



BRIEF



A physically challenged girl reacts during Holi celebrations at the Society for the Education of the Crippled (child and adult) ahead of the festival of colours, in Mumbai, Friday.

Defamation case

Sultanpur (UP): A special court here on Friday postponed the hearing on a defamation case against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to April 2 due a strike by lawyers. The defamation complaint against Gandhi was filed by BJP leader Vijay Mishra for his alleged objectionable remarks against Home Minister Amit Shah. The plaintiff's advocate, Santosh Pandey, said the hearing in the case was scheduled for Friday, but it was deferred to April 2 as lawyers abstained from court proceedings due to a strike over their various demands.

BJP Odisha

Bhubaneswar: The BJP will go solo in the Lok Sabha and assembly elections in Odisha, state party president Manmohan Samal said on Friday. Talks on pre-poll alliance were being held between the ruling BJD and the opposition BJP. "Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will fight this election alone in all 21 Lok Sabha and 147 Assembly seats to create a developed India and a developed Odisha under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to fulfil the hopes, aspirations and aspirations of four and a half crore Odias," Samal said in a post on X.

YouTuber bail

Noida: A Gautam Buddha Nagar court Friday granted bail to controversial YouTuber Siddharth Yadav alias Elvish Yadav in suspected drugs case, his lawyers said. Yadav was arrested by the Noida Police on Sunday in connection with its probe into suspected use of snake venoms as recreational drugs in parties he hosted. "The court heard the bail application and granted bail in the case. He will have to furnish two bail bonds of Rs 50,000 each which would be submitted in the court," Advocate Prashant Rathi said.

Factory blast

Rewari: Three more workers injured in a boiler blast at a spare parts manufacturing facility in Haryana's Rewari last week died on Friday, taking the death toll in the incident to 10, police said. "Two workers died during treatment at PGIMS Hospital, Rohtak while one worker died in Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital. The death toll in the incident has now risen to 10," Dharuhera police station SHO Jagdish Chand said.

Weather
High 34 Low 18

MARKET
NIFTY 22,096.75
SENSEX 72,831.94

BULLION
GOLD 66,074
SILVER 74,935

ED tells court

'Kejriwal key conspirator in liquor scam'

New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI):

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday said Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was a "key conspirator" in the excise policy scam case along with other ministers and AAP leaders, as it sought his 10-day custody from a court here.

Kejriwal was produced in the trial court shortly after he withdrew from the Supreme Court his plea against his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the excise policy-linked money laundering case on Thursday evening.

During the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener's remand hearing, the ED told Special Judge Kaveri Baweja at the Rouse Avenue court that Kejriwal received several crores of rupees as kickbacks from the 'South group' for formulating and implementing the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22.

He demanded Rs 100 crore from some accused from the 'South group' for contesting the Punjab elec-



Aam Adami Party workers and leader raise slogans during a protest against the arrest of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, in Bengaluru, Friday.

tions, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) SV Raju, who is appearing for the agency, told the court.

The law officer said the money trail showed that Rs 45 crore "kickback" used in the Goa elections came from four hawala routes. He said the statements of the accused and witnesses have been corroborated through Call

Detail Records (CDR).

The AAP chief was produced before the court around 2 pm amid tight security on and around the court premises.

"We have given an application for 10 days' remand," ASG Raju told the court.

He said the AAP is not an individual but a company, and every person re-

sponsible for the conduct of the company will be held responsible.

Senior Advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who is representing Kejriwal, said this is the first time in the history of India that a sitting chief minister has been arrested.

The power of arrest is not equal to the need of arrest and there was no necessity of arresting this man, he said.

"Please don't look at remand as a routine exercise... it requires application of significant judicial mind... larger issues of democracy involved," Singhvi said.

Lawyer Vikram Chaudhari, who is also representing the Delhi chief minister, told the court that the "ED has become judge, jury and executioner".

Kejriwal's counsel said he would contest the remand proceedings before the trial court and then come back to the apex court with another petition.

SC denies bail to BRS leader K Kavitha

New Delhi: In a setback to BRS leader K Kavitha, the Supreme Court on Friday refused to grant her bail in the money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. The development came a day after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in the same case.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna, MM Sundresh and Bela M Trivedi asked Kavitha to approach the trial court, saying it is a practice which this court is following and cannot bypass the protocol. "Issue notice. Counter affidavit shall be filed in six weeks. Rejoinder, if any, in six weeks. It will be open to the petitioner to move the trial court or invoke any other remedy for grant of bail," the bench said, adding all pleas and contentions available to the petitioner are left open.

It clarified that the court has not made any comments on merits of the case.

The bench said as far as Kavitha's plea challenging the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) is concerned, the court is issuing notice to the ED and seeking its response.

SC dismisses Centre's review plea

'ED required to furnish grounds of arrest to accused in writing'

New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI):

The Supreme Court has dismissed the Centre's petition seeking review of its verdict which said the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is required to furnish the grounds of arrest to an accused in writing "without exception", saying there was no error in its judgement warranting reconsideration.

A bench of Justices AS Bopanna and Sanjay Kumar considered the review petition in chambers and passed the order.

"We have carefully gone through the review petitions and the connected papers. We do not find any error, much less apparent,



in the order impugned, warranting its reconsideration. The review petitions are dismissed accordingly. Pending application, if any, stands disposed of," the bench said.

In its order passed on March 20, the bench also dismissed the Centre's application for an open court hearing. The Centre had sought a review of the October 3 order of the

apex court by which it had set aside the orders of the Punjab and Haryana High Court as well as the arrest memos, while directing the release of Basant Bansal and Pankaj Bansal, directors of Gurugram-based realty group M3M, in a money laundering case. The top court had come down heavily on the ED and said it is not expected to be "vindictive" in its conduct and must act with utmost probity and fairness. It had said being a premier investigating agency charged with the onerous responsibility of curbing the debilitating economic offence of money laundering in the country, every action of

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Aviation regulator DGCA slaps Rs 80 lakh fine on Air India

New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI):

Aviation watchdog DGCA on Friday imposed a fine of Rs 80 lakh on Air India for violations of norms related to flight duty time limitations and fatigue management system of flight crew.

The decision came after the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) conducted a spot audit of Air India in January, during which evidence was collected and fleet-wise random reports were analysed. "The analysis of

reports and evidence revealed that Air India Limited operated flight(s) with both flight crew aged above 60 years flying together in a few instances.

"... the operator was also found deficient in providing adequate weekly rest, adequate rest before & after ultra-long range flights and adequate rest on layover to the flight crew, which violates the extant provisions of the Civil Aviation Requirements pertaining to FDTL," the regulator said in a release.

Three charred bodies found in a burnt car

Tumakuru, Mar 22 (PTI): Three charred bodies were found in a burnt car on a lake bed on the outskirts of this district headquarters town about 70 km from Bengaluru, police said on Friday. Police suspect it to be a case of murder and said that investigations are in full swing.

According to police, the burnt car with charred bodies beyond recognition was found on the lake bed of Kuchchangi lake here today.

"We don't know how the incident happened. Our investigations are on. It could be murder. Two bodies were in the boot space and the third body was in the second row.

ASI begins survey of Bhojshala complex in MP

Puja, namaz to continue as per practice

Dhar, Mar 22 (PTI):

A team of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) Friday began a survey of the controversial Bhojshala/Kamal Maula Mosque complex situated in the tribal-dominated Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh.

The ASI team, comprising more than a dozen members, reached the complex in the morning. It was accompanied by senior local police and district administration officials.

The ASI team worked till noon and left the spot

for the day, Ashish Goyal, one of the petitioners in the matter who was present with surveyors, told reporters. Both Hindus and Muslims consider the site a place of worship.

Asked whether Muslims would be allowed to offer prayers at the site, Dhar Superintendent of Police (SP) Manoj Kumar Singh said puja' on Tuesdays and namaz' on Fridays will be held as per practice. The SP said he would discuss the matter with ASI officials and make adequate arrangements for the faith-related activities.

A 15-member team reached the site early in the morning to survey the Bhojshala complex, Goyal said. He said that mem-

bers of the Hindu Front for Justice, an umbrella organisation representing petitioners like him, were also present during the survey. "Today they did the ground-level preparations for conducting the survey. As directed by the high court, new technologies like GPS and carbon-dating equipment were used by the team," Goyal said. However, eyewitnesses said that the members of the Muslim community were not present on the occasion. As per the ongoing practice, Muslim community members offered Friday namaz at the site amid heavy police presence, they said. Earlier, SP Singh said that the survey had begun at the

Bhojshala. "We have provided all the logistical support that the ASI team needed to conduct it. Adequate security measures were taken for the exercise and there is peace in the town," he had told PTI.

A heavy police force has been deployed at the site, eyewitnesses said. Meanwhile, a Special Leave Petition (SLP) filed by the Muslim community against the HC order in the Supreme Court on the issue was listed for hearing on April 1, lawyer Shirish Dube, representing Hindu Front for Justice, told reporters. He said the SC refused to hear the matter on Friday as mentioned by their lawyers.

WORLD WATER DAY



Students hold a pot during an event to mark the 'World Water Day' in Bengaluru, Friday.

Fire erupts in seating-cum-luggage coach of Godan Express

Nashik, Mar 22 (PTI): A fire broke out in a seating-cum-luggage coach of Mumbai-Gorakhpur Godan Express near Nashik Road station in north Maharashtra on Friday afternoon, though there were no reports of casualties, Railway officials said.

According to the officials, the fire, whose cause was not immediately known, erupted when the Godan Express (No. 11055) was on its way to Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh from Mumbai (Lokmanya Tilak Terminus), prompting some passengers to jump out of the train when it stopped. The train reached

Nashik Road, around 200km from Mumbai, at its regular time 14.43 hrs and left after halting for four minutes. When it was passing by the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) water filtration plant situated between Nashik Road and Gorewadi railway gate, smoke was seen coming out of the SLR (seating-cum-luggage rake) compartment attached on the rear part of the train, they said. Passengers travelling in the bogie raised an alarm on seeing the smoke and when the guard came to know about it, he immediately stopped the train and informed Railway authorities, said the officials.

New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI):

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has disaffiliated 20 schools, including five in Delhi, for enrolling dummy students and ineligible candidates, its secretary Himanshu Gupta said on Friday. The board has also downgraded the affiliation of three schools.

"Pursuant to a surprise inspection conducted in CBSE schools across the country to check whether the schools are running according to the provisions and norms contained in the affiliation and examination bye-laws, it was found that some schools were committing

CBSE disaffiliates 20 schools for enrolling dummy students

Dronacharya Public School and Vicon School in Chhattisgarh's Raipur

various malpractices of presenting dummy students, ineligible candidates and not maintaining records properly," Gupta said. "After a thorough inquiry, it has been decided to disaffiliate 20 schools and downgrade three schools," he added.

Five of the disaffiliated schools are in Delhi, three in Uttar Pradesh, two each in Kerala, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra, and one each is in Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand,

Assam and Madhya Pradesh.

The schools with downgraded affiliation are in Delhi, Punjab and Assam.

The disaffiliated schools include Sidhartha Public School, Bharat Mata Saraswati Bal Mandir, National Public School, Chand Ram Public Senior Secondary School and Marigold Public School in Delhi, Loyal Public School (Bulandshahr), Trinity World School (Gautam Buddha Nagar), Crescent Convent School (Ghaziपुर) in Uttar Pradesh, Prince UCH Madhyamik Vidyalaya (Sikar) and Global Indian International School, (Jodhpur) in Rajasthan.

HC admits CBI's appeal challenging acquittals in 2G scam case

New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI):

The Delhi High Court Friday admitted a CBI appeal against the acquittal of former telecom minister A Raja and 16 others in the 2G spectrum allocation scam case, paving the way for hearing in the matter six years after the plea was filed by the agency.

Admitting the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) appeal, the high court said there are "some contradictions" in the trial court's judgment which require "deeper examination". It granted the CBI "leave to appeal", saying the probe agency has made out arguable points. "Leave to appeal" is a formal per-

mission granted by a court to a party to challenge a decision in a higher court. "The court on the basis of material on record, and after going through the sworn testimonies, material on record, impugned judgment and the submissions made at bar by both the parties has reached on an objective satisfaction that there is a prima facie case which requires deeper examination and re-appraisal of entire evidence," Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma said. "The court during the hearing has also noticed some contradictions in the judgement itself, which requires deeper examination.

Murder accused arrested, co-accused surrenders before court

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 22: With the arrest of a man, Padmanabhpur Police claimed to have solved a blind murder mystery. The co-accused in this case surrendered before the court. After a liquor party, the accused had bludgeoned their friend to death behind a fuel station near Potiya Chowk in Durg.

Police had received a complaint from Gaukaran Dhritlahre of Kundrapara, Potiya Chowk on March 18. He complained that his younger brother Topchand Dhritlahre had left home around 2.00 pm on March 17 and did not return till next morning.

The family tried to search him and came to know that Topchand



Dhritlahre and his friends Vishnu Sahu, Raja Markande, Anil Kumar Thakur, Anil Naurange and Veeru Satnami had gone behind Manish Petrol Pump for a liquor party.

Gaukaran reached the spot and found his brother lying dead on the ground. Topchand had suffered a head injury. Stones with blood stains, liquor bottles and disposables were

lying nearby. Police lodged an offence under section 302 of IPC and investigations were launched.

During the investigation, police received a tip off that the suspect Anil Naurange was hiding somewhere in Tilda. A special team was immediately formed by the SP Jitendra Shukla and CSP (Durg) Chirag Jain.

The team led by Padmanabhpur SHO

Akshay Pramod Sabadra (IPS) searched the accused in Tilda and managed to trap him. The accused Anil Naurange (23) son of late Jivrakhan Naurange, a resident of Kundrapara, Potiya Chowk, confessed to committing murder with his accomplice Veeru Satnami.

Anil Naurange was arrested and produced before the court. He was sent to jail on judicial remand. The absconding co-accused Veeru Satnami later surrendered before the District Court, Durg.

ASI Ramswaroop Kureshia, Head Constable Anand Tiwari, Constable Pyare Lal Sahu, Devendra Rajput, Bharthari Nishad and civil team played a vital role in solving the case.

Neighbour and two others arrested for blackmailing trader in Durg

● **Accused used fake sim card for sending threat messages and videos**

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 22: Police arrested three persons on charges of threatening and trying to extort money from a trader in Durg. One of the accused is the neighbour of the victim. The accused used fake sim card for sending threat messages and videos through Whatsapp. The victim Sumeet Bothra (43) son of Ashok Bothra, a resident of Gawalipara Durg, had lodged a complaint on March 19 at Durg City Kotwali. He was receiving threat messages on Whatsapp from an unknown mobile number. The accused were threatening to kill him and were demanding money. Later, they sent a

video in which the victim's neighbour was being beaten by the accused. Police lodged an FIR under Section 384, 419, 120B, 506, 507, 34 of IPC and launched the investigation. Under the guidance of SP Jitendra Shukla and supervision of ASP (City) Abhishek Jha and CSP (Durg) Chirag Jain, the team led by Inspector Mahesh Dhruv (SHO, City Kotwali) collected the CDR of the unknown mobile number and found that the sim was registered in name of Pradeep Kumar Thakur, a resident of Risma Anda Durg. Later, it was discovered that one Purushottam Devgan, who works on commission basis for the Airtel company, had given a free SIM to Pradeep Kumar Thakur and had activated another sim in his name and kept it with him. He gave this sim card to



TishuBarjatya (Jain) as a fake sim. The accused TishuBarjatya (Jain) used this sim to blackmail his friend Vinit Bothra's brother Sumit Bothra by posing as an unknown person through WhatsApp. He sent threatening messages and demanded money. The accused TishuBarjatya (Jain) injured himself and made a video with the help of his

friend Lekhrum Sahu. They sent this videos to Sumit Bothra to threaten and extort money from him. During interrogation, the accused confessed to committing the crime.

