, a domestic legislation, aims to provide refuge to persecuted minorities from neighboring countries, aligning with India's humanitarian ethos. Contrary to misinterpretations, the CAA upholds constitutional principles, ensuring equality and protection for all, regardless of religion. It does not exclude Muslims from citizenship or alter existing immigration laws. Instead, it addresses a specific humanitarian concern without compromising India's secular fabric. Furthermore, assertions regarding the North East and the Assam Accord are unfounded. The CAA does not undermine indigenous rights or the integrity of the Accord. Rather, it addresses a distinct issue with a clear cut-off date, safeguarding India's borders while upholding humanitarian values.

Yash Pal Ralhan, Jalandhar

### Kudos to RCB

Kudos to Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) women cricket team for clinching their inaugural Women's Premier League (WPL) title, led by Smriti Mandhana. Defeating Delhi Capitals, they showcased remarkable poise, achieving what their male counterparts couldn't. Richa Ghosh's winning boundary secured not only RCB's maiden WPL victory but also their first-ever silverware. DC's falter in batting, despite Shafali Verma's explosive start, succumbing to RCB's spin quartet, led by Shreyanka Patil and Sophie Molineux, encapsulates RCB's dominance. Smriti Mandhana's leadership, coupled with individual accolades, underscores the burgeoning popularity and prowess of women's cricket. Congratulations to RCB Women for a well-deserved triumph!

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee, Faridabad

## Age, sex, location could be important to antibiotic resistance

Press Trust Of India

Age, sex and location could be important in assessing the antibiotic resistance of a bacterial infection, new research has found. Antibiotic, or antimicrobial, resistance is a global public health threat and occurs when disease-causing germs evolve and develop a resistance to the very drugs designed to kill them, rendering these drugs ineffective.

The research, led by those at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK, analysed data on bloodstream

infections of nearly 9.5 lakh individuals across 29 European countries. The data was collected through routine surveillance between 2015 and 2019.

The team looked at the bacterial species that were isolated and sent to the surveillance service, and the antibiotics that were used to treat these bloodstream or bacterial infections. The findings are published in the journal PLOS Medicine.

They observed that gender played a role in antimicrobial resistance, with men at a higher risk of developing it than

women.

The team also found that the participants' resistance to various bacterial species peaked at different stages of their lives, with the peaks related to most of these species being seen at the youngest and oldest ages.

For example, the superbug MRSA, responsible for many hard-to-treat infections in humans, becomes more resistant with increasing age of the host, whereas resistance of E. coli decreased with age, they said. E. coli can cause infections in the gut and digestive tract.

The Pseudomonas aerugi-

nosa - known to cause infections in mainly hospital patients - was found to be most likely to resist several antibiotics when the host is around 30 years old.

For women, the team found that the incidence of bloodstream infections due to E. coli peaked between ages 15 and 40.

The researchers said that even though antibiotic usage, changes in immunity, and exposure to high-risk settings are all linked to age and sex, little is known how resistance varies with age and sex.

"These findings highlight

important gaps in our knowledge of the epidemiology of antimicrobial resistance that are difficult to explain through known patterns of antibiotic exposure and healthcare contact," the authors wrote in their study.

"In order for us to address this growing threat to public health, we now need data from a wider range of sources to determine the contribution that cultural versus natural history differences have in driving these patterns globally and the role that they play in the increasing rates of AMR being seen," they wrote.



**BRIEF**

**Development agenda**



**New Delhi:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman met Asian Development Bank's new Vice-President (market solutions) Bhargav Dasgupta and discussed ways to further the development agenda. "Both exchanged views on how @ADB\_HQ may partner with India to further the development agenda. They also discussed harnessing ADB's convening power to crowd in other public and private sector institutions to participate in India's growth," the finance ministry said in a post on X. ADB in September 2023, appointed Dasgupta as VP for a period of three years. Prior to this, he was MD and CEO of ICICI Lombard General Insurance.

**EV chargers**

**Mumbai:** Adani Electricity Mumbai Ltd on Tuesday said it is looking to install 8,500 chargers for electric vehicles (EVs) across apartment blocks in the suburbs of the financial capital. The Adani group company said it has launched what it calls the "share charge" initiative, under which multiple vehicle owners can use the same charging infrastructure. Vehicle owners can schedule charging sessions, monitor usage, and pay directly through a mobile app as part of the initiative, as per a statement. Without sharing a timeline, the company said it is rolling out 8,500 chargers to be installed in 4,000 housing societies across suburban Mumbai.

**Vehicle scrapping**



**New Delhi:** Tata Motors on Tuesday said it has commissioned its fifth registered vehicle scrapping facility near the capital. Developed in partnership with Johar Motors, the registered vehicle scrapping facility (RVSF) has a capacity to safely disassemble 18,000 end-of-life vehicles annually, Tata Motors said in a statement. It is adept at scrapping passenger and commercial vehicles of all brands, the company added.

**Women hiring**

**Mumbai:** There has been a 5 percentage points increase in campus hiring of women in 2022-23, compared to the previous year as companies in India are keen on inclusivity and diversity in the workplace, a report said on Monday. In FY23, 40 per cent of the fresh talent hired from college campuses were women, up from 35 per cent in the previous year; AI-powered recruitment automation firm HirePro said in the report.

## India can sustain 8 pc growth, even higher: RBI bulletin

**Mumbai, Mar 19:**

India can sustain 8 per cent annual GDP growth and the conducive macroeconomic configuration may become a launching pad for a step-up in the country's growth trajectory, said an article on the 'State of Economy' in the central bank's March Bulletin published on Tuesday. Over the period 2021-24, gross domestic product (GDP) growth has averaged above 8 per cent. The global economy is losing steam, with growth slowing in some of the most resilient economies and high frequency indicators, pointing to further levelling in the period ahead, said the article authored by a team led by RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra. In India, real GDP growth was at a six-quarter high in the October-December

period of 2023-24, powered by strong momentum, robust indirect taxes, and lower subsidies. The high visibility of structural demand and healthier corporate and bank balance sheets will likely be the galvanising forces for growth going forward. "The world is confronted with large shifts in structure and sentiments, which are either underway or impending," it said. The article noted that the outlook is shrouded with layers of uncertainty, exacerbated by geopolitical and extreme weather risks as well as fragmenting forces. By contrast, it said the Indian economy is experiencing a conducive macroeconomic configuration that can be its launching pad for a step-up in its growth trajectory. "Over the period 2021-24, growth has averaged above 8 per cent; and the

underlying fundamentals indicate that this can be sustained and even built upon," the authors said. The current account deficit is modest, external buffers are resilient and fiscal consolidation is into its third consecutive year even as corporations are deleveraging and improving their debt servicing capacity. According to the article, balance sheets in the financial sector are sound and healthy, providing the wherewithal for intermediating the productive credit needs of a resurgent economy. "Financial markets are reflecting these favourable formations. Capital inflows have resumed strongly as investor interest floods back into India," it said. The authors further said technology is offering new growth opportunities to seize by becoming more competitive and efficient. "The time

has come to build world class infrastructure, strong manufacturing bases, a high-quality labour force and global leadership in services to convert these favourable factors into opportunities and strengths over the next few decades," they added. The article further said the aggregate demand in the third quarter of 2023-24 was investment-driven, with some indications of a revival of the private capex cycle. Capacity utilisation in several sectors has reached a point where there has to be new investments. "The current financial year will likely see the highest ever length of four-lane roads being constructed, along with the highest ever length of speed or access-controlled highways - on course to create a world-class road network by 2037," it said.