The accused TishuBarjatya (Jain) (33) son of Radhelal Dewangan (21) son of Radhelal Dewangan, a resident of Jayati Nagar, Durg were arrested and produced before the court. They were sent to jail on judicial remand. Sub Inspector Naveen Rajput, ASI Purandas, Head Constable Anil Rajput, Constable Luv Pandey and Sheikh Alauddin played a vital role in arresting the accused.

Wagh Bakri Foundation donates New Delivery Vehicle to Akshaya Patra Foundation

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 22: In a significant contribution to child nutrition, Wagh Bakri Foundation has donated a new delivery vehicle to The Akshaya Patra Foundation's Bhilai kitchen, reinforcing their commitment to combating child malnutrition in India. This generous donation will facilitate the transportation of hot, nutritious mid-day meals to over 2,200 children across 16 government schools in Bhilai, Chhattisgarh. The handover ceremony of the vehicle took place at Akshaya Patra's Bhilai kitchen on March 22, 2024. Distinguished guests included Rajesh Deolalkar - GM Sales, Ajay Ciciliya, Head - CSR, Mandep Shukla - Sr ASM - Raipur of Wagh Bakri Tea Group alongside key members of the sales and distribution teams, and from Akshaya Patra, Vyomapada Dasa, President of Akshaya Patra, Bhilai. This initiative is part of a broader collabo-

ration between Wagh Bakri Foundation and Akshaya Patra, which spans over a decade and includes various efforts to provide nutritious meals in government schools, distribute essential supplies during the Covid-19 pandemic, and more.

Paras Desai, Executive Director of Wagh Bakri Tea Group and Trustee of Wagh Bakri Foundation, expressed "Right from inception, Wagh Bakri Tea Group believes in giving back to society, from where the profit has earned. The market share of Wagh Bakri Tea has been increasing in the state of Chhattisgarh. This is our first CSR initiative for the people of Chhattisgarh particularly Bhilai city. Our small contribution to Akshaya Patra aims at eradicating classroom hunger. I am hoping for many more such initiatives in this part of country in coming future. In addition to the latest donation, Wagh Bakri Foundation has previously contributed 18 food distribu-



tion vehicles to support the 'Mid-Day Meal' scheme, showcasing their ongoing commitment to societal welfare. Echoing the sentiment, VyomapadaDasa, President of Akshaya Patra, Bhilai, expressed gratitude towards Wagh Bakri Foundation for their unwavering support. "Our partnership, which began 15 years ago, is a testament to the power of collaboration in achieving a common goal - to feed the future of our nation. We are also thankful to the Ministry of Education, Government of India, and the

Government of Chhattisgarh for their continued support," he added. The collaboration also receives support from the Ministry of Education, Government of India, and the Government of Chhattisgarh, underlining a unified effort to eliminate child malnutrition in the country. The Wagh Bakri Tea Group has been actively involved in philanthropic activities even before it was mandated by the CSR law. The Group has been making sincere endeavours to bring about a visible change in the society by con-

tributing in the fields of education, healthcare, women empowerment and other socio-economic development activities. Some of their notable contributions include the construction of education infrastructure at Vishvagram, Anera - Sabarkantha district of Gujarat, creation of an endowment fund for 'Cataract Surgeries' to Blind People's association, health equipment support to 'Jivraj Mehta health Smarak Foundation' in Ahmedabad, among others. The Group has also extended support towards the 'Gujarat Cancer Society' for spreading awareness & Prevention and joins hands during various relief interventions through partner organizations during the COVID pandemic.

It needs a mention that The Akshaya Patra Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that strives to address classroom hunger and malnutrition in India. By implementing the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Government and

Government-aided schools, Akshaya Patra aims to fight hunger and, at the same time, bring children to school. Since 2000, Akshaya Patra has worked towards reaching out to children with wholesome food every single school day. The Foundation is continuously leveraging technology to cater to millions of children. Its state-of-the-art kitchens have become a subject of study and attract curious visitors from around the world. In partnership with the Government of India and various State Governments and the inestimable support of many philanthropic donors and well-wishers, Akshaya Patra has grown from humble beginnings serving just 1,500 school children across five schools to becoming the world's largest (not-for-profit run) mid-day meal programme, serving wholesome food to over 2.0 million children from 24,082 schools across 16 states and 2 union territory in India.

Timings for water supply changed in various areas of Bhilai Township

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 22: On the night of March 18, two valve accessories were stolen by unknown people near Q no.36/37 the Hospital Sector area of BSP Township. After this, again on the night of March 19, the items from the wall behind SPA/24 street in Sector 9 were stolen. Due to this, the water supply of Hospital Sector and Sector 9 was badly affected, which was repaired by Municipal Services Department PHE and water supply was immediately restored.

Water supply had stopped on March 22, in some area of Sector 9 and the entire Sector 8 area due to the theft of the cover of two valves located near the canal in Sector 9 area and the valve located between Streets 7 and 10 along the Central Avenue. Due to which the residents of the above mentioned area were facing drinking water crisis which has been repaired by BSP Municipal Service Department PHE and water supply was resumed by 11 am. Information about the previous se-

quence of incidents has been given in writing to the Sector 6 police station in-charge on March 20, in which the inconvenience caused to the common citizens due to such incidents of theft in the township has been mentioned. The police administration has been requested to increase police patrolling in the township and take necessary action. The citizens of the township are also appealed to immediately inform the administration about any suspicious persons around them, so that essential services like water supply etc. can be operated smoothly.

Changed timings

Water supply timings of Bhilai Township Sector 9 from Street 1 to 4 will now be 7:00 hrs to 8:00 hrs from March 23, 2024 till further notice. There will be no change in water supply timings in the remaining areas of Sector 9. This information is being given through Municipal Services Department PHE.

Man held for giving surety with forged documents and misusing Court seal

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 22: Police arrested a man on charges of tampering the property documents (Rin Pustika) and misusing the Court Seal to give surety for bail of an accused. The Reader of the Magistrate remembered that the same person had given surety for another person but the entry of this surety was not there in the property documents. Later, it was discovered that the surety had produced tampered documents before the Court.

Ajay Kumar Sahu, Reader at the Court of Judicial Magistrate Payal Topno, had filed a com-



plaint at the police station. He complained that one Rakesh Banjare produced Kisan Kitab for bail of the accused in Chetan Singh Chandrakar before the court of Judicial Magistrate Payal Topno. Ajay remembered that

Rakesh Banjare had given surety for bail through the same Kisan Kitab in another case in the same court, but there is no mention of previous bail in the property document. When enquired from the Tehsildar Office, it was discovered that the office has not issued any duplicate or new Kisan Kitab to Rakesh Banjare. City Kotwali Police Station lodged a complaint under Section 420 of IPC. During investigation, it was discovered that the accused tampered and forged the pages of the Kisan Kitab, removed some pages and misused the seal of Tehsildar Durg.

Under the guidance of

SP Jitendra Shukla and supervision of ASP (City) Abhishek Jha and CSP Chirag Jain, the team led by Inspector Mahesh Dhruv traced the accused and arrested him on March 21. During interrogation, the accused admitted that he removed a page from the Kisan Kitab and placed another page on it. The accused Rakesh Banjare (47) son of Late Harkuram a resident of Bijbehatha, Police Station Ranitarai Durg was produced before the court and has been sent to jail on judicial remand. Sub Inspector Naveen Rajput, Constable Luv Pandey and Sheikh Alauddin played vital roles.

Two day Program on 'Disciplinary proceedings and Domestic Enquiry' inaugurated

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 22: A special program on Disciplinary proceedings and Domestic enquiry has been launched at BMDC on March 22 for a cross section of executives across the plant. Personnel department and Vigilance department, which was graced by Pawan Kumar ED (P&A) Bhilai Steel Plant as the chief guest for the inaugural session.

Sanjeev Kumar Srivastava GM (HRD-BMDC) welcomed the participants and talked about the significance of the program and its relevance in the present context. Faculty for the 2 day pro-



gram, SPS Jaggi Ex Director (P&A), Shipping Corporation of India apprised the house about the outline and structure of the program.

Pawan Kumar ED (P&A) inaugurated the session and spoke about his expect-

tations from the workshop and stated that the participants can benefit hugely from the rich expertise of SPS Jaggi.

He also urged the participants specially the Personnel Executives to keep themselves updated

about latest decisions and court rulings on the subject in order to advice the Line Authorities on Disciplinary matters. Avanthi VuchulaMgr (HRD-BMDC) has coordinated and compered the programme.

Ten must do things before the end of financial year

By: CA Minesh Kumar Jain, Ex Chairman, ICAI Bhilai

Only a few days are left for the end of the financial year 2023-24 on 31 March 2024. The last date for closing the books and accounts of all business institutions in India is 31st March. Before closing the books, it is very important to take care of certain things to avoid penalty or losses.

1. Calculate payable advance tax: Income tax follows the principle of "pay as you earn". Therefore, advance income tax during the financial year from April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024 was payable on or before June 15, 2023, September 15, 2023, December 15, 2023 and March 15, 2024. The assessee has to pay interest if he has not paid at least 90%

of his tax due through advance tax on or before March 31, 2024. Therefore, an assessee should calculate his estimated taxable income as accurately as possible, calculate the tax liability and pay the total advance tax payable before 31st March. It is necessary that the advance tax paid is deposited in the account of the Central Government. Challan number must be received before March 31st and with date on or before March 31st.

2. Invest to save tax: Make the investment eligible for deduction under Chapter VI A. Subject to certain conditions, different types of taxpayers are entitled to deduct specified amounts from gross total income before arriving at taxable income. Individuals and Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs) are enti-

led to deduction under section 80C of the Income Tax Act up to the investment amount of Rs 1,50,000/- and additional deduction of Rs 50,000/- under Section 80 CCD for investment in National Pension Scheme (NPS) subject to certain terms and conditions. Deduction of premium paid for health insurance under Section 80D, donation under Section 80G is admissible only if the investment / payment is made on or before March 31, 2024.

3. Manage Physical Inventory: Take a physical inventory of raw materials, work in progress, closing stock, finished goods, stores and spares, equipment, consumables etc on 31st March. Apart from this, compile information about its market value as on 31st March which will be necessary at the time of valuation to be



Minesh Kumar Jain

adopted in the balance sheet as on 31st March.

4. Purchase of fixed assets for business: Purchase of assets to claim depreciation (half the rate of depreciation). If any immovable property is purchased for the purpose of business during the previous year and is put to use for the purpose of business or profession for a period of less than 180 days in that previous

year, depreciation is to be charged at the prescribed percentage. It will be limited to 50% of the calculated amount. So, if you are planning to buy any fixed asset for the purpose of use in business, buy it and put it to use for business purposes on or before March 31 to avail the benefit of at least 50% depreciation.

5. Find out capital gains: If an assessee has taxable capital gains during the financial year 2023-24, he can try to identify his capital assets, especially shares, mutual funds, debentures, etc, which if sold during the financial year, will result into capital loss. He can sell such assets on or before March 31, 2024 and book a capital loss which will help to set off against taxable capital gains and reduce capital gains tax. The same capital asset can be pur-

chased again as a planning on or before March 31 and can be continued to be held.

6. Deduct interest and TDS from your loan accounts: Verify loan accounts and clear them if necessary. If a person has given or taken any temporary loan, hand loan and there are outstanding dues, then book the interest on the same on or before 31st March and if TDS needs to be deducted, the same should be deducted and deposited on time.

7. Manage Business Expenses: According to the new provision of Section 43b, any business payment, business expenses can be deducted only if they are actually paid on or before March 31. If payment is not made to MSME within 45 days, it will not be included in this year's expenditure but the expenditure will be received in the

year in which the payment is made. Therefore, it is advisable to pay all business expenses relating to the period up to 31st March on or before that date, otherwise higher tax will have to be paid as well as reporting in the tax audit report.

8. Updated income tax return as per new section 139 (8A): According to the new provision of Section 139(8A), if someone has not filed ITR or has missed showing some income, then he can file updated return through ITR-U. The last date to file updated return ITR-U for the financial year 2020-21 is 31 March 2024 which can be filed with 50% penalty and the last date to file ITR-U for the financial year 2021-22 with 25% penalty. The date is also 31 March 2024.

9. Calculate GST Turnover: Businesses that are not yet under the GST

registration limit of Rs 20 lakh should keep an eye on their turnover. Calculation of total turnover as on 31st March is to be done for the purpose of determining the eligibility for GST registration, eligibility for composition scheme and applicability of filing specific returns.

10. Reconciliation of GST Ledger: GST payment is made either through tax credit or through challan payment. Taxpayers should reconcile the cash ledger, credit ledger and liability ledger on the GSTN portal with their books of accounts. All entries must be made before the end of the year. Additionally, debit notes, credit notes, rate differentials, discounts, etc should also match.

Conclusion: It is always great to have this checklist handy during final activities of the fiscal year.

Ensure victory to LS candidate from R'gaon LS seat: Sai

● 9340461137 Holds party workers' sammelan in R'gaon and Dongargaon

Rajnandgaon/Dongargaon, Mar 22: CM Vishnu Deo Sai addressing party workers' sammelan in Chhattisgarhi in Rajnandgaon charged the earlier Bhupesh Baghel had looted people of Chhattisgarh and now has come to cheat them in Rajnandgaon and appealed all present to defeat him in such a manner that he would never come in the future to look into their favour. After this address, people in large number joined BJP fold in the presence of CM Sai.

CM Sai addressed party workers' sammelan in Rajnandgaon and Dongargaon on Friday. Speaking on the occasion he said that bugle for LS polls has been blown and we have to make PM Modi as PM of country for the third time. BJP LS candidate from Rajnandgaon Santosh Pandey has to be elected as MP and sent to



the Lok Sabha. The MP elected from the region strongly put up the issues of the region in the LS. The last five year rule of Congress in the state has stopped all Central government schemes in the state and so he appealed the party workers and people present to defeat the Congress candidate with huge margin so that he never comes here for the next time.

Targetting on Congress, CM Sai charged that Congress has broken all the records of corruption. Today many Congress leaders are in the jail and they are not even getting bail. All the big scams viz. Coal, PSC, liquor, and others have put them (Cong)

at the right place in the last VS polls and now it is time to show them right place in the LS polls as well.

He made an appeal to the party workers to visit every house and hand over the details of achievements and works of PM Narendra Modi to the family members, apart from taking the 15 yrs achievements of former CM Dr Raman Singh and that of 100 days under his leadership before the people of Chhattisgarh.

Recalling over the achievements of Sai's government in last 100 days, CM Sai said that sanction has been granted for houses under PMAY for more than 18 lakh poor families.

More than 12 lakh farmers have been paid different of the bonus amount of Rs 3716 cr and all the promises made to the farmers have been fulfilled.

This year more than 145 lakh MT of paddy has been purchased and the difference of the amount of paddy purchase from MSP has been sent to account of 24.72 lakh farmers last on March 12 and this include the account of former CM Bhupesh Baghel as well. Under Mahatari Vandan Yojana, the government is paying Rs 1000 per month to married women in the state and has fulfilled the promise of sending people for 'Darshan' of Ramlalla to Ayodhya as well.

CM said that a government with strong engine has started functioning in the state and would ensure that the PM Narendra Modi is elected as the PM for the third time and therefore by ensuring victory to BJP LS candidate Santosh Pandey from Rajnandgaon LS seat, please fulfill the target of above 400 seats for BJP in this LS polls, Sai appealed.

Collector inspects quality of Zero Point Assembly Road construction

Raipur, Mar 22: Collector Dr Gaurav Singh had gone out today to visit the polling stations in connection with the election preparations. Meanwhile he observed construction of the road to Assembly Zero Point and inquired about the work from the workers and the executive engineer. He also walked some distance on the road and inquired about the materials used in the construction. According to the Collector Vidhan Sabha Zero Point is a very busy road in which construction is being done by blocking one-way traffic. The said construction work should be done within the time limit and with quality so that the owner does not face any kind of inconvenience and can benefit from it, he said. SSP Santosh Singh, District Panchayat CEO Vishwadeep, Raipur Sub-Divisional Officer (Revenue) Nandkumar Choubey and Executive Engineer Vishal Trivedi were present.

HOLI CELEBRATIONS



Girls on the last day of their exams in the School, enjoying throwing of colours on each other as pre-Holi celebrations here on Friday.

Four accused sent behind the bar

Raipur, Mar 22: In the whirlwind raids against illicit liquor, Excise Department seized 45,540 litres of liquor and arrested 4 people in Raipur district on March 19, Wednesday.

As per the instructions of Secretary cum Excise Commissioner R. Sangeeta, under the guidance of Collector Gaurav Kumar Singh and under the direction of Deputy Commissioner Excise Vikas Goswami, the district excise

team took immediate action on the information regarding possession/sale/transportation of illegal liquor.

On March 19, 2024, raids were conducted at 3 places and criminal cases have been registered against 4 persons. Huge stock of liquor was confiscated from different persons. During the raid, 35 bottles of country Masala liquor was recovered from Darasingh Joshi, a resident of Neora.

Chasing a bike on Tilda Neora road, 103 bottles of country Masala was found. During smuggling on a red Hero Passion Plus Motorcycle with registration No. CG 04 NY 1763 by Tulsi resident, Ravi Dandekar, Sankra resident Dhaneshwar Gendre and Gurumukh Satnami were caught with 115 pieces of country liquor masala. Transporting the liquor on a blue Hero Splendor Plus Motorcycle with registration No. CG 04 PM 7789.

Make booths convenient for voters to vote in scorching heat: Collector



Raipur, Mar 22: Collector and District Returning Officer Dr Gaurav Singh and SSP Santosh Singh are continuously inspecting the polling stations in connection with the preparations for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. They visited the polling booths of Government Primary School Dondekala,

Government Primary School Dhaneli, Government Primary School Baroda on Friday. They went inside all the rooms and took stock of the situation.

Keeping in mind that there will be extreme heat and high temperature on May 7, arrangements should be made to avoid in-

convenience to the voters during polling, the Collector said, adding that a provision should be made for shade and drinking water for protection from sunlight and separate toilet rooms for men and women in polling stations. The road to reach the polling station should be in good condition, so that voters can reach easily, said the Collector.

The SSP said that security arrangements should be maintained at polling stations. Barricades should be arranged if necessary, he said. District Panchayat CEO Vishwadeep, Sub-Divisional Officer (Revenue) Nandkumar Choubey and other officials were present.

Kejriwal's arrest is an attack on democracy: AAP



● Members of Ch'garh AAP stages protest in Raipur

Raipur, Mar 22: The Aam Aadmi Party's Chhattisgarh unit on Friday staged a protest to denounce the arrest of its national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the Enforcement Directorate in an excise policy-linked money laundering case.

Around 100 party leaders and workers holding AAP flags and the tricolour gathered at Ambedkar Chowk in Raipur and raised slogans against the BJP-led central government.

Talking to PTI at the protest site, state AAP secretary Priyanka Shukla hit out at the BJP-led Centre and claimed they want 'one nation, one party' rule and run the government like a dictator wherein they want to control everything.

The AAP had been elect-

ed three times with full majority in the national capital and Kejriwal's arrest was an attack on the people of Delhi who voted for the party, and also on democracy, she claimed.

"Opposition leaders who raise their voice against them (BJP) and refuse to bow their heads are being sent to jail. They have strangled democracy and put it behind bars," Shukla alleged.

The AAP leader maintained the BJP wants to contest elections without opposition.

"If the BJP wants to contest elections without opposition, then they should tell us to sit at home. They just want to contest elections alone and win," she added, attacking the saffron party.

Police personnel were deployed at the protest site. After protesters were told by the police personnel that the model code of conduct was in force for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, they started dispersing from the venue.

Union Health Ministry Jt Secy visits Hamar Lab and Health Center



● Takes information about the facilities being provided to patients

Raipur, Mar 22: Joint Secretary (Policy) in the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Mrs Anuradha Patnaik today visited Hamar Lab operated in the District Hospital of Raipur and Urban Primary Health Center Mathpuraina. She inquired about the facilities being provided to the patients in the hospital and Hamar Lab and asked the officers in charge about the functioning of the lab. Director of National Health Mission,

Dr Jagdish Sonkar was present on the occasion.

During her visit to Hamar Lab, Mrs. Patnaik inspected registration, sample collection counter, Ayushman room, kiosk and help center, bacteriology lab, hematology lab, culture room and cold room. State Nodal Officer of Hamar Lab, Dr. Abhyudaya Shakti Tiwari told the Joint Secretary that the lab has the facility of 120 types of tests.

In the year 2023, tests of 90 lakh 57 thousand 888 patients were done whereas in the year 2022, tests of 51 lakh 85 thousand 309 patients were done. Joint Secretary Mrs. Patnaik praised Dr. Madhuri

Wankhede and the entire team of Hamar Lab for better facilities and services. During the inspection of Urban Primary Health Center Mathpuraina, the Joint Secretary asked about the prevalent token system for patients.

Mrs. Anuradha Patnaik also held a meeting with officers and employees on major schemes of the Health Department and discussed important activities in the new health building. On the occasion of World Tuberculosis Day on March 24, she administered oath to all the officers and employees to make every citizen aware about TB disease and launched the signature campaign.

International Mathematics Day celebrated in Amity University



Raipur, Mar 22: International Mathematics Day was celebrated at Amity University on Thursday. Faculty Coordinator Dr. Poonam

Mishra (Department of Mathematics, Amity University) said that on this occasion a poster making competition was organized for the students. Along

with this, quizzes and games were also held. The winners were also rewarded. She told that every year International Mathematics Day is celebrated on March 14, this day is also called Pi Day. On this occasion, Vice Chancellor of the University Dr. Piyushkant Pandey, especially Roshan Mathew, Head of Amity School of Engineering and Technology, other teachers and a large number of students were also present.

2 candidates file their nominations on Friday

● For Bastar Lok Sabha constituency: Lok Sabha General Election-2024

Raipur, Mar 22: Two candidates filed their nomination papers for Bastar Lok Sabha constituency for the first phase of elections in Chhattisgarh under Lok Sabha Elections 2024 on Friday. Aytu Ram Mandavi as Bahujan Samaj Party candidate and Ful Singh Kachalam as Communist Party of India candidate submitted their nomination papers on Friday.

It is noteworthy that the last date for filing nomination papers by the candidates for Bastar Lok Sabha constituency under the first phase of voting in the state

is March 27. Nominations can be filed on office days from 11 am to 3 pm, except government holidays. The scrutiny of nomination papers received will be done on March 28. Candidates will be able to withdraw their nomination till March 30. Meanwhile Election Commission of India has appointed General Observer and Police Observer for the general elections in Bastar Lok Sabha constituency. The Commission has appointed Dr. J. Ganesan, an officer of Haryana cadre of 2006 batch of Indian Administrative Service as the general observer and Ramkishun, an officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre of 2010 batch of Indian Police Service, has been appointed as Police Observer.

Results of PSC preliminary exam 2023 declared

● On the lines of UPSC, category wise and sub category wise cutoff numbers of the candidates have been released

Raipur, Mar 22: This time the results of preliminary examination have been released by Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission on the lines of Union Public Service Commission. Along with the roll numbers and names of the candidates who have qualified for the main examination, category wise and sub category wise

cutoff numbers have also been declared. In the result released by the Commission, a total of 3597 candidates have qualified for the main examination.

A total of 242 posts for 17 services were advertised by Chhattisgarh State Public Service Commission. For this, 1 lakh 58 thousand 211 candidates had submitted online applications. The State Service Preliminary Examination-2023 was organized on February 11, 2024 as the first stage of the selection process.

It is noteworthy that the youth of Chhattisgarh state have been demanding for a

long time to release the category and sub-category wise cutoff marks along with the results of the State Service Preliminary Examination. This time, as per the demand of the young participants, Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission has released the cut-off marks along with the results of the preliminary examination. For information about preliminary examination results and category wise and sub category wise cutoff numbers etc., visit the website of Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission - <https://www.psc.cg.gov.in/>.

NIT Raipur hosts 2nd National Student Conference

● 'Socio-Economic Perspectives on Sustainable Management of Water' on World Water Day

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 22: National Institute of Technology (NIT) Raipur organized the 2nd National Student Conference on "Socio-Economic Perspectives on Sustainable Management of Water" on occasion of world water day on 22nd March 2024. The conference was jointly organized by Indian Water Resources Society (IWRs) Student Chapter, Department of Civil Engineering, NIT Raipur and OP Jindal University (OPJU) Raigarh.

The event was graced by the presence of the Chief Guest Dharendra Tiwari, Ex CWC Chief Engineer, along with the

guests of honour, Dr RK Tripathi, Director In-charge, Dr Sameer Bajpai, Head Center for Mahanadi River Basin Management Studies, Dr Shirish V Deo, HOD, Department of Civil Engineering, Dr Ishtiyaq Ahmed, Faculty Advisor IWRs Student Chapter, Dr Sandeep Soni, Faculty Coordinator Amit Kumar Shukla, Secretary of the IWRs Student Chapter, Siddhant Panigrahi, Joint Secretary, along with faculties and students. Shukla elaborated on the Institute's growing prominence, noting the influx of research papers from numerous universities nationwide and abroad. This year, the institute garnered a total of 42 registrations, with 27 papers selected for presentation.

Dr. Tripathi eloquently expounded the scattered geographical distribution of water bodies across the country, emphasizing the pivotal role engineers can play in rectifying this non-uniformity to miti-

gate the water crisis. Dr. Bajpai emphasized the strategic utilization of technology in addressing water-related challenges, urging IWRs to conduct workshops aimed at tackling diverse issues across various water resources.

Chief Guest Dharendra expressed his gratitude to the organizers for extending the invitation to speak at his alma mater, commended them for administering such an enlightening event, and delved into the inevitable global water crisis spurred by rapid development and globalization. He emphasized the disproportionate impact of this crisis on the underprivileged, highlighting the critical importance of addressing socio-economic perspectives in the sustainable management of water resources.

The evening valedictory session was chaired by Dr Sameer Bajpai, and Dr Nitin Jain, Dean (Student Welfare) and Dr Ishtiyaq Ahmed, Faculty Advisor IWRs Student Chapter.

Administration should be visible on ground: Collector

Strict action should be taken against criminals: SP

Collector and SP took law and order meeting



Raipur, Mar 22: Collector Dr. Gaurav Singh and SP Santosh Singh on Friday held a law and order meeting in the Red Cross meeting room located in the Collectorate premises. During this, the Collector asked the police and administration to work with better coordination. Instructions were given to take immediate action along with maintaining law and order seriously during Holi festival and Lok Sabha elections-2024.

Collector Dr. Singh said that it is necessary to have coordination between the police and administration at the ground level. During elections and festivals, surveillance should be increased in the area and

criminals should be strictly cracked down on. He also said that all police and administration officials should visit the polling stations and identify sensitive areas. The code of conduct should be strictly followed in government offices.

The Collector said that rallies, loudspeakers etc. without permission should be strictly banned. The presence of police and administration should be visible in every area during the day and night.

During this, he said that the pendency of revenue matters should be reduced. Collector Dr. Singh said that the time of festivals and celebrations along with elections is

very sensitive. At this time, the administration and police staff should work seriously, keep a close watch on every incident, take careful and prompt action on the incident.

This is the time when the police and administration work shoulder to shoulder and so that the public gets relief, Law and order can be maintained and a positive message can be spread in the society.

SP Santosh Singh said that the administration and police will have to work in unity to ensure that the Lok Sabha elections and Holi festival are peaceful. Serious action should be taken against criminals in the district,

especially during crises and law and order times, better coordination between the administration and the police is necessary. Officials should have good personal relations with the public.

In this way better coordination, law and order will be established. Information system should be kept strong, field staff should cooperate with each other in routine work. On this occasion, ADM Mr. Devendra Patel, Mrs. Nidhi Sahu, Additional Superintendent of Police Mr. Kirtan Rathore, Mr. Lakhan Patle, Mr. Daulat Ram Porte and police and administration officers were present.

Ch'garh Madrasa Board exam dates to start from May 14

Exam to start from 9 am, will continue till May 27

Raipur, Mar 22: There has been a change in the high school, higher secondary correspondence course exam dates conducted by Chhattisgarh Madrasa Board. Urdu Adib, Urdu Proficiency Certificate Examination will now start from May 14th. After the announcement of Lok Sabha elections, the already released timetable has been amended. Secretary in-charge of Chhattisgarh Madrasa Board, PP Dwivedi has said that voting is to be held in three phases in the state. The examination timetable has been amended keeping in mind the voting dates. The examinations will start from 9 am to 12 noon. Examination centers have been set up in many districts of the state for the examination which will run till May 27.

'Congress fails to select candidates due to atmosphere in favour of BJP'

Senior MLA claims Congress has no public mandate

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 22: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday said that the Congress is not able to select the candidates for the Lok Sabha elections as the atmosphere is in favour of the BJP in the entire nation.

In a statement issued

here, the senior BJP Legislator Dharmalal Kaushik said that infighting within the Congress has created confusion among Congress leaders as they are asking each other who is going to get Lok Sabha election ticket. He further said that the Congress in-charge of party affairs in Chhattisgarh Sachin Pilot too is not having any answer to the queries of Congress leaders over the candidate for the remaining five Lok

Sabha segments. Kaushik claimed that the Congress leaders have no public support as the senior leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi too have no confidence on party workers. BJP MLA said that while the Congress is battling hard to search the candidate, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has created atmosphere which would ensure victory in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

CM assures IMA delegation to consider their demands

Raipur, Mar 22: Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai has assured the Indian Medical Association (IMA) to give a positive thinking over their proposal on the system of treatment of patients under the Ayushman Scheme.