## I-T dept expands scope for filing appeals by tax officers, includes TDS disputes

**New Delhi, Mar 19:**

The CBDT has permitted income tax authorities to file appeals irrespective of monetary threshold in cases relating to TDS/TCS, undisclosed foreign income, or information received from investigating agencies like ED and GST Intelligence. Currently, tax authorities can file appeals before the ITAT, High Court and Supreme Court, if the disputed tax demand exceeds Rs 50 lakh, Rs 1 crore and Rs 2 crore respectively - a threshold fixed in 2019.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) in a circular dated March 15 said that the said monetary limits will not be applicable for filing appeals in cases where prosecution has been filed by the department in the relevant case, and trial is pending and conviction order has been passed and the same has not been compounded. Cases where the assessment is based on information with regard to an offence alleged to have been

committed under any other law and information received from law enforcement or intelligence agencies like CBI, ED, DRI, SFIO, NIA, NCB, Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI), and state law enforcement agencies, in such cases the appeals would be filed irrespective of the tax demand on the assessee.

The threshold would not apply to litigation arising out of disputes relating to TDS/TCS in domestic and international taxation, or disputes relating to the applicability of provisions of the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement. Taxmen would also have to file appeals irrespective of the tax demand in dispute in cases of undisclosed foreign income/assets/bank accounts.

About 2.7 crore direct tax demands totalling about Rs 35 lakh crore are being disputed at various foras. AKM Global, Tax Partner, Amit Maheshwari said the new circular has consoli-

dated various earlier circulars on the issue of monetary limits for filing of appeals. "CBDT has broadened the scope of exceptions which are now outside the scope of monetary threshold and on which department may file the appeals / SLP irrespective of the amount involved. Such exceptions although seem to be reasonable will add to the volume of appeals filed by the department in future," Maheshwari said.

The CBDT circular also clarified that an appeal should not be filed merely because the tax effect in a case exceeds the monetary limits prescribed by the CBDT. "Filing of appeals in such cases is to be decided on the merits of the case. The officers concerned should keep in mind the overall objective of reducing unnecessary litigation and providing certainty to taxpayers on their I-T assessments while taking a decision regarding filing an appeal," the CBDT said.

**NEW LAUNCH**



Samsung India, General Manager, Mobile Business, Akshay Rao interacts with the media during the launch of Samsung Galaxy A55 5G and Galaxy A35 5G smartphones, in Kolkata, Tuesday, March 19.

### Rupee declines 12 paise to close at 83.02 against US dollar

**Mumbai, Mar 19:**

The rupee depreciated 12 paise to 83.02 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, weighed down by a heavy selloff in domestic equities and persistent foreign capital outflows. Besides, a surging greenback against major crosses overseas also pulled down the other local currency, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.94 and touched the intra-day low of 83.05 and a high of 82.93. It finally settled at 83.02 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 12 paise from its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee dropped 4 paise to settle at 82.90 against the US dollar.

## Dalal Street investors become poorer by Rs 4.86 lakh cr as markets tumble

**New Delhi, Mar 19:**

A sharp plunge in the stock market made investors poorer by Rs 4.86 lakh crore on Tuesday, on a day when the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked over 700 points. The Sensex tumbled 736.37 points or 1.01 per cent to finish at 72,012.05. During the day, the benchmark fell by 815.07 points or 1.12 per cent to 71,933.35. Amid weak leads from equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms fell by Rs 4,86,777.98 crore to Rs 3,73,92,545.45 crore.

Following the BoJ's (Bank of Japan) decision to hike interest rates for the first time in 17 years, the Asian peers' mood turned sour, which pulled the Indian markets to continue its re-



cent pessimism, said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. "The correction in the domestic market has also been triggered by concerns over premium valuations and the delay of rate cuts by the US Fed due to hotter-than-expected inflation, which is evident from the upward trend in the dollar index. Investors are exercising

caution as they await the upcoming US Fed meeting, seeking indications on the potential timing of a reversal in the rate cycle," he added. From the Sensex basket, Tata Consultancy Services fell by 4.03 per cent as its promoter Tata Sons sold around 2.3 crore shares, or 0.65 per cent of equity stake, in the IT services major through block deals.

## Audi to drive in over 20 new models by 2025-end: CEO Gernot Dollner

**Ingolstadt, Mar 19:**

German automaker Audi plans to roll out over 20 new models by the end of 2025 across markets, Audi AG CEO Gernot Dollner said on Tuesday. The company also plans to electrify all core segments by 2027. The automaker has also lined up a capex of EUR 41 billion for the period between 2024-2028. Audi AG will invest EUR 11.5 billion in the development of ICE (internal combustion engine), PHEV (plug-in hybrid electric vehicle) and other segments and EUR 29.5 billion for BEV (battery electric vehicles) and digitisation. "The Audi Q6 e-tron is the start of an extensive product initiative that we will use to rejuvenate our port-



folio over the coming years," Dollner stated. He further said: "We are planning more than 20 new models in 2024 and 2025, including the presentation of the A6 e-tron in the summer of 2024 and the new generation of the A5 and Q5 as the first models on the new Premium Platform Combustion (PPC) in the second half of the year." The group is positioning itself for the future economi-

cally, technologically and strategically, and planning to put new products on the street one by one, he stated. Dollner said that despite the recent public debate, there is no doubt about the future of electric cars. "At Audi, we will electrify all core segments by 2027 and have defined a fully electric target portfolio," he stated. In addition, the transitional period will require starting off with highly efficient combustion-engine models and plug-in hybrids, Dollner stated. "The 50 per cent increase in electric vehicles delivered in 2023 confirms our path toward electric mobility," he added. Audi delivered 1.78 lakh electric vehicle units last year, a growth of 51 per cent as compared with 2022.

## HIL to acquire Topline for Rs 265 crore

**New Delhi, Mar 19:**

HIL Ltd, a part of the USD 2.9 billion CK Birla Group, has signed an agreement with Crestia Polytech for the acquisition of Topline, a popular brand of pipes and fittings in Eastern India along with Crestia's four wholly owned subsidiaries Topline Industries, Aditya Polytechnic, Aditya Industries and Sainath Polymers for Rs 265 crores. Crestia and its subsidiaries, with an estimated turnover of Rs 330 crore in FY 24, are strong players in the pipes, fittings and water tank sector with three flagship brands: Topline, Rockwell, and Soniplast.