A delegation led by former MLA Dr Vimal Chopda, Dr Surendra Shukla, Dr Ashok Tripathi, Dr Shailesh Khandelwal, Dr Akhilesh Dubey, Dr Ketan Shah and Darsingh Dewangan expressed their concern



over the delay in the payments to the Hospitals under Ayushman Bharat scheme. CM has assured the delegation to take prompt action on their demands. He further said that the Ayushman Bharat is a flagship

scheme of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which would be conducted smoothly.

Delegation also stated that the Hospitals are ready to work on Trust Mode in the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

Festival should be celebrated in harmony and brotherhood: Mishra

Instructions given to perform Holika Dahan by 12:30 pm as per Muhurat

District administration and police administration held peace committee meeting



Raipur, Mar 22: Under the guidance of Collector and District Magistrate Dr. Gaurav Singh, the District Administration and Police Administration held a meeting of the Peace Committee in the Red Cross meeting room located at the Collectorate on Thursday. Eminent residents of all the communities participated in this meeting and were instructed to celebrate Holi and other festivals in a peaceful manner. During this, community leaders also put forth their suggestions and asked the officials for serious consideration. On this occasion, Municipal Corporation Commissioner Mr. Abinash Mishra said that the festival of Holi is festi-

val of colors, which makes our lives colorful by spreading happiness. Everyone is requested to celebrate the festival with full harmony and a sense of brotherhood. For this and Holika Dahan, arrangements are being made at various places in the city. Zone commissioners have been directed for this. Electricity arrangements and cleanliness should be done in public places. Also, adequate water arrangements will be made.

Additional Collector, Devendra Patel said that there will be a complete ban on the use and display of weapons. Keeping the

school and university examinations in mind, loudspeakers can be used in a low tone only till 10 pm. There will be a complete ban on masks. Action will be taken against forcibly collecting donations, Holika Dahan should be done on the roadside and after Holika Dahan, sand will be poured. Holika Dahan will not be done in new places without permission, except those places where Holika Dahan is already being done in Lakhe Nagar, Chandni Chowk and Kukri Para.

Additional Superintendent of Police, City, Mr. Lakhan Patle said

that Holika Dahan can be performed till 12:30 in the night as per the Muhurat. After this the residents will be sent back home. During Holi festival, speeding vehicles will be marked through ITMS and strict action will be taken against those roaming around wearing masks. Action will also be taken against those who drink and drive. Those creating hooliganism will also be monitored and action will be taken against spreading any kind of disturbance. District administration and police officials were present on this occasion.

For GST simplification and rationalization under Ease of Doing Business

Raipur, Mar 22: State President of Chhattisgarh Chamber of Commerce and Industries Amar Parwani, General Secretary Ajay Bhasin, Treasurer Uttam Chand Golchha, Working President Rajendra Jaggi, Vikram Singhdeo, Ram Mandhan, Manmohan Agarwal said that under the Ease of Doing Business in the Chamber, GST simplification and rationalization was discussed. A meeting was held where the Chamber delegation under the leadership of State Chamber President Amar Parwani met Mr. Rajat Bansal, State GST Commissioner, regarding the suggestions received from business-industrial organizations and officials and submitted a memorandum regarding suggestions for GST simplification.

Chamber State President Parwani said that on Thursday the delegation submitted a memo-

Chamber delegation submitted memorandum to State GST Commissioner



randum to Rajat Bansal regarding the legal and technical problems being faced by the traders of the state regarding GST and for the simplification and rationalization of GST. In the meeting, the Chamber mainly listed the problems and suggestions related to GST received from the traders.

In the meeting, Rajat Bansal, State GST Commissioner adopted a positive attitude and said that the suggestions received will be placed before the GST Council.

On this occasion, Chamber State President Amar Parwani, Treasurer Uttamchand Golchha, Executive President Ram Mandhan, Advisor Surinder Singh, Vice President-Kanhaiya Gupta, Jai Nanwani, Minister-Nilesh Mundhra Shankar Bajaj, President of Mahatma Gandhi Marg Traders Association Sanjay Jadwani, Scooter Parts Association. Raipur Plywood Traders Association President Ashwin Garg, Neeraj Agarwal, Rajkumar Rathi, and Vivek Arora were present.

Association Babu Ram Modi, Vijay Patel, Vikas Tiwari, Marble Market Traders Association President Rajesh Mundhada, Car Accessories Association of Raipur President Harminder Singh Saluja, Electric Merchants Association President Ajant Agarwal, Secretary Mitesh. Vadher, Yogesh Trivedi etc., prominent industry chamber presidents Ashwin Garg, Neeraj Agarwal, Rajkumar Rathi, and Vivek Arora were present.

Bank of Maharashtra organizes All India Hindi Seminar

Raipur/Delhi, Mar 22: Bank of Maharashtra is a leading public sector bank of the country. An All India Hindi Seminar on 'Future Banking' was organized by Bank of Maharashtra for all the Banks, Financial Institutions and Insurance Companies across the country at Delhi. Ms. Anshuli Arya, IAS, Secretary, Department of Official Language, Ministry of Home Affairs,



Government of India was present as the chief guest in this seminar. Shri Asheesh Pandey, Executive Director, Bank of Maharashtra presided over the function. Chitra Datar, General Manager, K. Rajesh Kumar, General Manager, HRM

and Rajbhasha, Hari Shankar Vats, Zonal Manager, Delhi Zone and Dr. Rajendra Shrivastava, Deputy General Manager (Rajbhasha), Bank of Maharashtra were prominently present in the seminar. Jagjeet Kumar, Director and Dharmbir, Dy. Director, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance were present in the seminar as a special guest. A large number of top executives and Hindi Officers of all the banks, financial institutions and insurance companies participated in the seminar. Anshuli Arya, IAS in her address said that the banks and financial institutions are the backbone of economy

Sindhi community welcomes declaration of Public Holiday

Raipur, Mar 22: Dinesh Athwani, spokesperson of Chetrichandra Mahotsav Committee, Sindhi Samaj Raipur said that on Thursday information was issued by the Chhattisgarh government, on the occasion of Chetrichandra Mahotsav, Public holiday has been issued on Wednesday April 10, 2024. Earlier this holiday was erroneously declared on Tuesday, April 09, 2024. On highlighting the issue by Chetrichandra Mahotsav Committee, Sindhi Samaj Raipur, the holiday was declared on April 9th was cancelled and a notification was issued for public holiday on April 10, Wednesday. Committee Chairman Mukhi Manumal congratulated the Sindhi community and government on declaring it a public holiday. We have welcomed the administrative initiative by sending our gratitude and thanks for declaring April 10, Wednesday as a public hol-

iday and have termed it a good message for the Sindhi community.

Prominent among those who congratulated were Committee Chairman Mukhi Manumal, Dr. Bhimandas Bajaj, Dada Asudaram Wadhvani, former North MLA Shrichand Sundarani, Chhattisgarh Chamber of Commerce President Amar Parwani, Lalit Jaisingh, President, Sindhi Council, senior member Amar Gidwani, Corporation Ajit Anand Kukreja, newly elected President of Chhattisgarh Sindhi Panchayat Mahesh Daryani, Deepak Kripalani, Mahesh Prithwani, Dinesh Athwani, Balram Mandhani, Manish Wadhvani, Shankar Bajaj, Deepak Dodwani, Jai Keswani and Lakhmichand-Lalchand Gulwani, Rajesh Vaswani, Raju Tarwani and other representatives of Sindhi community.

Build a better society by embracing change: Prof. Chakrawal

Bilaspur, Mar 22: A one-day National Conference organized by the Social Work Department of Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya (a Central University), Bilaspur, sponsored by the National Commission for Women, New Delhi, was held on 21st March 2024. Addressing the workshop on "Sex Worker and Their Children: Legal, Educational, Health, Occupational Challenges," the Chief Guest Prof. Nilambri Dave, Vice-Chancellor of Saurashtra University, Rajkot, Gujarat, stated that the objective of the workshop should be to spread awareness in society about these issues. Women are an integral part of society and have the right to live with full dignity. Efforts should be made to connect children of sex workers to mainstream education and health facilities.



Chairing the program, University's Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Alok Kumar Chakrawal stated that the theme of the conference is contemporary. Societies evolve over time, and we should build a better society by accepting positive changes. To strengthen the nation's future, there is an imminent

need to pay attention to the educational and character development of youth. Special guest Bansidhar Pandey, Director of the Social Work Department, Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, Wardha, mentioned in his address that many people still perceive this section of society with negativity. More efforts are needed to integrate them into the mainstream of society. Special guest Laita S. A., Vice-President of the Society for Participatory Integrated Development, New Delhi, highlighted the challenges faced by children of women involved in the sex trade in gaining employment. She emphasized the need for more positive efforts on the part of the intellectual class of society, which would enable such youth to establish themselves along with self-employment opportunities. Before the event, the guests

Classifieds

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HEAVY SNOWFALL



Sandakphu after being hit by heavy snowfall, in Darjeeling district, Friday.

BJP leader Bharati Ghosh visits Sandeshkhali

Kolkata, Mar 22 (PTI):

Senior BJP leader and former IPS officer Bharati Ghosh, who visited trouble-torn Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district on Friday, said there is total lawlessness in West Bengal. During her visit, Ghosh interacted with over 25 women who recounted years of physical abuse allegedly inflicted by the henchmen of the now incarcerated TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh. These women claimed that their husbands were coerced into labouring on properties, including waterbodies, controlled by Sheikh's associates. Addressing reporters after meeting villagers in

Jeliakhali locality near the Sunderbans, Ghosh said, "Total lawlessness prevails in West Bengal. The Mamata Banerjee government has failed to protect the lives of people and uphold the dignity and respect of women in Sandeshkhali. It has also failed to prevent atrocities on the poor perpetrated by ruling party musclemen like Shahjahan."

Expressing her intent to investigate the numerous allegations made by these rural women and their families, Ghosh, who resigned from her position as SP of Paschim Medinipur before joining the BJP months prior to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, said, "I will compile a re-

port." Ghosh was accompanied by BJP leader Falguni Patra and others during her visit.

Earlier attempts by Ghosh, Patra, and other prominent BJP leaders, including Agnimitra Paul and Locket Chatterjee, to visit Sandeshkhali on March 7 were thwarted by police, citing prohibitory orders in parts of the region.

Their subsequent sit-in led to their arrest, followed by release on PR bond. Subsequently, Ghosh petitioned the Calcutta High Court, which granted her permission to visit Sandeshkhali on March 22 and directed police to ensure her unimpeded access.

Congress nominates JNU professor, ex-MLA for two LS seats

Imphal, Mar 22 (PTI):

The Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) on Friday fielded JNU professor Akoijam Bimol Angomcha from Inner Manipur parliamentary seat and Alfred Kannang Arthur from Outer Manipur.

MPCC president Keisham Meghachandra said, "Prof Akoijam Bimol Angomcha will contest from Inner Manipur parliamentary seat, while Alfred Kannang Arthur will be the party's candidate from Outer Manipur."

Elections in Manipur will be conducted in two phases, with the Inner Manipur seat going to polls on April 19, along with at least 15 assembly segments of Outer Manipur.

Akoijam is known for his academic perspectives on the violence that erupted in May last year, earning him popularity in the state. Former MLA Arthur hails from the Tangkhul Naga-dominated Ukhrul district. The Naga People's Front (NPF) has nominated K Timothy Zimik, a for-

mer IRS officer, for the Outer Manipur seat. The Communist Party of India (CPI) plans to field Sotinkumar Laishram, the general secretary of All India Trade Union Congress Manipur (AITUC), for the Inner Manipur seat. Elections in Manipur will be conducted in two phases, with the Inner Manipur seat going to polls on April 19, along with at least 15 assembly segments of Outer Manipur. Thirteen assembly segments of Outer Manipur will go to polls on April 26.

Two held in 2023 Indore temple tragedy that killed 36 persons

Indore, Mar 22 (PTI):

Two accused persons in the Beleshwar Mahadev Jhulelal temple tragedy in Indore in Madhya Pradesh that took place on March 30 last year were arrested on Friday, a police official said.

The floor of the temple, which was constructed after covering a huge stepwell, caved in during Ram Navami celebrations last year, killing 36 persons, including 21 women and two children.

The temple trust's president Sevaram Galani and secretary Murlu Kumar Sabnani were held on Friday under Indian Penal Code section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), the official said.

Asked about the police not having taken any action against civic officials, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Rishikesh Meena said the probe was underway and it will also cover the points of the magiste-

rial inquiry. "We have written to the departments concerned seeking some information from them. After getting it impartial action will be taken on the basis of evidence," the DCP said.

Incidentally, on January 19, Madhya Pradesh High Court expressed displeasure over the incomplete investigation and had directed the police to conclude it before the first anniversary of the tragedy.

3 Independent MLAs who voted for BJP in RS polls submit resignation

Shimla, Mar 22 (PTI):

Three independent MLAs in Hiamchal Pradesh, who had voted in favour of the BJP candidate in the recent Rajya Sabha elections, submitted their resignation to the Assembly secretary on Friday. One of them told reporters that they would join the BJP and contest elections on its ticket.

The three MLAs — Ashish Sharma (Hamirpur constituency), Hoshiyar Singh (Dehra) and K L Thakur (Nalagarh) — reached Shimla Friday, met leader of the opposition Jai

Ram Thakur and thereafter submitted their resignation. "We have submitted our resignation. We will join the BJP and contest elections on its ticket," Hoshiyar Singh told reporters.

The Independent MLAs said Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has stooped to such a level that he is targeting the MLAs and their families and registering false cases against them. The three Independent MLAs, along with six Congress rebels, voted in favour of the BJP candidate in the Rajya Sabha elections last month.

BJP fields Agartala mayor for Ramnagar assembly bypolls

Agartala, Mar 22 (PTI):

The ruling BJP in Tripura on Friday said Agartala mayor Dipak Majumder will be the party's candidate for Ramnagar assembly bypolls. This seat fell vacant following the death of veteran party MLA Surajit Dutta in December last year. Voting will take place on April 19.

Majumder will take on former CPI(M) MLA Ratan Das, who will contest as an INDIA bloc candidate. Chief Minister Manik Saha congratulated Majumder for his nomination as the party candidate.

"I congratulated Mayor Dipak Majumder for his nomination as the BJP candidate for Ramnagar assembly seat. To support

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, I appeal to the electors of the assembly constituency to cast their votes for him on April 19," Saha wrote on his Facebook page.

"I am familiar with the sentiments of the people of Ramnagar assembly constituency for many years. In fact, I used to accompany former MLA Surajit Dutta during his 40-year tenure from the constituency. I am confident that the party will win from the seat," Majumder told reporters.

Asked if he intends to resign as mayor after winning the by-elections, he said, "The party has fielded me from the prestigious seat for which I thank the party's central leadership. The party will take a decision on my fate after April 19," he said.

BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab quits party

Cuttack, Mar 22 (PTI): Senior BJD MP and one of its founder members Bhartruhari Mahtab resigned from the primary membership of the party on Friday.

Mahtab, a six-time MP from the Cuttack Lok Sabha constituency, said: "I have sent my resignation letter to BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at 4 pm today."

The veteran parliamentarian, who was awarded the Sansad Ratna for four consecutive years from 2017 to 2020 for his outstanding performance in Parliament debates, said he quit the party as he did not get ample opportunity to work freely in the BJD.

MARTYRDOM DAY



College teachers and students pay tribute to Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Shukhdev on the eve of their martyrdom day, at Government Bikram College of Commerce in Patiala, Friday

Haryana CM Saini meets Anil Vij

Ambala, Mar 22 (PTI): Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday met senior BJP leader and former home minister Anil Vij, who was stated to be upset with the party for not keeping him in the loop when deciding to replace Manohar Lal Khattar as CM.

Vij also did not find a place in the cabinet led by Saini. The two leaders spent some time at Vij's Ambala Cantonment residence over a cup of tea, sources said.

During his visit to Karnal on Thursday, Saini had said, "Vij is our senior leader. We have been getting his guidance and will continue to get it".

When Vij was asked about Saini's comment, he had said in Ambala on Thursday that "he can come at any time, tea is ready for him".

Last week, the BJP replaced Khattar with OBC leader Saini as Haryana chief minister in a swift switch in the state, just weeks ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

Malegaon blast case

MP Pragya Thakur appears before court

Mumbai, Mar 22 (PTI):

A special court here on Friday cancelled the bailable warrant issued against Pragya Singh Thakur after the Bhopal BJP MP appeared before it. The court had, on March 11, issued a bailable warrant of Rs 10,000 against Thakur, who is an accused in the September 2008 Malegaon bomb blasts case, for failing to appear before it despite repeated warnings.

Special Judge A K Lahoti had at the time directed Thakur to appear before it on March 20 but she failed to do so claiming she was admitted in a private hospital here.

The court, on March 20, stayed execution of the warrant till she was

discharged from hospital. On Friday, Thakur appeared before the special court and filed an application through her lawyer for cancellation of the bailable warrant.

The court took note of her medical papers and cancelled the warrant.

"Considering the ill-health of accused No. 1 (Thakur) and perusal of medical papers which show that she could not remain present on the scheduled dates," the court said.

Thakur in her application claimed she was unable to sit, walk and even sign. The court said it found substance in her claims as she appeared in court with the help of supporting aid.

The court directed Thakur to appear before it on March 28 to record her final statement in

the ongoing trial against her.

Thakur and six others are facing trial in the case under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) court is currently recording statements of the accused under Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

Six people were killed and over 100 injured when an explosive device strapped on a motorcycle went off near a mosque in Malegaon, a town about 200 km from Mumbai, in north Maharashtra, on September 29, 2008.

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad initially probed the case before it was transferred to the NIA in 2011.

SSC declares constables recruitment result for Manipur after rectifying mistake in data compilation

New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI):

The Staff Selection Commission has declared results for the recruitment of constables in the Central Armed Police Forces for Manipur after rectifying a data computation error, according to an official statement.

The final result of the Constable (general duty) in the CAPFs, Secretariat Security Force (SSF), Rifleman (general duty) in Assam Rifles and Sepoy in Narcotics Control Bureau Examination, 2022 was declared by the Commission on August 20, 2023, for all states/Union Territories except for Manipur, the SSC said in a notice.

The final result was processed for 49,590 vacancies (except 597 vacancies for Manipur) wherein 45,217 candidates (40,229 male and 4,988 female) were provisionally recommended for appointment

whereas the candidature of 1,337 candidates was kept withheld, it said. "At the time of declaration of the said final result of the aforesaid examination, the physical and medical tests could not be conducted due to the law and order situa-

tion in Manipur. "Therefore, the result for the state of Manipur for 597 vacancies could not be declared on August 20, 2023. Subsequently, the final result for the state of Manipur was declared on the website of the

Commission on March 15, 2024," the statement said. The physical and medical tests in respect of the candidates belonging to Manipur had been conducted in multiple phases due to the law and order situation in the state, it said.

TRN Energy Private Limited

Registered Office: 18 Vasant Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg New Delhi-110057
Corporate Office: 7th Floor, Office Tower, Ambience Mall NH-8, Gurgaon-122002 (Haryana) Ph.: 0124-2719000; Fax: 0124-2719185
E-mail: trnenergy@acbindia.com&info@trnenergy.com

TRN Energy Private Limited Letter of Interest

Ref. No.: TRNEPL/UNIT#2/HT & LT MOTORS/AOH/2024-25/01 Dated: 21-03-2024
TRN Energy Pvt. Ltd. is having 2 X 300 MW Coal based thermal power plant which is located near Vill - Bhengari, Tehsil - Gharghoda, Dist. - Raigarh, Chhattisgarh. This place is well connected with road network Nawapara (Tenda) village is on Chhal - Gharghoda road and very near to the plant. This place is around 42 KM away from Raigarh and 35 KM away from Kharsia, which are the nearest towns. M/s TRN Energy Pvt. Ltd. invites the bids from reputed and experienced parties for OVERHAULING OF Unit # 2 - HT & LT MOTORS.

Please visit the website <https://eprocurement.mjunction.in> and refer tender no.1007 for qualifying criteria and for further details on or before 28-03-2024 @ 14:00 Hrs.

Contact Details:-
Name: -Sunil Kumar
Contact No.:- 9868392867
E-Mail Id: - sunil.kumar@acbindia.com

NOTICE

Myself Ashok Kumar Agrawal, due to some personal reasons I am applying for cancellation of RERA registered project PUSH P BELA, motisagarpara, KORBA (registration no. - PCGRERA050618000059). If any person/institution etc in past have any booking advance due then they are requested to claim such amount by producing evidence of such claim within 15 days and mail the same to RERA office Email ID- registrar.rera.cg@gov.in and through post to registrar, chhattisgarh rera office, shastri chowk, raipur (PIN code -492001)

SHRIJAN BUILDERS
PUSH P BELA PROJECT,
Motisagarpara, KORBA
ashokagrwal475@gmail.com

Postal department delivers Rs 10 lakh insurance claim



Pithora, Mar 22:

The Indian Postal Department, renowned for its extensive reach and commitment to financial inclusion, continues to serve as a beacon of reliability and support for the Indian populace. Not only does it facilitate essential postal services, but it also extends a helping hand

through its India Post Payment Bank, providing doorstep banking services to communities nationwide. In a testament to its dedication to the welfare of citizens, the Indian Postal Department has further bolstered its offerings by providing accident insurance benefits to the public. Today, in a heartening ges-

ture, the Senior Superintendent of the Postal Department, B.L. Jangde, presented an insurance claim amount of Rs 10 lakh to the nominee, Dev Shani Lahiri, following the tragic demise of the policyholder, Mohadi, a resident of Raipur. The insurance coverage, awarded by Mohadi for Rs 10 lakh, underscores the

Indian Postal Department's commitment to safeguarding the financial well-being of its patrons. This initiative, facilitated through tie-ups with reputable insurance providers such as Tata AIG and Bajaj Company, offers affordable accident insurance options, providing peace of mind to individuals and families across the nation.

Expressing its solidarity with the bereaved family, the Indian Postal Department demonstrated its unwavering support by promptly disbursing the insurance claim. Senior Superintendent B.L. Jangde, accompanied by Assistant Superintendent Saurabh Srivastava, Sub Divisional Postal Inspector Hemlal Sahu, IPP Branch Manager Suryakant Sahu, and numerous departmental employees, presented the insurance payout to the deceased's mother.

Farmers need not worry, will get compensation: Sahu

Bemetara: Farmers have faced huge losses due to hailstorm and heavy rain in Bemetara. Recently, Bemetara MLA Deepesh Sahu met Collector Ranveer Sharma and held detailed discussion with the media regarding the crop damage caused due to unseasonal rain. While talking to media he said that we have met the District Collector and given instructions regarding the fact that the unseasonal rain and hailstorm that has occurred recently and the manner in which farmers' crops have been damaged in this rain is a matter of utmost concern. A survey is being conducted regarding this and on the basis of whatever survey report comes, compensation amount should be given to the farmers of the district. Sahu told the farmers of the district that there is no need for the farmers to worry, this government is definitely a farmer friendly government. Whatever loss the farmers have suffered will be given to them, our government always stands with the farmers. On this occasion, Vijay Sinha, former Municipality President, Harsh Vardhan Tiwari, Aditya Singh Rajput, Monty Sahu, Vikash Tamboli, Neetu Kothari, Yogesh Verma, Rakesh Mohan Sharma, Mahesh Singh Rajput were present.

Unusual Tradition: Village opts out of 'Holika Dahan' for 44 years

Cholera epidemic spurs unique ritual in Ratakak village



Arang, Mar 22:

In the quaint village of Ratakak, nestled just three kilometers away from the bustling block headquarters of Arang, a remarkable tradition has endured for four decades. Holika Dahan has not been performed for forty-four consecutive years.

The elders of Ratakak recount a solemn tale from the pasta devastating cholera epidemic that

ravaged the village during the Holi festivities forty-four years ago. The outbreak claimed numerous lives, plunging the community into mourning and despair. Amidst escalating tensions during the customary Holika Dahan, villagers unanimously decided to forego the ritual to prevent further discord and misfortune. When questioned about the persistent abstention from Holika

Dahan, village elders revealed a deep-seated belief that performing the ritual would invite calamity upon the village, leading to loss of life and property. They recounted tales of past tragedies, including the spread of foot-and-mouth disease among animals, which plagued both livestock and inhabitants. Since the cessation of Holika Dahan, tranquility has prevailed in Ratakak, with no untoward incidents reported in the village. Despite maintaining a platform for Holika Dahan, villagers refrain from visiting the site on the auspicious day, opting instead to celebrate Holi with fervor and joy, reveling in the colorful festivities. Remarkably, the village has not made any attempts to revive the tradition of Holika Dahan, content in their decision to prioritize community harmony and well-being over customary rituals.

Expenditure observer issues instructions to keep strict vigil

Jagdalpur, Mar 22:

Under the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, Expenditure Observer Ashutosh Pradhan, appointed by the Election Commission of India for Parliamentary Constituency 10 Bastar, held a meeting with the Election Expenditure Account Monitoring Teams and stressed upon everyone to discharge their responsibilities with mutual coordination. To work with team spirit for proper maintenance of election expenditure accounts of the candidates. In this direction, he asked the parties of different districts under the parliamentary constituency to estab-

- On inter-state border
- Took meeting with election expenditure, accounting and monitoring teams

lish better coordination. Expenditure Observer Pradhan discussed the election expenditure in detail and said that it is the responsibility of the AEO to ensure the arrangement of the entire accounting team. He took information about the deployment of VST, FST, SST and the facilities provided to them and gave necessary instructions. Expenditure Observer Pradhan asked the Media Certification and Monitoring



Committee to keep a constant watch on paid news and advertisements and directed to ensure coordination with other districts and take cognizance of paid news. In the meeting, he took detailed information from all the accounting teams about data maintenance, status of control room, call centre, FST, SST, VST, VVT etc. and said

that special vigil should be ensured in the interstate border of the assembly constituencies.

The number of static surveillance teams should be increased at those places where needed, the need for vehicles, cameras etc. should be considered. While discussing the cases of money transactions with the Income Tax

Department officer; he was asked to compulsorily inform the Income Tax Department during the seizure of cash of more than Rs 10 lakh.

The Expenditure Observer took information about the operating status and control of liquor shops by the Excise Department and gave instructions to keep a close watch on the

transportation and sale of illegal liquor, as well as the sale in bulk from liquor shops and sale in villages and border areas.

Asked to control the movement of liquor. In the meeting, maintenance of election expenditure of all the candidates as per the rate determination of materials at the district level, process of EMS etc. were discussed.

Sub-district election officers, police officers and assistant election expenditure observers of all the six districts falling under parliamentary constituency 10 Bastar and nodal officers of parties related to election expenditure accounting were present in the meeting.

Accused of minor kidnapper nabbed

- Had kidnapped in pretext of marriage

Jagdalpur, Mar 22: Bodhghat police of the district has arrested the accused Kanhaiya Vishwakarma, who abducted a minor girl on the pretext of marriage. According to the information received from the police, Bodhghat police station received information that the minor victim had eloped with himself on the pretext of marriage. Taking immediate action on the information under the leadership of police station in-charge Bodhghat, within 2 hours the minor



was rescued from the accused Kanhaiya Vishwakarma, S/o late Mohan Vishwakarma. On confirmation of rape of a minor, accused Kanhaiya Vishwakarma was booked under section 376.2(N) of IPC. And after action under 5(D)/6 POCSO Act, he was sent to the court on judicial remand today on Friday.

Collector reaches out to the fields to assess crop damage

Bemetara, Mar 22:

Unseasonal rain and hailstorm in different parts of the district for the last three-four days has had a direct impact on the crops. The destruction of crops has brought wrinkles on the faces of food providers. The district administration has also been instructed to assess the loss suffered by the farmers and start the process of providing crop insurance compensation.

Collector Ranbir Sharma himself reached the fields of affected farmers of village Hathguri and Dunda of the district on Thursday. Collector

Sharma went to the fields and inspected the crops and also talked to the affected farmers. He told the farmers that they will get crop insurance amount. He saw the standing and harvested crops of Rabi crops gram, wheat and Tiwara. He has instructed the employees of the crop insurance company to conduct every panchayat-wise survey and prepare an estimate of the crop loss and on the same basis, insurance compensation will be given to the farmers. Additional Collector Dr. Anil Bajpayee, SDM, Ghanshyam Tawar, Deputy Director Agriculture Mordhwaj

Dadsena along with Tehsildar Parmanand Banjare were present.

On one hand, due to rain and hailstorm in different parts of the last three days, the temperature has dropped significantly. On the other hand, it has caused a direct impact on the crops. Due to rain and hailstorm accompanied by strong winds, crops of wheat, gram and tiwara have suffered a lot.

Collector Ranbir Sharma said while discussing with the journalists that the sudden rain and hailstorm has wreaked havoc. Due to which the crops standing in the fields in many vil-

lages of the district have been completely destroyed. Crops have suffered a lot due to rain and hailstorm. Apart from this, horticultural crops like banana and papaya have also been damaged in the district. Due to which farmers are upset and worried. He said that this is likely to affect the production as well as quality of crops. He said that an estimate of about Rs 62.50 crore has been sent to the state government. Farmers who have taken crop insurance will get Rs 37,500 per hectare. Apart from this, cases of some farmers will also be made in RBC 6 (4).