This acquisition is a significant step towards HIL's commitment to further ac-



celerate its fast-growing Pipes & Fittings business in the estimated Rs 55,000 crore Indian PVC Pipes & Fittings market. With a complementary portfolio of products, technologies and market footprint, it will also help to significantly scale HIL's production capacity and nearly double its revenue.

Commenting on the acquisition, Avanti Birla said, "The agreement to acquire Topline perfectly



aligns with our ambition, and is part of our growth strategy for the Pipes & Fittings business at HIL. The combined synergies of the two organisations will broaden the product portfolio, manufacturing capacity and market reach for us. Our ambition is to be five times our current size in this category by 2026. The acquisition offers immense growth potential. It not only doubles our revenue but also im-

mediately enhances our production capacity three-fold, especially in the strategically important Eastern region. We also gain access to Topline's significant channel presence across 15 states, with the East being a stronghold. Significant government and private investments expected across infrastructure, construction, real estate and agriculture sectors ensures a place for HIL in a fast paced transformation journey. We are committed to delivering exceptional products and services to our customers." Akshat Seth, Managing Director, and CEO of HIL said, "The unique capabilities of Topline perfectly complement HIL's portfolio and opens new product segments and markets for us.

## Sensex tanks 736 pts, Nifty slides below 22K as BoJ rate hike stokes inflation concerns

**Mumbai, Mar 19:**

Benchmark Sensex tanked 736 points while Nifty fell below the 22,000 level on Tuesday following a sell-off in index majors TCS, Infosys and RIL and weak Asian trends as Japan's central bank hiked rates for the first time in 17 years. The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 736.37 points or 1.01 per cent to settle at more than a month's low of 72,012.05. As many as 23 Sensex shares declined while seven advanced. The index declined by 815.07 points or 1.12 per cent to slide below 72,000 at 71,933.35 in day trade. The broader NSE Nifty slumped 238.25 points or

1.08 per cent to settle at a month's low of 21,817.45. As many as 41 Nifty shares closed in the red while nine ended with gains. The key indices opened on a weak note amid losses in Asian markets as the Bank of Japan hiked interest rates for the first time in 17 years. Investors were also cautious ahead of the US Fed interest rate decision this week, analysts said. Sharp losses in TCS also dragged the indices to month's lows. Tata Consultancy Services tanked over 4 per cent as its promoter Tata Sons sold around 2.3 crore shares, or 0.65 per cent of equity stake, in the IT services major through block deals.

## Exporters need to follow new UK rules to avail duty benefits: DGFT

**New Delhi, Mar 18:**

Exporters seeking to avail duty concessions on shipments to the UK will have to adhere to the new British rules under the Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS). In a trade notice, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade said that the United Kingdom (UK) has replaced its existing origin declaration process under Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP) with the UK DCTS effective from June 19, 2023. The transition period for this change was extended until December 31, 2023. "Starting from January 1, 2024, onwards,

Indian exporters to the UK are required to adhere to the new rules under DCTS to avail concessions on their exports to the UK," the trade notice to the exporters community said. It added that goods that meet the UK DCTS Rules of Origin (RoO) requirements would be eligible to claim a concessional rate of import duty for exports to the UK. "Consequently, the origin criteria necessary for satisfying the Rules of Origin to avail tariff concessions on exports from India to the UK must be filled in through self-certification," it added. Accordingly, it said, Indian exporters are directed to use origin declaration

wording under DCTS scheme, in place of origin declaration wording under GSP. Certain labour-intensive sectors such as leather, carpets, chemicals, iron and steel and textiles were the major beneficiaries of the GSP scheme. The US, European Union (EU), Australia, Japan and many other developed countries grant unilateral import duty concessions to developing countries under their GSP schemes. As per estimates, India's exports worth USD 2.5 billion were entitled for the GSP benefit in the UK, and the UK have been negotiating a free trade agreement since January 13, 2021.

## 'Startups must adhere to self-regulating ecosystem'

**New Delhi, Mar 19:**

Indian startups must adhere to a self-regulating ecosystem to bring in transparency and ethical behaviour, G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant said while observing that chasing valuation at all costs sometimes leads to misgovernance. He also said that there should not be any regulatory intervention if India wants to create a vibrant startup movement as "government regulation stifles innovation". Speaking at the Startup Mahakumbh event, Kant said India has been able to create the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world, and the challenge



for the country is to make it the number one nation of startups in the world in the next five years. "Startups must adhere to a self-regulating ecosystem governance as this will bring in transparency, ethical behaviour in our startup ecosystem," he said.



## Storm causes chaos on Khairagarh-Kawardha state highway

**Residents rally to clear blocked highway**  
**Severe weather threatens agricultural crops**

**Khairagarh, Mar 19:**

The Khairagarh-Kawardha main state highway fell into disarray as heavy storms and rain, accompanied by hailstones, wreaked havoc in the region. A massive tree succumbed to the storm's fury, blocking the road near village Dhimrin Kuan, disrupting traffic flow along the main route from Khairagarh to Chhuikhadan.

Monday evening brought an abrupt change in weather conditions, unleashing a tempest that unleashed hailstones alongside rainfall. The calamitous weather event led to the downfall of a sizable tree near the Tekapar turn, effectively halting



movement along the state highway. Stranded passenger buses and private vehicles compounded the chaos until villagers and passers-by intervened to clear the obstruction, restoring traffic flow.

According to forecasts from the Meteorological Department, Monday witnessed thunderstorms and rainfall, exacerbating the already tumultuous conditions. Strong winds swept through the area, disrupting normal life and causing inconvenience to

pedestrians. The region has endured three consecutive days of intense winds and intermittent rainfall, leading to recurrent disruptions in the rural electricity supply, including in Khairagarh district headquarters.

Climate change looms as a significant factor, heightening the risk of extensive crop damage due to untimely rains, hailstorms, and storms. Rabi crops, green vegetables, and the currently flourishing mango crop have suf-

Due to the current weather fluctuations, there is a higher likelihood of damage to the gram and wheat crops in the fields, with ripe crops also facing potential harm. However, other crops are not expected to be affected by the changing weather conditions.

**Rajkumar Solanki, Assistant Director of Agriculture, KCG**

Greater damage to banana and papaya crops is anticipated due to the onslaught of storms, rain, and hail. Additionally, other seasonal crops are at risk of sustaining damage.

**Ravindra Mehra, Assistant Director of Horticulture, KCG**

ferred significant losses in the fields. Additionally, staple crops of the Khairagarh districts, such as banana, papaya, brinjal, and tomato, have incurred damage, posing a threat to the local agricultural economy.

## Collector convenes meeting with Nodal officers

**Comprehensive preparations ensured for smooth electoral process**

**Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi, Mar 19:** In a move to ensure seamless conduct of the Lok Sabha General Election 2024, Collector and District Returning Officer (DRO) Leena Kamlesh Mandavi spearheaded a crucial meeting with district-level nodal officers appointed for various election activities.