Collector and SP inspected the country liquor warehouse

- Keep a close watch on illegal sale of liquor and take continuous action: Collector

Bemetara, Mar 21: In view of the Lok Sabha general elections and the festival of Holi, Collector Ranbir Sharma and Superintendent of Police Ramkrishna Sahu inspected the country liquor warehouse located at the district headquarters Kobia on Thursday from the security point of view. Checked the registers maintained during inspection, the liquor stock stored in the warehouse was verified. Collector Sharma took information about the price of available country liquor, storage capacity of country liquor etc and asked the

staff to maintain cleanliness around the shop. All the CCTV cameras installed in the warehouse were found to be in working condition, through which the country liquor stock is being continuously monitored. The Collector instructed the Excise officers to strictly follow the election instructions. He said that keep a

close watch on illegal sale of liquor and take continuous action. During the inspection, Additional Dr. Anil Bajpayee, CSP Jyoti Singh, District Excise Officer Nitin Khanduja, Excise Department employees were present. The Collector asked to maintain cleanliness and get the walls painted, and was also directed by Superintendent of Police Sahu to ensure proper lighting arrangements. Also, they were asked to operate the liquor shop only for the prescribed time as per the license conditions. The staff was informed not to sell liquor to

any person in more quantity than prescribed and maintain all records diligently every day. District Excise Officer Khanduja said that there are a total of 16 shops of domestic and foreign liquor in the district. In which there are 5-5 local and foreign liquor shops and 6 country liquor shops. Foreign liquor comes directly to the shop. Let it be informed that during the elections, continuous action is being taken by the Excise Department and apart from country liquor, action is also being taken against illegal sale of foreign liquor.

BJP's recognition should be cancelled for election donation scam: Mandavi

- Electoral bond is an example of BJP's corruption

Bijaur, Mar 21:

As per the instructions of the State Congress Committee, District Congress Committee Bijapur organized a press conference on Monday. Addressing the press conference, Bijapur MLA Vikram Mandavi said that the information related to the electoral bonds has made it clear that the electoral bonds will be given by the Modi government to the BJP was brought to benefit. This is the biggest election donation scam in the country so far. Modi government intimidated business institutions through central agencies, conducted raids, took wrong action and made recovery through electoral

bonds, he alleged. Mandavi charged that the Modi government also collected bribe through electoral bonds. The companies which gave election donations to BJP received thousands of crores of rupees. Contracts were given to those giving funds. Modi government stopped money laundering proceedings against companies who have donated to BJP, Mandavi charged. MLA Vikram Mandavi further said in the press conference that after the information related to electoral bonds came to light, it became clear that BJP had hatched the entire conspiracy for its own financial gain. That is why the State Bank wanted to hide it. According to the information that has come to light, more than 1,300 companies and individuals have donated in the form of electoral



bonds. BJP has received donations of more than Rs 6,000 crore since 2019. There are many cases of companies that have donated electoral bonds and immediately thereafter these companies have received huge benefits from the Modi government. Vikram Mandavi said that Megha Engineering and Infra has given more than Rs 800 crore in electoral bonds. In April 2023, he donated Rs 140 crore and just a month later, he got the Thane-Borivali Twin

Tunnel Project worth Rs 14,400 crore. Jindal Steel & Power paid Rs 25 crore in electoral bonds on 7 October 2022 and just 3 days later it managed to acquire the Gare Palma 4/6 coal mine on 10 October 2022. MLA Vikram Mandavi said in the press conference that "BJP recovered money through electoral bonds. Raid a company through ED/CBI/IT and then collect hafta ("donation") for the security of the company."

MLA Vikram Mandavi further said that at least 14 of the top 30 donors have been raided. An investigation earlier this year found that following ED/CBI/IT raids, companies were forced to donate to the BJP through electoral trusts. Many companies like Hetero Pharma and Yashoda Hospital have donated through electoral bonds. The Income Tax Department raided Shirdi Sai Electricals in December 2023 and in

January 2024 they donated Rs 40 crore through electoral bonds. Future Gaming & Hotels has donated over Rs 1200 crore making it the largest donor till date. While addressing the press conference, MLA Vikram Mandavi charged that ED and BJP together conspired to tarnish the image of Bhupesh Baghel. What is the relationship between BJP, ED and the makers of Mahadev App? Congress raised questions on the FIR written by

EOW on the basis of ED's letter against former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, saying that political conspiracy is clearly visible in the investigation of ED and the FIR of EOW. Why was this FIR registered even before the Lok Sabha elections? Why is the timing of all ED proceedings only to benefit BJP politically? In the press conference, Vikram Mandavi said that a case was registered against the former Chief Minister on the basis of Aseem Das's alleged statement. Aseem Das also denied that statement in the court and said that the statement was given under pressure from the ED. Even after that a case was registered against Bhupesh Baghel. That BJP leaders were not even interrogated on the basis of their relations with the same Aseem Das is enough to show the con-

spiracies of ED. During the press conference, District Congress Committee Bijapur District President Lalu Rathore, District Panchayat President Shankar Kudiam, District Panchayat Member Neena Rawatiya Udde, District Panchayat Member Basant Rao Tati, District President Bhairamgarh Dashrath Kunjam, Bijapur District Vice President Sonu Potam, Municipality Vice President Purushottam. Sallur, Spokesperson Jyoti Kumar, Media In-charge Rajesh Jain, Councilor Praveen Dongre, Councilor Kavita Yadav, Councilor Sahil Tigga, Women District President Geeta Kamal, Babulath Rathi, Idris Khan, Raja Gupta, Navneet Naidu, and Lilendra Durgam including a large number of Congress workers were present.

Russia attacks Ukrainian electrical power facilities

● Including major hydroelectric plant

Kyiv, Mar 22 (AP):

Russia attacked electrical power facilities in much of Ukraine, including the country's largest hydroelectric plant, causing widespread outages and killing at least five people, officials said Friday.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said more than 60 drones and about 90 rockets were used in the attack.

The attack came a day after Russia launched 31 missiles in a single attack on the capital. It was the largest assault on

Ukraine's energy infrastructure this year and one of the largest since the outbreak of the war, according to Ukrainian authorities.

"Even last winter, attacks on our energy system were not as large as they were this night," said the head of energy utility Ukrrenergoproekt, Volodymyr Kudrytskyi.

Last winter, Russia deliberately targeted Ukraine's energy infrastructure, resulting in frequent blackouts across the country. Many had warned that Russia might repeat this strategy ahead of this winter. But instead, Russia has launched massive missile and drone attacks prima-

rily directed at Ukraine's defense industry.

Every large-scale air attack depletes Ukraine's capabilities to repel Russian missiles. Zelenskyy has been urging Ukraine's Western allies for weeks to provide additional air defense systems and ammunition amid delays in aid from the U.S.

"With Russian missiles, there are no delays, like with aid packages to our state. Shaheds don't have indecisiveness, as do some politicians. It is important to understand the cost of delays and postponed decisions," Zelenskyy said, referring to Iranian-made Shahed drones, which are widely

used by Russia in the war.

The attacks caused a fire at the Dnipro Hydroelectric Station, which supplies electricity to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Europe's largest nuclear power installation.

The main external power line to the plant was cut off, International Atomic Energy Agency head Rafael Grossi said early Friday, but Ukraine's nuclear energy operator said it was restored several hours later.

The plant is occupied by Russian troops, and fighting around the plant has been a constant concern because of the potential for a nuclear accident.

ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE, IN KHAN YOUNIS



Palestinians look at a house destroyed in an Israeli airstrike, in Khan Younis, Friday, March 22.

Pak court sentences 40-year-old woman to life for burning pages of Quran

Lahore, Mar 22 (PTI):

A Pakistani court in Punjab province has sentenced a 40-year-old woman to life in prison after finding her guilty of burning pages of Islam's holy book, a court official said on Friday.

Asia Bibi, a Muslim resident of the thickly populated Bedian Road area of Lahore, was arrested by police in 2021 on a complaint by a man of her locality who accused her of burning a copy of the Quran outside her house.

"The Lahore sessions court on Thursday handed down life imprisonment to Asia Bibi on the charges of desecration of the Holy Quran," a court official told PTI.

She was subsequently

booked under the stringent blasphemy laws of the country.

Her counsel, advocate Sarmad Ali, pointed out fundamental flaws in the case against Asia saying she did not commit any blasphemy and she was implicated wrongfully by her neighbour to settle a personal score.

Besides, there have been glaring contradictions in the statements of the prosecution witnesses, he said, and questioned as to why the principal complainant was replaced by a police officer who was not a witness to the incident.

Prosecutor Mohazib Awaiz, however, said Asia was caught red-handed while burning a copy of the Quran which was also recovered from the spot.

Michelin-star chef Vikas Khanna set to open flagship Indian restaurant in NYC

New York, Mar 22 (PTI):

A new flagship Indian restaurant, helmed by Michelin-star chef Vikas Khanna, that celebrates India's rich culinary culture and pays an ode to the "mothers who have nurtured" generations, is all set to make its debut on Manhattan's gourmet stage.

"Bungalow", Khanna's restaurant "deeply rooted in India's social clubs of times past", will open its doors to New York City on March 23.

"Restaurants are all about the food but in New York, they are about food and heritage because there's so much of a combination of cultures here," Khanna told PTI ahead of his restaurant's



grand opening.

India's "culture and cuisine need to be celebrated in this country" and "Bungalow" will be that "home" connecting the diaspora as well as the next generation of Indian-American children, bringing them closer to the cultural roots and heritage of India, Khanna said.

"For me, the most important part of Bungalow" is that it will be a platform and a medium where the diaspora children "can connect to the Indian culture, our food, our celebrations", he said.

Khanna is partnering with Indian-born restaurateur Jimmy Rizvi, who

owns the popular eatery 'GupShup' in Manhattan, for 'Bungalow'. The new restaurant and cocktail bar is coming up in the city's East Village neighbourhood.

In an Instagram post, Khanna said 'Bungalow' "celebrates millions of home kitchens of India, our street vendors who perfected their recipes over generations, our cookbook authors, our food custodians of India and also most importantly, our mothers who have nurtured our souls for generations".

The restaurant will also celebrate the life and legacy of Khanna's late sister Radhika, who would have turned 50 on March 23, the day of the restaurant's opening.

EU Commission proposes to impose tariffs on imports of grain from Russia

Brussels, Mar 22 (AP):

The European Commission, the executive arm of the European Union, is proposing to member countries to impose tariffs on grain imports from Russia and Belarus, commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Thursday.

Speaking at the end of the opening day of a summit of EU leaders in Brussels, Von der Leyen said the move would prevent Russia from destabilizing the EU market with its imports of cereals, oilseeds and derived products.

"It will stop Russia from using the revenues from the export of these goods to the European

Union, and it will ensure that illegal Russian exports of stolen Ukrainian grain do not enter the EU market," she said.

Von der Leyen did not give any details about the value of the proposed tariffs.

Russia was one of the main trade partners of the European Union before it invaded Ukraine.

In support to Ukraine in the war against Russia, the EU has imposed several rounds of sanctions on Russia. The measures have targeted the energy sector, banks, the world's biggest diamond mining company and other businesses and made Russian officials subject to asset freezes and travel bans.

Israeli assault on Gaza's Rafah would be a 'mistake' and isn't needed to defeat Hamas: Blinken

Cairo, Mar 22 (AP):

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Thursday a major Israeli ground assault on the southern Gaza town of Rafah would be "a mistake" and unnecessary to defeating Hamas, underscoring the further souring of relations between the United States and Israel.

Blinken, on his sixth urgent Mideast mission since the war began, spoke after huddling with top Arab diplomats in Cairo for discussions over efforts for a cease-fire and over ideas for Gaza's post-conflict future.

He said an "immediate, sustained ceasefire" with the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas was urgently needed and that gaps were narrowing in indirect negotiations



that US, Egypt and Qatar have spent weeks mediating.

Blinken heads to Israel on Friday to meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his war cabinet. The growing disagreements between Netanyahu and President Joe Biden over the prosecution of the war will likely overshadow the talks — particularly over Netanyahu's determination to launch a ground as-

sault on Rafah, where more than a million Palestinians have sought refuge from devastating Israeli ground and air strikes further north.

Netanyahu has said that without an invasion of Rafah, Israel can't achieve its goal of destroying Hamas after its deadly October 7 attack and taking of hostages that triggered Israel's bombardment and offensive in Gaza. "A major military

operation in Rafah would be a mistake, something we don't support. And, it's also not necessary to deal with Hamas, which is necessary," Blinken told a news conference in Cairo. A major offensive would mean more civilian deaths and worsen Gaza's humanitarian crisis, he said, adding that his talks on Rafah in Israel on Friday and next week in Washington will be to share alternative action.

Netanyahu, on a roughly 45-minute call with GOP senators on Wednesday, pledged to ignore warnings about a Rafah operation. He also took aim at Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer's condemnation last week of the civilian death toll in Gaza and his call for new elections in Israel in a speech that Biden later said was "good."

Ram Mandir Rath Yatra to travel 8,000 miles, visit 851 temples in 48 US states

Washington, Mar 22 (PTI):

The Ram Mandir Rath Yatra will kick off from Chicago in US on Monday to travel to 851 temples in 48 states, crossing more than 8,000 miles over the next 60 days, organisers said on Thursday.

The rath or chariot built over a Toyota Sienna van will carry statues of Lord Ram, Goddess Sita, Lakshman, and Hanuman, along with special prasadam from the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and kalash of Prana Pratishtha Pujit Akshat, according to Amitabh Mittal, general secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA), which is organising the yatra.

"The Ram Mandir opening has filled with joy the hearts of over 1.5 billion Hindus around the world and has resulted in a re-



newed energy and faith. The nationwide Rath Yatra will start on March 25 from Chicago in the USA and travel for over 8000 miles. It will cover 851 temples in the USA and around 150 temples in Canada," Mittal told PTI.

The Canada section of the Ratha Yatra — separate one — is being organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of Canada. It will travel to

more than 150 temples in Canada.

"The objective of this Rath Yatra is to raise awareness, educate and empower Hindu Dharma," said Tejal Shah of the Hindu Mandir Empowerment Council (HMEC), which is the apex body for all the temples in the United States.

The yatra will provide the opportunity to all Hindus to unite and participate,

which will lead to revival of Hindu ethos and Dharma, she said.

"It is very important for us and especially for our future generation to stay united and strong in the campaign to raise awareness and spread the Hindu Dharma across the world," Shah said.

According to Mittal, several dozen volunteers have registered with the VHPA to help plan and organise this yatra. This is for the first time in the US that a yatra of this kind has been organised by the Hindu community that would take the van to more than 800 temples in the US.

The yatra will culminate on April 23, the auspicious day of Shree Hanuman Jayanti, at Sugar Grove, Illinois. The Rath Yatra would cover not only all the major temples but also even smaller ones.

US surgeons transplant a gene-edited pig kidney into a patient for the first time

New York, Mar 22 (AP):

Doctors in Boston have transplanted a pig kidney into a 62-year-old patient, the latest experiment in the quest to use animal organs in humans.

Massachusetts General Hospital said Thursday that it's the first time a genetically modified pig kidney has been transplanted into a living person. Previously, pig kidneys have been temporarily transplanted into brain-dead donors. Also, two men received heart transplants from pigs, although both died within months.

The patient, Richard "Rick" Slayman of Weymouth, Massachusetts, is recovering well from the surgery last Saturday and is expected to be discharged soon, doctors said Thursday.

Dr. Tatsuo Kawai, the transplant surgeon, said the team believes the pig kidney will work for at least two years. If it fails, Slayman could go back on dialysis, said kidney specialist Dr. Winfred Williams. He noted that unlike the pig heart recipients who were very sick, Slayman is "actually quite robust".

PM MODI IN BHUTAN



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed on his arrival, in Thimphu, Friday, March 22.

UN chief urges the EU to avoid 'double standards' over Gaza and Ukraine

Brussels, Mar 22 (AP):

European Union leaders were urged Thursday to show the same respect for international law in Gaza as they aim to uphold in Ukraine, as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians face dire food shortages and possible famine.

At an EU summit in Brussels, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealed to the leaders to remain strong and united in their respect of standards enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law.

"The basic principle of international humanitarian



law is the protection of civilians.

We must stick to principles in Ukraine as in Gaza without double standards," Guterres told reporters, standing alongside EU Council President Charles Michel, who chaired the summit. A UN food agency

has warned that "famine is imminent" in northern Gaza. Israel, meanwhile, appears determined to launch a ground offensive in the southern city of Rafah, where many people have sought refuge from the fighting.

The 27-nation EU has long been deeply divided in its approach to Israel and the Palestinians, and the devastating Hamas attack on southern Israel on October 7 laid bare those differences. But as the death toll in Gaza mounts to nearly 32,000 people, more countries are supporting calls for a cease-fire.



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Patanjali Ad Ethics

The directive from the Supreme Court summoning yoga guru Ramdev and Patanjali Ayurved Managing Director Acharya Balkrishna underscores a critical issue plaguing the advertising landscape: the proliferation of misleading claims about medicinal efficacy. The petition filed by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) sheds light on a pressing concern that demands immediate attention. The foundation of any claim regarding the medicinal benefits of products, whether allopathic, ayurvedic, or homeopathic, must rest upon verifiable evidence. The promise made by Patanjali to refrain from asserting curative properties and to abstain from disparaging other medical systems appears to have been breached. This breach not only undermines the integrity of the company but also poses a grave risk to public health. The Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954, serves as a bulwark against such deceptive marketing practices. However, its efficacy in deterring unscrupulous entities remains questionable. The penalties stipulated by the Act—imprisonment for up to six months for initial convictions and up to one year for subsequent convictions—are insufficient to dissuade those who prioritize profit over ethics. As custodians of public health, it is incumbent upon us to advocate for legislative reform that reflects the evolving landscape of advertising and consumer protection. The proposed amendments to the Act by the Health Ministry in 2020 present a timely opportunity to fortify our regulatory framework. These amendments should not only extend the scope of the Act but also enhance the severity of penalties to effectively deter offenders. While legislative measures are indispensable, a concerted effort from all stakeholders is imperative in combating misinformation. The dissemination of scientific data and evidence-based information should serve as the cornerstone of our collective endeavor to safeguard public health. Doctors, patients, pharmacists, and pharmaceutical companies must collaborate to counter the misinformation propagated through various channels, including social media. In addition to strengthening legal provisions, it is essential to establish robust mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement. Regulatory bodies must be endowed with adequate resources and authority to investigate complaints promptly and impose sanctions swiftly. Transparency and accountability should form the bedrock of regulatory oversight, instilling confidence in consumers and ensuring adherence to ethical standards by advertisers. The onus lies not only on regulatory authorities but also on consumers to exercise vigilance and discernment. Critical evaluation of advertisements and scrutiny of claims can empower individuals to make informed choices regarding their health and well-being. By fostering a culture of skepticism and inquiry, we can cultivate resilience against deceptive marketing tactics.

Clearing the Air

The recent revelations from the World Air Quality Report are a clarion call for immediate and sustained action. India finds itself in an unenviable position as the third most polluted country globally, with New Delhi retaining its infamous title as the capital with the poorest air quality. This alarming reality demands urgent intervention and a comprehensive overhaul of existing strategies. Delhi's PM2.5 levels soared to a staggering 92.7 micrograms per cubic meter in 2023, underscoring the gravity of the situation. Shockingly, a staggering 96 per cent of Indians are breathing air that fails to meet the safety standards outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO). This is not merely an environmental issue; it's a public health crisis of monumental proportions, with far-reaching consequences for individuals, communities, and the nation as a whole. While initiatives such as banning older vehicles and implementing odd-even schemes have shown promise in alleviating immediate concerns, a more concerted effort is imperative. Addressing complex and deeply ingrained issues such as crop residue burning, industrial emissions, and vehicular pollution demands multifaceted strategies and sustained commitment from all stakeholders. The consequences of inaction are dire, with respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular diseases, and premature deaths continuing to plague communities nationwide. The economic toll is equally alarming, with healthcare costs skyrocketing and productivity plummeting as a result of absenteeism and reduced efficiency in the workforce. Engaging in political finger-pointing serves no purpose other than to distract from the urgency of the matter. What we need are comprehensive policies at both the Central and state levels that transcend political divides and prioritize the well-being of citizens. This entails investing in cleaner technologies, rigorously enforcing regulations, and launching extensive public awareness campaigns to foster a culture of environmental stewardship. International cooperation is essential in tackling this global challenge. Collaborative efforts can facilitate the exchange of best practices, technology transfer, and financial assistance for developing nations grappling with this pervasive issue. By fostering partnerships and alliances on the global stage, India can leverage collective expertise and resources to implement effective solutions and mitigate the impact of air pollution on a broader scale. Individuals, too, have a critical role to play in combating air pollution and safeguarding public health. Embracing sustainable practices such as reducing energy consumption, using public transportation, and advocating for green initiatives in their communities can significantly reduce personal carbon footprints and contribute to collective efforts to improve air quality. The time for action is now. We cannot afford to delay or remain complacent in the face of such a pressing threat. The detrimental effects of air pollution extend far beyond environmental degradation; they threaten our very health, well-being, and economic prosperity. Let us unite in our resolve to clear the air and pave the way for a sustainable future for generations to come. Together, we can make a difference and create a cleaner, healthier environment for all.

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

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR CAMPAIGNS



Union Minister & BJP candidate Rajeev Chandrasekhar interacts with the students of LBS Institute of Technology for Women during his election campaign ahead of upcoming Lok Sabha Polls, in Thiruvananthapuram, Friday, March 22.

Caught between Religion and politics: Democracy's dark dimension

**M.R.LALU**

Without being cynical even a bit on the personality of Rahul Gandhi, the lone celebrity leader of the Congress who comes from the most powerful political family, the status that qualifies him to be a politician among the notables, on whom most of the members of the INDI Alliance look up to for a better leadership; I have a question to ask, as to what makes him phenomenally land in the captivity of the BJP intellectually so that the saffron party and its leaders feel free to make satirical conclusions on his statements that are capable to cause serious political ramifications to him and his party. For instance, let us examine his concluding address delivered at the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Mumbai, which the Prime Minister has dramatically framed as a reason to lash out at him. Rahul Gandhi's remark on the concept of "Shakti" in Hinduism has blown the lid of one more fresh controversy that the Prime Minister has alleged was made against the spiritual concept of Shakti the deity worshipped by Hindus which according to him, was not only derogatory and disrespectful on the Hindu concept of Shakti alone but also a remark against the women of the country. Narendra Modi scathingly called it an insult to Hinduism. Now, what among the statements of Rahul Gandhi made this fresh controversy? While addressing the INDI rally, Rahul had said: "There is a word 'Shakti' in Hinduism. We are fighting against a shakti too. The question is, where is the shakti and what does it mean for us?"

Undoubtedly, Rahul Gandhi was sharpening his arrow against the Prime Minister and the statements he spelt out throughout his speech were literally attacking the government and its leader. Then, what was the fallout? Why did the BJP and the Prime Minister take it far to that extent of calling it an attack on Hinduism? A fresh look at the statement delivered by Rahul Gandhi does not qualify any resentment except the word Hinduism. The statement could have been presented without taking the name of a particular religion. Instead of referring to Hinduism, he could have said the word Shakti is a profound expression in Sanskrit or so. But, as usual, the BJP caught his misquote afresh, a new subject to politically choreograph Rahul Gandhi and his side of the alliance. The Congress and its allies should have the basic sense on the vocabulary they would choose to fling allegations at the ruling party, especially its leader Narendra Modi.

Religions being the most inflammable in India's present political climate, Rahul Gandhi's utterances on Hinduism were sure to catch fire and what Modi did was to wait for the Gandhi scion to make remarks that he would further use to fuel anti-Congress sentiments. Though he refuses to take Rahul Gandhi's name directly, Modi leaves no chance for using his statements in public. This has two reasons. Modi absolutely understands the compulsion of the Congress and the parties that stand by it. The INDI block does not have a face that enjoys the level of ac-

ceptance and attraction that the Gandhi scion does. Moreover, it is important for the saffron camp to deliberately project the kindergarten mindset of the Congress and its leaders so as to dismantle its efforts to bag relevance ever since it faced its devastating collapse. It's also a trap that the ruling dispensation spreads for its opposition parties in order to get them lost on stray issues, while the BJP would belligerently come hammer and tongs on its achievement in the government.

Adding fuel to the fire, derogatory remarks made on Hinduism by the DMK, and other members of the opposition camp would also be full-grown and manipulative as the elections near in the BJP's scheme of things bringing collateral damage to the INDI framework. The saffron party and the Prime Minister would certainly draw instances from the archives where the Congress and its allies spew aggression on Hinduism with its complete inflammability. To count among the Congress insensitivities, the colossal and the most impactful was its approach on the Ram Temple at Ayodhya and its absence from its consecration. While in power, the Congress stance on Lord Ram embarrassed the country. The government led by the Congress in an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court questioned the authenticity and veracity of Lord Ram depicted in the Valmiki Ramayana. Though Valmiki Ramayana and Ramcharitmanas formed an important part of Indian literature, they could not be said to be historical records, the Congress claimed.

With multiple narratives piling on its account, mostly belittling on what Hinduism stands for, the Congress and its allies once again seem to struggle to survive its depleting non-pragmatic existence. The alliance, with its faith being shown in Rahul Gandhi, needs to help him learn the basics of framing narratives, especially when the country is conspiringly captured and suffocated by the demeanors of immature politicians and their wayward political prologues and comments. Winning a General Election is

a Himalayan task for all parties that are there in the fray. But for the political opposition of Narendra Modi, it is clearly an uphill task. That being the case, an internal leadership challenge would further stretch the dilemma of the INDI block. Squeezed not just by the controversial mishmash of the alliance, but also by the harsh dissonance on the comments made by its members would also be fulfilling the dreamy progress of the BJP pulling the grim popularity of the Congress and other parties again to a lower level. Extreme patriotic sensationalism has gripped the country with its burning issues being thrown into the cold storage.

Obviously, the media pronounce what the ruling class dictates and amid such chaotically ideological primetime arguments, more scathingly illicit and disproportionate attacks and counter attacks would reveal the predictability of their dishonesty. Caught between religion and politics, India's democracy seems to be once again struggling to land the monumental exercise of the electoral process on the ground without any damage. And the voter, before he casts his vote, has a reason to think twice to decide as to what his priorities are. Concoction of irrelevant subjects should not attract his voting right. The one he would use his voting right should be for the country first and the country last. One of the largest democratic exercises in the world, India's National Election cannot be stumbling on a litany of abuse on religions, race, societies and even individuals. Being the largest democracy, it is not hard for us to be the best. Elections should be a warm fight fought between ideal minds significantly tossing their views with great respect and of course religion should not be a paratrooper, a savior dominating the show.

(Writer is a Freelance Journalist, Pathanamthitta Kerala. Email: mr-lalu30@gmail.com. The views expressed above are the author's own. They do not necessarily reflect the views of Central Chronicle.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Adverting urban water crisis

Water shortage in Bengaluru becomes a threatening predicament indicator to the rest of the states in India. As it becomes a IT hub, soil turns into concrete and that's one of the reason for not sipping the water into the ground. In 2017, the Environment Management and Policy Research institute expressed that 85% of remaining water bodies were severely polluted. And according to 2018 study showing that 21 cities including Bengaluru, will be used up of ground water by 2030. Most Indian urban cities are not taking water management seriously and solutions are only laying on the books and papers only. Bengaluru's water problem turn an alarm to the country.

Rina Roy Karmakar; Durgapur (WB).

Patanjali's Advertising Odyssey

The Supreme Court summons Baba Ramdev and Balkrishna over persistent dissemination of misleading advertisements, casting a shadow over Patanjali's credibility. Ramdev's history of false claims, exemplified by the contentious Coronil debacle, prompts judicial scrutiny and ire. The court chastises both Patanjali and the government for negligence, emphasizing accountability in safeguarding public trust. Despite assurances, Patanjali's unrelenting promotional tactics defy court orders, inviting contempt proceedings. Ramdev's foray into IPL bidding elicits skepticism, exposing commercial ambitions at odds with his spiritual persona. As legal battles unfold, questions loom over corporate impunity and ethical advertising practices.

Yash Pal Ralhan, Jalandhar

Pakistan's Responsibility

Pakistan's recent airstrikes in Afghan provinces reveal a stark irony, considering its past reliance on Kabul for strategic support against India. Islamabad must rectify its course to avoid repercussions. Its ongoing backing of terrorism in India is reprehensible. Rather than unjustly accusing India, Pakistan must cease sheltering terrorists. The global community should ensure Pakistan's accountability and mediate a productive dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan to foster peace in South Asia.

MK Nair, Raipur

Image Fallout

The assault on five international students during their hostel prayer is alarming, tarnishing India's global reputation and fueling concerns over rising Islamophobia. Thorough investigation is imperative, with swift justice for the perpetrators to convey zero tolerance. Mishandling could exacerbate negative perceptions in the Arab world regarding Indian Muslims' plight.

Shive Kumar Mishra, Raipur

India's Pursuit of Happiness: Beyond Materialism

**Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee**

In the latest iteration of the UN World Happiness Report, Finland retained its title as the world's happiest country for the

seventh consecutive year. Meanwhile, Afghanistan grapples at the bottom of the happiness index, underscoring the stark contrasts in global well-being. Surprisingly, despite significant governmental initiatives, India finds itself at a perplexing 126th position among 146 nations surveyed.

The Modi government's fervent efforts, including the abrogation of Article 370, landmark infrastructure projects like the Ram Mandir, and social welfare schemes such as the Triple Talaq and CAA Acts, have not translated into widespread happiness among the populace. The provision of 81.35 crore free ration, Ujwala Gas connections, and free housing, among others, has failed to uplift the nation's spirits as expected.

Drawing from the wisdom of Aristotle, who posited that

"Happiness depends upon ourselves," it becomes apparent that true contentment cannot be derived solely from external factors. Material possessions and governmental policies, while significant, cannot guarantee individual or collective happiness. India's stagnant happiness ranking prompts introspection into areas for improvement. Despite strides in various sectors, sobering statistics reveal areas of concern:

India's press freedom ranking at 161 out of 180 countries highlights limitations on free expression, essential for societal well-being. Additionally, alarming figures from the FAO Report indicate that 74.1% of Indians struggle to afford a healthy diet, contributing to food insecurity and malnutrition.

The Global Hunger Index placing India at 107 out of 121 countries underscores the persistent

challenges in addressing hunger and poverty. Furthermore, India's position at 128 out of 177 in the global Women, Peace, and Security Index calls attention to gender disparities and women's safety concerns.

In educational attainment, India's ranking at 145 out of 191 countries reflects the need for quality education accessible to all. The decline in talent competitiveness, from 83rd a decade ago to 103rd in 2023, raises questions about India's capacity to nurture and retain skilled professionals.