With the official announcement of the Lok Sabha elections, the Model Code of Conduct was implemented effective March 16. Highlighting the significance of this milestone, Collector Mandavi emphasized the importance of meticulous planning and execution to uphold the integrity of the electoral process.

Scheduled for the third



phase, voting in the district is slated for May 7, with vote counting set for June 4. In the convened meeting at the Arpa meeting room of the Collectorate, Collector issued directives to all nodal officers, urging them to fulfill their assigned re-

sponsibilities with utmost diligence.

Key areas discussed included arrangements for election staff, training programs, electoral rolls, availability of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail

(VVPAT) devices, route planning, voting materials, law and order, vehicular logistics, control room operations, Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) activities, web-casting, ballot printing, and vote counting procedures.

Additionally, instructions were provided to officers overseeing arrangements such as barricading, electricity, provision of drinking water, medical facilities, fire brigade services, videography, and other essential logistical support.

Present at the meeting were Additional Collector Namrata Anand Dongre, District Nodal Officer for Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) KP Tendulkar, Joint Collector Dileram Dahire, SDM Pendra road Amit Beck, and officers in charge of various election-related activities.

## SVEEP core committee strategizes awareness campaign

**Sukma, Mar 19:**

In a concerted effort to bolster voter participation and awareness ahead of the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, the District Level Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) Core Committee convened a crucial meeting at the District Panchayat, chaired by Chief Executive Officer and Nodal Officer for SVEEP, Laxman Tiwari.

Highlighting the significance of the Voting Awareness Campaign, Tiwari underscored the importance of engaging voters through a series of activities aimed at achieving a 100% voter turnout and empowering citizens to exercise their franchise effectively.

During the meeting,



detailed action plans were deliberated upon to educate and raise awareness among voters regarding the electoral process. Tiwari directed the formulation of a comprehensive roster for organizing sweep activities across various levels, including gram panchayat, cluster level, development block, and district levels, targeting specific

groups within the electorate.

Deputy Director of Social Welfare and Assistant Nodal Officer for SVEEP, Sanjay Pandey, along with members of the core committee, actively participated in the discussions, contributing to the formulation of effective strategies to enhance voter education and participation.

## District Resource Person Narendra Singh inspects literacy centers

**Kawardha, Mar 19:**

District Resource Person Narendra Singh Rajput spearheaded the inspection of literacy examination centers as part of the Navbharat Literacy Program Exam Campaign, organized statewide on March 17. The initiative aimed to encourage individuals to learn alphabets and numbers, fostering literacy and education across the region.

Rajput conducted thorough inspections of various examination centers in the Vananchal area, including Rengkhari, ensuring adherence to program guidelines and assessing candidate participation.

At Kanya Ashram, Barendia, and Saraipatera, 20 candidates each participated in the Pariksha Maha Abhiyan. Meanwhile, Khamaria and Bhatola saw the attendance of 15 candi-

dates each, while Seoni Khurd had 13 participants. Similarly, Usarwahi and Ghani Ghuta recorded 10 candidates each, with Karmada witnessing the highest turnout of 20 candidates. Additionally, Niwaspur had 12 candidates present for the examination.

Emphasizing the importance of gathering necessary information for the successful implementation of the Navbharat Literacy Program, Rajput provided guidance to candidates and urged remaining illiterates to participate in upcoming examinations scheduled for September.

Accompanying Rajput in the inspection were Sankul Coordinator Sahadur Talware and teacher Tilesh Kumar Sahu, underscoring the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders in advancing the cause of literacy and education in the community.

## Free health checkup camp at Mother's Pride School

**Arang, Mar 19:**

Mother's Pride School in Arang hosted a commendable initiative aimed at promoting community health, as a free disease consultation and physiotherapy camp unfolded under the collaborative efforts of Blue Bird Children's Hospital, Raipur, and the Indian Association of Physiotherapist Women's Cell, Chhattisgarh.

The event witnessed the participation of over 150 individuals, who availed themselves of the comprehensive health services provided. Leading the charge were esteemed medical professionals from Blue Bird Hospital, including Dr. Omkar Khandwal (HOD Medicine, Mekahara) and Dr. Alok Agarwal



(Intensive Care Specialist), alongside physiotherapists Dr. Manish Agarwal, Dr. Madhura Dewangan, and Dr. Neha Agarwal. Their expertise and dedication ensured the delivery of high-quality healthcare to all attendees.

The camp also welcomed Dr. Akhilesh Sahu (I.A.P. State Secretary) and Dr. Garima Tiwari (I.A.P. Women Cell State Head), who lent their support and guidance to the proceed-

ings. Following consultations, free medications were distributed to patients, ensuring that they received comprehensive care without any financial burden.

Girija Dhruv Narayan Shukla from Mother's Pride School actively participated in organizing and facilitating the camp, reflecting the school's commitment to community welfare and healthcare advocacy.

## CPMG explores Malhar's rich legacy

**Masturi, Mar 19:**

Chief Post Master General (CPMG) Veena Srinivas embarked on an enchanting journey to Malhar, a village brimming with history and heritage. With over 160 years of experience in the Indian Postal Department of the Government of India, Srinivas has traversed countless historical, religious, and archaeological sites across the nation. Known for its rich architectural heritage, Malhar was particularly intrigued by Malhar's renowned temple statues and architecture, despite being from the Southern region famed for its tem-



ple craftsmanship. During her visit, Srinivas inspected the Malhar branch post office and embarked on a captivating tour of the city, guided by Sanjeev Pandey, President of Malhar Vikas

Manch. Pandey provided detailed insights into the museum's treasures, including copper plates, inscriptions, currency, and statues, leaving Srinivas impressed with the cultural wealth preserved in

Malhar. Srinivas commended Branch Postmaster Rajesh Pandey for his exemplary work and expressed her intention to honour him with a certificate. Accompanied by Pandey, she explored Malhar's iconic landmarks, including the Bhim Keechak Temple, Pataleshwar Temple, and the revered Didineshwari Devi Temple and Museum, gaining deeper insights into the village's rich heritage.

Expressing her delight, Srinivas lauded Malhar's recent achievements, including its designation as an insurance village and Newari's recognition as a

complete Sukanya Samridhi Yojana village, showcasing the village's progress. Veena Srinivas and her husband also participated in the night aarti ceremony at the Malhar Vasni Mata Rani Didineshwari Devi temple, experiencing firsthand the village's spiritual essence and community warmth. The presence of local dignitaries, including Branch Postmaster Rajesh Pandey, Assistant Postmaster Raja Mahilange, and Nagar Panchayat President Anil Kevat, highlighted the significance of Srinivas's visit in fostering local connections and cultural appreciation.

## Action taken on 12,437 cases under property defacement

**Korba, Mar 19:** With the code of conduct becoming effective, Collector and District Election Officer Ajit Vasant had given instructions to take action under the Defacement of Property Act and during this as soon as instructions were received to remove publicity materials, teams became active in urban and rural areas and. MCC official Vikas Chaudhary said that 3435 wall writings, 1608 posters, 934 banners and others under a total of 8808 cases were removed. Similarly, wall writing under private property defacement, 1506 posters 419, banners 526 and others 1178 total 3629 cases were removed. Property proceedings under defacement continues and action is being taken by the team under the elections under LS 2024.

## SP conducts inspection of Check-post



**Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi, Mar 19:** Superintendent of Police Bhavna Gupta did static surveillance, border inspection of check post here and gave instructions for doing videography while checking vehicles, here in the district Static Surveillance Check-post Kabir Chabutra and Joint Check-post (Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh). Gupta asked the employees pres-

ent on duty about their well-being and their stay and took information about arrangements etc. In order to maintain transparency, videography has been done as per the instructions of the Election Commission and also instructions were given by the SP to take necessary instructions for making entries in the record register of the vehicles to be checked.

## Legacy of Charity: Maniyara Bai's Educational Vision

**Generosity Ignites Educational Enlightenment in Arang**

**Arang, Mar 19:**

The spirit of charity has long been embedded in the fabric of Arang, where acts of benevolence have adorned its history since ancient times. Among the illustrious examples stands Maniyara Bai Lodhi, a beacon of philanthropy whose legacy continues to inspire.

Hailing from Lodhi Para Arang, Maniyara Bai Lodhi embarked on a noble mission to immortalize the memory of her beloved son, Badri Prasad Lodhi, who tragically passed away at a young age in 1964. Determined to honour his legacy, she proposed the es-



tablishment of a temple, but community leaders recognized the need for higher education in the region. Thus, the vision for Badri Prasad Lodhi Government Post Graduate College was born.

In a remarkable display of generosity, Maniyara Bai donated all her possessions, including 40 acres of land, two houses, and a barn, to initiate the col-

lege's construction. The college commenced its journey in 1965 with humble beginnings, housed in three small rooms within the Government Basic School, Arang, welcoming 35 eager students.

Over the years, through tireless efforts and further contributions, including the sale of land for infrastructure development, the college flourished. In

1970, its own building was erected on approximately 3 acres and 65 decimal land, symbolizing the fruition of Maniyara Bai's vision. Funds generously donated by Hardev Lal Lodhi Samaj Parishad facilitated the establishment of a library within the college premises.

The transformational impact of Maniyara Bai's philanthropy was recognized in 1983 when the college attained government status, expanding its academic offerings to include faculties of Arts, Commerce, and later, Science. Today, Badri Prasad Lodhi Government Post Graduate College stands as a testament to her unwavering commitment to education, illuminating the minds of countless students in Arang and beyond.

## Training of employees involved in static team, flying squads commences

**For Lok Sabha Elections 2024**

**Korba, Mar 19:**

Under the direction of Collector and District Election Officer Ajit Vasant for the Lok Sabha elections 2024, training was conducted for the officers and employees involved in the elections. Master Trainer Dr. MM Joshi in the presence of Additional Collector Shrikant Verma of the static monitoring team gave the training.

During the training it was told that each team would have one magistrate and three or four police personnel and there will be those who will be working at the check post and check posts will be con-



structed to stop illegal liquor, bribery items or weapons in its area. Movement of cash, arms and ammunition and movement of anti-social elements will also be kept an eye on and the entire process of investigation will be videographed.

Daily activity report in the format and copy of the same to RO, DEO and Expenditure Observer, General Observer and Nodal Officer of Police Headquarters will review all such reports of the district and will compile and send it to the Commission

through fax/e-mail on the same day, simultaneously and a copy of the same will also be sent to the Chief Electoral Officer of the state.

Same way static and flying teams will remain active in C-VIGIL and ESMS app. its basis, but will take further action, carrying out the entire investigation process by static monitoring teams and this will be done in the presence of a magistrate and will be videographed by the magistrate and entry will be made in the ESMS app and the information will be received by the concerned nodal officer. During the election, all officers and employees will be required to work as per the guidelines of the Election Commission.



## Hasaranga set to miss SRH's first three IPL fixtures



Colombo, Mar 19 (PTI):

All-rounder Wanindu Hasaranga is set to miss at least the first three IPL matches for Sunrisers Hyderabad after he was named in the Sri Lanka squad for a two-Test series against Bangladesh starting March 22.

Hasaranga has played four Tests for Sri Lanka. He had announced his retirement from the longest format in August last year to focus on white-ball cricket.

However, the 26-year-old was named in Sri Lanka's 17-man squad on Tuesday along with uncapped spinner Nishan Peiris. The first Test will be played in Sylhet

from March 22-26, while the second tie is slated for March 30 to April 3 at Chattogram. Hasaranga was roped in by SRH at his base price of Rs 1.5 crore.

As per the IPL schedule announced for the first two weeks, SRH will take on Kolkata Knight Riders on March 23 in Kolkata. They will travel to Hyderabad for the tie against Mumbai Indians on March 27 and then proceed to Ahmedabad for the game against Gujarat Titans on March 31. It remains to be seen if the right-arm spinner will be available for SRH's home fixture against Chennai Super Kings on April 5.

# WPL title is one thing, but what Kohli has achieved for India is remarkable: Mandhana

New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):

RCB skipper Smriti Mandhana feels it's not right for people to undermine Virat Kohli's achievements for the Bengaluru franchise in the wake of her side's Women's Premier League title triumph here recently.

The Mandhana-led RCB defeated Delhi Capitals to lift the WPL trophy in only their second year, while their male counterparts, led by the charismatic Kohli for nearly a decade before he stepped down, haven't had success in the 16 years of IPL.

"The title is one thing, but what he (Kohli) has achieved for India is remarkable. So, I don't think that comparison is right in terms of where my career is and what he has already achieved," Mandhana told the media on Tuesday.

"The reason why I do not like the comparison is that what he has achieved is great; he has been an inspirational person. A title does not define a lot of things; we all respect him and I feel like the respect has to be right up there for



Virat. So, there is nothing different from me as well," said the India vice-captain.

Both Mandhana and Kohli wear No. 18 jerseys and the left-handed batter said drawing comparison between the two based on that was unwarranted.

"I would not term it as an 18 comparison. The jersey number is just a personal choice; my birth date is 18th and I have 18

men's team has also played good cricket in the last 16 years; it is not like they have not played well. I don't think the comparison is right. RCB is a franchise; let's treat the men's and women's teams separately because we don't want to be compared.

"They are good at what they do. We are good at what we do," she added.

On how she scripted the team's super spell, where RCB grabbed nine Delhi Capitals wickets for just 43 runs, Mandhana said Sophie Molineux taking three wickets after the strategic timeout was the turning point.

"Especially that over after that strategic timeout when Sophie got those three wickets, that was pretty much the turning point. It was good to watch the way they (spinners) planned and executed. I think that was good to watch."

Mandhana praised the 'one tribe' culture in the side, saying it was something that each one in the group has adhered to and tried to build on in the last two years.

## Peaking at right time, holding nerves in big moments helped us win WPL: Perry

New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):

Staying calm and composed in the most high-pressure moments and peaking at the right time helped Royal Challengers Bangalore win their maiden title at the Women's Premier League (WPL), said star Australian all-rounder Ellyse Perry.

RCB beat Delhi Capitals by 8 wickets in the summit clash to claim the title on Sunday.

The 33-year-old Perry emerged as the star performer for RCB as she ended the tournament as leading run-scorer with 347 and also recorded the best bowling figures in WPL history taking 6 wickets against Mumbai Indians in their last league game.

"We've had a great time together, franchise cricket is one of those where there is a small window in time and things have to come together for the group and the individuals," Perry, who scored a vital 35 not out in the final, told PTI in an interview. "Fortunately for us, we peaked at the right time, we played our best cricket in the backend, we held our nerves and stayed nice and calm in big moments and beat the other best teams in the



competition to win the trophy." RCB had started WPL 2024 with back-to-back wins but lost a bit of momentum in the middle before roaring back to form in the nick of time, winning their must-win last league match, the Eliminator and the final.

Perry hoped the maiden win will lay a strong foundation for the young and inexperienced players of the side. "Hopefully we are building a really strong foundation platform for some sustained success," said the four-time T20 World Cup winner. "We have got a really great group of girls, pretty similar to last year, obviously a few different tweaks and things like that. It is a group that really wants to play for one another."

## Perth to host India's first Test against Australia in November

Melbourne, Mar 19 (PTI):

Perth is set to host the opening Test of the five-match series during the much-anticipated India's tour of Australia later this year. According to a report in 'Sydney Morning Herald', Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney have also been picked as the venues for the blockbuster series.

"Adelaide will host the second Test and Brisbane the third, with the Boxing Day and New Year's Tests keeping their traditional time slots in Melbourne and Sydney," the report said. The Adelaide Test will be a day-night affair. Cricket Australia is yet to come out with its schedule for the next season but a final announcement is expected by the end of this month.

The series is likely to start in late November this year. It will be the first time India will play a five-match series in Australia since the 1991-92 tour, which the hosts won 4-0. In the past four series between the two teams, India have won on all four occasions, including back-to-back Test series wins in 2018-19 and 2020-21.

## Suryakumar certain to miss MIs' season opener in IPL 2024



Mumbai, Mar 19 (PTI):

Star batter Suryakumar

Yadav is certain to miss Mumbai Indians' IPL opener against Gujarat

Titans on March 24 as he is yet to get fitness clearance from the National Cricket Academy (NCA).

The world No 1 T20 batter Suryakumar has been stationed at the NCA in Bengaluru for his recovery and rehabilitation following a surgery for sports hernia.

Suryakumar, who has been out of action since December, had a fitness test at the NCA on Tuesday but PTI understands that the 33-year-old needs "further assessment".

His participation in the subsequent matches for Mumbai Indians against Sunrisers Hyderabad on March 27, Rajasthan Royals on April 1 and Delhi Capitals on April 7 would be determined at a later stage.

Suryakumar on Tuesday posted a cryptic message on his Instagram page conveying a heart-break.

Mumbai Indians, meanwhile, are occupied with closed-door practice games here at the Wankhede Stadium.

## Aus postpones T20 series against Afghanistan

Over deteriorating conditions for women

Sydney, Mar 19 (PTI):

Cricket Australia on Tuesday postponed a three-match T20 International home series against Afghanistan's men's team in August this year, citing the "worsening" conditions for women and girls in that country.

The Taliban, following its return to power in Afghanistan, has imposed restrictions on girls attending high schools, barred women from universities and stopped female Afghan aid staff from working.

CA's decision to postpone the upcoming series is the continuation of its tough stand on the south Asian country. CA had cancelled a one-off Test against Afghanistan in Hobart in November 2021, following which they also postponed a three-match ODI series in the UAE.

"Over the past twelve months, CA has continued to consult with the Australian Government on the situation in Afghanistan. The government's advice is that conditions for women and girls in Afghanistan are getting worse," read a statement from CA.

## Rohit backed Hardik, Bumrah to hilt: Parthiv



Mumbai, Mar 19 (PTI):

Former cricketer Parthiv Patel said on Tuesday that Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah had got the full backing of Rohit Sharma when they were struggling in the early part of their IPL stints at Mumbai Indians.

Parthiv compared Rohit's leadership with CSK talisman MS Dhoni, saying the Mumbai cricketer never "made a blunder", while the Chennai captain had erred on a few occasions during his long IPL stint. "I think the most

important thing is that he (Rohit) supports his players. The best examples of this are Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah. Bumrah came into the MI set up in 2014 and by 2015, his performance wasn't great," Parthiv told Jio Cinema on Tuesday.

"They even pondered sending him back after half the season. But Rohit Sharma believed in his ability and from 2016 onwards, his performance has been excellent," added the former India wicket-keeper, who played 25 Tests.

Bumrah, who came into the MI setup in 2014, has gone on to become the country's go-to pacer in all three formats and played a pivotal role in Mumbai's success in IPL.

Pandya, after becoming a part of the five-time champions in 2015, went on to lead Gujarat Titans to the IPL title in 2022 and is now back as MI skipper, replacing Rohit.

"Same with Hardik Pandya. He came in 2015 and became popular. His 2016 season wasn't great but MI stuck with him and Pandya became the player he is today."

He added that Rohit brings a sense of calm to the side, which is unmatched. "The best example is the two IPLs MI won by just one run each. That would not have been possible if you don't have a captain who can stay calm on the ground."

"When there's a tense match, sometimes wrong decisions or blunders are made. But the hallmark of Rohit Sharma's captaincy is that in the last 10 years, you don't remember that he made a blunder."

## Sumit Nagal wins on Miami Open debut



New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):

Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal showed great composure on way to a straight-set win over Canada's Gabriel Diallo to make a bright start on his debut at the Miami Open here.

The 26-year-old, playing the first-round qualifier match, kept his nerves in the crucial stages to outwit the 6 feet 8 inches tall Canadian Diallo 7-6(3) 6-2 on Monday.

Nagal, who had broken into the world's top-100 last month after winning the Chennai Open, will face Coleman Wong next.

Nagal won the tie-breaker in the first set after saving a break point in the seventh game, while he dominated the second set, breaking Diallo in the first and seventh game.

He is likely to reach a new career-high ranking of world No. 92 after this win. In his last tournament, Nagal had lost to Milos Raonic at the Indian Wells after qualifying for the main draw following the last-minute withdrawal of Rafael Nadal.

Nagal had created quite a flutter in January when he advanced to the second round of the Australian Open. That effort had played a big part in launching him into the top-100 of the ATP rankings.

# WPL looking to push boundaries, literally

Bengaluru, Mar 19 (PTI):

Shafali Verma shimmed down the track and deposited off-spinner Ashleigh Gardner's slotball on the off-stump 91 metres over wide long-on for a six, the longest of this year's Women's Premier League.

That nearly 20 seconds of explosive moment underlined the fast-evolving landscape of women's cricket - the increasing infiltration of power and fitness.

But it has also accentuated the talk about the possibility of stretching the boundary perimeter similar to that in men's cricket.

"Yeah, we have seen some big sixes getting hit this year in the WPL, and a lot of chat is going on about pushing back the boundary lines (in the tournament). The increasing power limit of players is obvious, thanks to their



focus on fitness. "But for that (increasing the length of boundary), detailed discussion with players, coaches etc is needed as ultimately, they have the biggest say in matters related to playing conditions," a BCCI official told PTI on condition of anonymity. Irrespective of the future course of action, there is a lot of merit in the argument to standardise the boundary size

in women's and men's cricket, considering the players' increasing ability to clear the ropes. The WPL 2023 saw a total of 159 sixes, whereas there were 168 maximums a year later and Indian batters biffed 98 of them. Former India player Mamtha Maben gave an explanation. "What I have seen is the step-up by domestic (Indian) players in terms of fitness and

power. It reflected in their batting and fielding. I saw a few of them hammering big sixes. "There is some more road to travel but there is a marked improvement from last year to this year in their performance, regardless of the boundary size," Maben, now a consultant with Namibia women's cricket team, told PTI. A deep dive into the dimensions of the M

Chinnaswamy Stadium and Arun Jaitley Stadium, venues where WPL 2024 was played, is necessary to see the finer points.

The normal boundary lengths at the Chinnaswamy, where the first part of this iteration of WPL was held, are 64-63m on the square of the wicket, 76-68m in the 'V' towards the media box while 56m on either flank behind the wicketkeeper.

But during the WPL, the shortest boundary mark was shrunk to 47 metres, and it had made the task of captains harder as batters comfortably cleared that distance. It became doubly difficult to contain left-handers when they batted from that end as even a small dab or tuck could make the ball race to the fence on the quick Bengaluru outfield. Delhi Capitals captain Meg Lanning stressed on that

point. "It is a nightmare having a 40-metre boundary on one side. That is one thing I haven't necessarily enjoyed as a captain. "We could look at potentially having slightly bigger boundaries. If it is even all the way around, that makes sense," Lanning had said ahead of the WPL final against Royal Challengers Bangalore. But the scenario saw a slight improvement during the title clash at the Arun Jaitley Stadium as the use of pitch No. 5 ensured a rather equal allocation of distance. The square boundaries measured 55 metres, while the 'V' in front of the wicket had a length of 65 metres. The 'V' behind the square was the shortest at 49 metres, and RCB captain Smriti Mandhana admitted that planning became easier on grounds with uniform boundary size.



## UDDHAV TO BJP

# 'Disclose details of funds received through electoral bonds'

**Yavatmal, Mar 19 (PTD):**

Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday targeted the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over electoral bonds scheme, and dared it to disclose the details of funds it received through this exercise.

He was addressing a public meeting at Umarkhed in Maharashtra's Yavatmal district. "BJP should declare the funds it collected under the electoral bonds scheme. My party Shiv Sena (UBT) will also declare the funds. Shiv Sena (UBT) also got electoral bonds, but it did not receive these donations by scaring the donors of the Enforcement Directorate or through grant of favours to them,"

Thackeray said. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday said he was mocked for his 2019 assembly poll campaign punchline "I will be back" but asserted he returned to power after breaking two parties, a reference to the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena and Sharad Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

Referring to it during his address, Thackeray said, "See what kind of worthless thinking they have. He (Fadnavis) should be put behind bars for robbing other peoples' property and showing it as their own wealth."

"This proves that Eknath Shinde and others left Shiv Sena not because they felt Uddhav

Thackeray went away from the ideology of Shiv Sena chief Balasaheb Thackeray. It is not like that...They went because Fadnavis took them away from Shiv Sena," Thackeray said.

The Shiv Sena split in June 2022 after Eknath Shinde rebelled along with several MLAs, while the NCP broke into two factions in July last year after Ajit Pawar joined the ruling alliance in the state.

Last week, the RSS presented an annual report, wherein it alleged that attempts to spread anarchy under the pretext of farmers' agitation have been restarted.

Speaking on that, Thackeray said, "It means they do not want to give minimum support price (MSP) to farmers, not

waive their loans and decide import-export policy as per the wish of the government and suggestions of the industrialist friends." "If farmers hit the streets to agitate for their rights and justice, then they are tagged as separatists and those spreading anarchy. If you call farmers as separatists and anarchists, if they ask for justice then what kind of Hindutva do you follow? I do not give any value to this kind of Hindutva and I do not approve of it," he added.

Thackeray also took a dig at the BJP over its 'Mera Parivar' campaign launched ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, and asked whether farmers were not part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'parivar' (family).

# Matua body asks members not to apply under CAA

**Till formation of new govt**

**Kolkata, Mar 19 (PTI):**

The Matua community's initial jubilation over the implementation of CAA has been dampened as its key organisation advised its members not to apply for citizenship under the new law for now as many of them do not have documents required to prove their previous residential address in Bangladesh.

The All India Matua Mahasangha has asked its members to apply for Indian citizenship only after the formation of a new government at the Centre. Matuas, originally from East Pakistan, are a weaker section of Hindus who migrated to India during the Partition and after the creation of Bangladesh following religious persecution.

Rules of the CAA were notified last week, and the government will now start granting Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants --

## CAUGHT IN CATCH-22



Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and Christians -- from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan who arrived in India before December 31, 2014. All India Matua Mahasangha general secretary Mahitosh Baidya said a communication has been sent to all the members of the community "not to file applications for citizenship till the formation of the next government". The Centre has launched a portal for applying for citizenship under the CAA.

"After the rules were framed, several members of the Matua community

tried to fill up online applications. But they faced problems since while filling up column 5, they have been asked to fill it with address proof or documents related to their residence in Bangladesh," Baidya told PTI.

Baidya highlighted that the Matuas face a catch-22 situation, as the majority either arrived without documents from Bangladesh or discarded them after obtaining some in India. "They destroyed the old documents after managing voter cards and Aadhaar cards here since it is dangerous for a person to carry documents from two

countries. If caught, they would be booked under the Foreigners Act," Baidya, who belonged to the Shantanu Thakur faction of the Matua Mahasangha, said.

The All India Matua Mahasangha, the largest Matua organisation in the country, is currently split into two factions one led by BJP MP and Union minister Shantanu Thakur and the other by TMC's Rajya Sabha MP Mamata Bala Thakur.

BJP MLA from Matua-dominated Haringhata seat Asim Sarkar also said that the community members have been advised to wait till the formation of the "third term of the BJP government" and simplification of the CAA rules.

"We have informed our top leadership both in the government and the party about the problems the Matuas are facing as the portal is asking for documents proving that they are from Bangladesh. We have asked the community members not to panic and wait for the government formation," he told PTI.

# Colonel-rank officer from Corps of Signals heads STEAG

**New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):**

Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group (STEAG), an elite unit of the Indian Army recently raised in Delhi, is headed by a Colonel-rank officer from the Corps of Signals, with a primary aim to enhance the communication infrastructure of the force, officials on Tuesday said.

This unit, with a strength of nearly 280 personnel, will undertake research and evaluation of futuristic communication technologies like 6G, artificial intelligence, machine learning and quantum computing for defence applications in view of the changing nature of the field.

"The primary aim is to enhance the communication infrastructure of the Indian Army," a senior official said.

This group will be operational under the Signals Directorate and is based in

Delhi. It is headed by a Colonel rank officer of the Army from the Corps of Signals, he said.

STEAG is mandated to nurture technologies spanning the complete spectrum of wired and wireless systems, officials earlier said.

The setting up of STEAG is part of the Army's efforts to develop technologies considering the future battlefield, they said.

"However, it is not a new raising, but 21 Signals Group has been reorganised with fresh mandate as Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group (STEAG) to adapt to the emerging technologies in the field of communications," the senior official said.

This unit is in line with the Army's vision of 'On Path to Transformation' in "adopting niche technologies towards becoming a future ready force," he

added.

STEAG proves to be one of the significant steps of 2024, which is declared as 'Year of Tech Absorption', the Army official asserted.

It seeks to harness the latest and also niche technologies "available in civil street and worldwide". This group analyses the existing technologies keeping the requirements of the Indian Army in mind and draw out use cases for trials or induction, officials said.

Accordingly, it interfaces with private companies, industry, academia to develop technology as suited to the Army, they said.

Army Chief General Manoj Pande has been highlighting the need for acquiring new technologies by the force in view of the changing nature of warfare.

The Army believes communications are going to be an important component of military operations.

## Holy relics of Lord Buddha to return home

**After 26-day exposition in Thailand**

**New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):** Some of the holy relics of Lord Buddha along with those of his disciples Arahata Sariputra and Arahata Maudgalayana are scheduled to return to India on Tuesday evening after being displayed at various locations in Thailand as part of a 26-day exposition. These relics, revered by the Buddhist followers around the world, were ferried in a special Indian Air Force aircraft, befitting the status as a 'State Guest' on February 22. The relics would be arriving at Air Force Station, Palam, here this evening. Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture Meenakshi Lekhi "will receive the relics in a humble ceremony" marking their return home, a senior official said.

year, the counsel representing the company had assured the court that "henceforth there shall not be any violation of any law(s), especially relating to advertising or branding of products manufactured and marketed by it and, further, that no casual statements claiming medicinal efficacy or against any system of medicine will be released to the media in any form".

The top court is hearing a plea of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) alleging a smear campaign by Ramdev against the Covid vaccination drive and modern system of medicine.

At the outset, the bench sought to know why have Patanjali and Balkrishna not filed their replies to notice issued in the contempt proceedings.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing Patanjali and Balkrishna, said he has had some discussions with his client on the issue.

# Ramdev summoned by SC over Patanjali ads

**New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):**

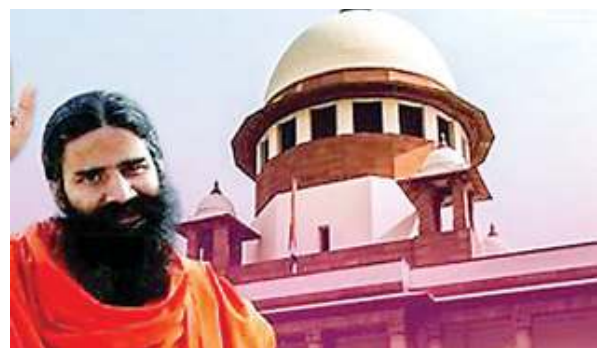
The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed yoga guru Ramdev and Managing Director of Patanjali Ayurved Acharya Balkrishna to appear before it after taking exception to the company's failure to respond to notice issued in the contempt proceedings relating to advertisements of the firm's products and their medicinal efficacy.

The apex court said it deemed appropriate to issue a show cause notice to Ramdev as the advertisements issued by Patanjali, which were in the teeth of the undertaking given to the court on November 21, 2023, reflect an endorsement by him.

A bench of justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah noted that Patanjali Ayurved, a company co-founded by Ramdev and dealing in herbal products, and Balkrishna have not filed replies to the notices issued earlier to show cause why contempt proceedings be not initiated against them for prima facie violating the undertaking given to the court.

The court directed them to personally appear before it at the next hearing.

"In view of the facts and circumstances, it is deemed appropriate to direct the presence of the managing director of respondent no. 5 on the next



date of hearing.

"Further, having gone through the advertisements issued by respondent 5 (Patanjali Ayurved) in the teeth of the undertaking given to this court on November 21, 2023 and on noticing that the said advertisements reflect an endorsement thereof by Acharya Ramdev, it is deemed appropriate to issue notice to show cause as to why contempt of court proceedings be not initiated against him in view of the fact that this court is of the prima facie opinion that he has also violated the provisions of section 3 and 4 of the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act," it said.

Section 3 of the Act refers to prohibition of advertisement of certain drugs for treatment of certain diseases and disorders and Section 4 of the Act refers to prohibition of misleading advertisements relating to drugs.

On November 21 last

# SC allows Sharad Pawar faction to use 'Nationalist Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar' name

**For LS polls**

**New Delhi, Mar 19 (PTI):**

The Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed the Sharad Pawar faction to use 'Nationalist Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar' as its name for the upcoming Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in the country.

A bench of Justices

Surya Kant and KV Viswanathan also permitted the NCP bloc led by the veteran politician to use as its symbol 'man blowing turha' (a traditional trumpet also known as tutari).

The bench passed the order on a plea by the Sharad Pawar group seeking to restrain the Ajit Pawar faction from using the 'clock' symbol for the polls, as allotted by the

Election Commission, on the ground that it is disrupting the level playing field. The NCP, founded by Sharad Pawar, had 'clock' as its election symbol before its split. The symbol is now with the Ajit Pawar faction. The bench directed the Election Commission and State Election Commission (SEC) to recognise the 'Nationalist Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar' and

its symbol 'man blowing turha'. It also asked the EC to not allot the 'man blowing turha' symbol to any other party or an independent candidate. It asked the Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar-led faction to issue a public notice in newspapers in English, Hindi and Marathi saying that the 'clock' symbol is sub-judice and its use is subject to adjudication.

## Be cautious while scanning QR codes to make payments. Be alert of online loan apps and quick-win lottery schemes.

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- While making payments using QR codes, confirm the name on the screen
- Never download Lending Apps from unknown sources
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**For more details, visit <https://rbikehtahai.rbi.org.in/dp>**

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