Despite these shortcomings, India ranks among the top in less desirable categories. It is the third most polluted country globally, with 42 Indian cities among the top 50 polluted cities according to IQ Air. Additionally, India's reputation as the "rape capital of the world," as per the Women, Peace, and

Security Index, underscores systemic issues requiring urgent attention.

However, amidst these challenges, lies an empowering truth: personal happiness is within individual control. As individuals grow and evolve, they uncover what truly motivates them, forging their dreams and beliefs. True happiness emanates from self-assurance and clarity of purpose.

In the quest for national happiness, India must transcend materialism and embrace holistic well-being. While governmental policies play a pivotal role, fostering a society where individuals are empowered to pursue their aspirations is paramount. By prioritizing freedom, equality, education, and environmental stewardship, India can pave the path towards genuine happiness and fulfillment for all its citizens.

BRIEF

New chairperson



Chennai: The Managing Director of Coimbatore-based Chandra Textiles Private Limited, R Nandini has been elected as the chairperson of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Southern Region for the year 2024-25. Prior to taking up the new role, she served the industry body as its Deputy Chairperson.

EV chargers

New Delhi: Auto components maker Uno Minda on Friday said it has tied up with Starcharge Energy to manufacture and sell electric vehicle supply equipment in the country. The company has entered into a technical license agreement with Starcharge Energy Pte for wall-mounted AC chargers designed for home charging. "This collaboration further strengthens our dedication to 'Make in India' and for accelerating the nation's transition to a sustainable and electrified future," Uno Minda Group CMD Nirmal K Minda said in a statement.

Largest economy



Bengaluru: India will surpass Japan and Germany to emerge as the third-largest economy and also the third-largest stock market in the world in the next five years, India's G20 Sherpa and former NITI Aayog CEO, Amitabh Kant said.

Tax demand

New Delhi: Fortis Healthcare Ltd on Friday said one of its subsidiaries has received a tax demand of Rs 89.53 crore, including interest for the assessment year 2022-23. Fortis Hospitals Ltd, a material subsidiary of the company has received an Income tax assessment order dated March 21, 2024, where in a demand of Rs 89.53 crore, including interest of Rs 9.54 crore has been raised, Fortis Healthcare said in a regulatory filing. "The company is evaluating the said order and will take appropriate actions in due course," it added. The expected financial implication on Fortis Hospitals Ltd is Rs 89.53 crore, the company said.

Govt rejects Hindustan Zinc's plan to split company: Mines Secretary

New Delhi, Mar 22:

The mines ministry has rejected a proposal by Vedanta group's firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd to split the company into different entities, a top official on Friday said. The government is the largest minority shareholder in Hindustan Zinc, owning a 29.54 per cent stake in the company. "We have not agreed to the proposal," Mines Secretary V L Kantha Rao told reporters on the sidelines of a function here. Hindustan Zinc had earlier announced its plans of spinning off business into separate entities, including zinc and silver, to increase its market capitalisation. When asked about the reason for the rejection of the proposal, the Secretary said "Whatever report we have in front of us are not convinced as a shareholder." Hindustan Zinc had earlier said that



it has engaged a leading advisory firm to study its plans to spin off the business. Earlier, Hindustan Zinc had said the company's board has decided to undertake a "comprehensive review of its corporate structure for unlocking potential value". According to a regulatory filing, the move is aimed at creating separate legal entities for zinc, lead, silver, and recycling businesses. The strategic objectives outlined by the company's board for undertaking such an exercise included

unlocking value for all stakeholders and creating businesses that are positioned to better capitalise their distinct market positions and deliver long-term growth. Besides, the move aims at forming appropriate capital structure and capital allocation policies based on business-specific dynamics and sharpen focus on core competencies and appropriate realignment of the company's resources. India is looking at Africa for minerals, including cobalt, and other critical minerals, Mines Secretary V L Kantha Rao said on Friday. The country is still engaging with Australia for lithium blocks, he said. Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a function here, the secretary said, "In Africa, we are looking at Zambia, Namibia, Congo, Ghana and Mozambique for critical minerals."

Stock markets rise for 3rd session; Sensex gains 190 pts

Mumbai, Mar 22:

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher for the third straight session on Friday, following gains in index majors L&T, ITC and Maruti and a record rally in the US markets after the Federal Reserve indicated three rate cuts this year.

After falling in early trade, markets staged a smart recovery. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 190.75 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 72,831.94. However, a sharp correction in IT and tech stocks limited the rise. During the day, it jumped 474.43 points or 0.65 per cent to 73,115.62. The NSE Nifty advanced 84.80 points or 0.39 per cent to 22,096.75. From the Sensex basket, Sun Pharma, Maruti, IndusInd Bank, Titan, ITC, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro and JSW Steel were the major gainers. On the other hand,



Infosys, Wipro, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra and Bajaj Finserv were among the laggards. The BSE IT index fell 2 per cent.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower, while Tokyo ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading on a mixed note. Wall Street tapped fresh record peaks on Thursday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,826.97 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.22 per cent to USD 85.59 a barrel.

RBI offices dealing with govt business to remain open on Mar 30, 31

Mumbai, Mar 22:

RBI offices dealing with government business and all designated branches of agency banks will keep their counters open as per normal working hours on Saturday and Sunday for the convenience of taxpayers. Electronic transactions can be done till the stipulated time on both days (March 30 and March 31), the Reserve Bank said in a statement on special measures for the current financial year (2023-24), in wake of annual closing of government accounts. "Transactions through National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) and Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) System will continue up to 2400 hours as hitherto on March 31, 2024," it said with a view to provide greater convenience to taxpayers. In order to facilitate government receipts and payments, necessary arrangements have also been made to conduct special clearing operations across the country, it added.

Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand stresses on better management of water in agriculture sector

New Delhi, Mar 22:

Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand on Friday expressed concern that the country uses 2-3 times more water to produce one tonne of agriculture crop compared to several developed as well as developing nations and stressed on better water management in the farm sector. Addressing an event organised on the occasion of World Water Day 2024 by Dhanuka Agritech Ltd, he stressed on better management of water in the agriculture sector. Chand noted that the demand for food and water is increasing because of rising population and also income growth. He said the demand for water is also increasing because of preferences for water-intensive crops like rice. The area under paddy has increased. The Niti Aayog member pointed out that the total acreage of rabi (winter-sown) crops has



increased when there is no rainfall. "India uses 2-3 times more water for producing 1 tonne of crop compared to several developed and developing nations," Chand said, while emphasising on the need for better water management. He said the state governments should promote cultivation according to local environmental and geographical conditions. Wastage of resources in irrigation projects, faulty crop pattern, wrong technique of crop cultivation, and growing of off-season vegetables have aggravated the problem, the Niti Aayog mem-

ber said. Chand highlighted that the government in the last few years has given a lot of emphasis on augmenting irrigation facilities for the agriculture sector. In the last few years, he said the area under irrigation has increased by 1 per cent every year taking it from 47 per cent to 55 per cent. Union Agriculture Commissioner P K Singh said, "In collaboration with the Jal Shakti ministry, we are exploring ways to maximize usage of surface water. For example, if water from a canal is presently irrigating 100 hectare of agricultural land, how can we take it to 150 hectare using various means but the same amount of water." R C Agrawal, Deputy Director General (Agricultural Education), ICAR, stressed upon the need to educate farmers and youths about right water usage in the agriculture sector.

NEW LAUNCH



Actor Sushmita Sen during the launch of a Shopper Stop Beauty store, in Kolkata.

Bajaj Auto working on CNG bike, to hit road in June: MD

Pune, Mar 22:

Bajaj Auto is developing a portfolio of clean fuel CNG motorcycles, and the first such bike will hit the market in June, Bajaj Auto Managing Director Rajiv Bajaj said here on Friday. The bike will run on CNG and would hit the roads in June, he said while announcing Bajaj Group's commitment of Rs 5,000 crore towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spent over the next 5 years. The new bike would target mileage-conscious consumers and is expected to launch under a different brand. It is expected that CNG bikes will be priced higher than their petrol counterparts due to the higher cost of manufacturing besides having a special tank to offer petrol and CNG fuel options to offer convenience to customers. Bajaj also said that Pulsar launched 20 years



ago will hit 2 million units soon. Meanwhile, the Bajaj Group committed Rs 5,000 crore to social impact initiatives over 5 years, with a focus on skill development, under 'Bajaj Beyond' the Group's new identity for all its CSR and charitable programmes. This will benefit over 2 crore of tomorrow's youth and enable them to take advantage of the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities offered by India's growing economy. "Social responsibility is deeply entwined in the Bajaj Family's businesses and its philanthropic endeavours through genera-

tions. In the last 10 years alone, the Bajaj Group has contributed close to Rs 4,000 crore towards CSR initiatives largely focused on skilling and education, health, livelihood, water conservation, and several other areas of development," Bajaj Auto Chairman Niraj Bajaj said. The Bajaj Group's humanitarian efforts are channeled through several institutions. The Jannalal Bajaj Foundation, Jankidevi Bajaj Gram Vikas Sanstha, and the Kamalnayan Bajaj Hospital, among others, have worked unceasingly to uplift and empower communities, he said. The Group stays firmly committed to co-creating a thriving and inclusive future for all Indians, he added. Bajaj Group companies include Bajaj Auto, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Electricals, and Mukand Ltd.

India's outlook for next fiscal positive: FinMin

New Delhi, Mar 22:

The finance ministry on Friday said with an uptick in private investment and inflation trending down, India's outlook for the next fiscal looks positive. The Monthly Economic Review also said that inclusion of Indian bonds in Bloomberg bond index from January 2025 should bolster inflows. It said robust investment activity is driving growth amid a steady rise in consumption. "The continued focus on public investment seems to have crowded in private investment," said the February edition of the review by Department of Economic Affairs. The National Statistical Office (NSO) has revised upwards the GDP growth estimate for current fiscal to 7.6 per cent from 7.3 per cent. India grew above 8 per cent for three consecutive quarters, reaffirming its position as a standout performer amid sluggish global growth trends.

Samsung launches Galaxy A55 5G, Galaxy A35 5G mobile phones

Jaipur, Mar 22:

Consumer electronics brand Samsung on Thursday announced the launch of Galaxy A55 5G and Galaxy A35 5G mobile phones in the mid-premium segment. The new A series devices have multiple features including Gorilla Glass Victus plus protection, camera features enhanced by AI, and a tamper-resistant security solution, the Samsung Knox Vault, amongst many other new features, a company official said. "Galaxy A series has been the highest-selling smartphone series in India for the last two years, showcasing its popularity among the consumers. The launch of Galaxy A55 5G and A35 5G reinforces our commitment to make flagship-like innovations accessible to all," Hirendra Kumar Rathod, Senior Director, MX Business, Samsung India,



said in a release. He said that for the first time, Galaxy A55 5G gets a metal frame and Galaxy A35 5G gets a premium glass back. Rathod informed that the new A series smartphones come with multiple innovative AI-enhanced camera features. Also, Samsung Knox Vault Security comes for the first time in A-Series mak-

Airtel announces special IPL Bonanza offers starting at Rs 39

New Delhi: Cricket fever captivates the nation once again as the biggest T20 league starts today. Airtel has unveiled special, limited period IPL Bonanza offers for its users starting from Rs 39. For all prepaid customers, Airtel has revised its existing Unlimited Data packs of Rs 49 and Rs 99 to special two new packs at INR 39 and INR 79 respectively. The packs are customized for IPL 2024 to offer uninterrupted connectivity to Airtel cricket fans and ensure they don't run out of data while streaming the matches. For Airtel DTH users, Airtel Digital TV has associated with Star Sports to elevate viewer experience during the ongoing IPL 2024 season. This association enables bringing Star Sports' innovative 4K service on Airtel Digital TV, just in time for more immersive experience for cricket fans this IPL season. Users can now enjoy thrilling, uninterrupted action of the TATA IPL 2024 on their streaming device seamlessly with Airtel from March 22, 2024.

Forex kitty rises by USD 6.40 bn to USD 642.50 bn

Mumbai, Mar 22:

India's forex reserves increased by USD 6.396 billion to USD 642.492 billion for the week ended March 15, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had risen by USD 10.47 billion to USD 636.095 billion. In October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an all-time high of USD 645 billion. The reserves took a hit as the central bank deployed the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments since last year. For the week ended March 15, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 6.034 billion to USD 568.386 billion, the data showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves increased by USD 425 million to USD 51.14 billion during the week, the RBI said.

Maruti Suzuki recalls over 16k units of Baleno, WagonR to fix fuel pump



New Delhi, Mar 22: Maruti Suzuki India on Friday said it is recalling over 16,000 units of Baleno

and WagonR to fix a possible defect in a part of the fuel pump motor. The company is recalling 11,851

units of Baleno and 4,190 units of WagonR manufactured between July 30, 2019 and November 1, 2019, the

country's largest carmaker said in a regulatory filing. It is suspected that there is a possible defect in a part of the fuel pump motor, which in a rare case may lead to engine stalling or engine starting issue, it added. Affected vehicle owners will be contacted by Maruti Suzuki authorised dealer workshops for replacement of the part, free of cost, in due course of time, the automaker stated.

Rupee falls 35 paise to hit all-time low of 83.48 against US dollar

Mumbai, Mar 22:

The rupee depreciated 35 paise to settle at an all-time low of 83.48 against the American currency on Friday, tracking a surging greenback against major crosses in the overseas markets and weak Asian peers. Forex traders said foreign fund outflows also weighed on the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened weak at 83.28 against the greenback, and finally settled at a record

low of 83.48 (provisional), registering a fall of 35 paise from the previous close of 83.13. In intraday trade, the rupee touched a low of 83.52 against the American currency. The rupee had earlier recorded its lowest closing level of 83.40 on December 13, 2023. According to Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, the US dollar strengthened on weak euro and pound. Euro declined as the Swiss National Bank (SNB) surprised the



markets by cutting interest rates by 25 bps to 1.5 per cent, which raised the odds of a rate cut by the European Central Bank (ECB) in June 2024. The pound also fell after the Bank of England kept interest rates unchanged at 5.25 per cent. Two hawkish

committee members, who voted for a rate hike in the previous meeting, also voted for a no rate hike. Robust economic data from the US also favoured the US dollar, Choudhary said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.31 per cent higher at 104.32 on Friday. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.05 per cent to USD 85.74 per barrel.

District-wide voter awareness campaign gains momentum

DEO and Collector spearhead voter engagement initiatives

Central Chronicle News

Khairagarh, Mar 22: In a concerted effort to bolster civic engagement and ensure informed participation in the democratic process, a comprehensive voter awareness campaign is underway across the district, orchestrated under the dynamic leadership of Collector and District Election Officer Chandrakant Verma.

Under the ambit of the SVEEP plan, a plethora of events aimed at enlightening voters have been meticulously organized at various locales across the district. Notably, a pivotal meeting convened by officials from 89 village organizations, including the Sankul organization in Khairagarh, Jalbandha, and Thelkadih, under the aegis of the District Panchayat Khairagarh



National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), saw participants pledging to become vigilant voters, accompanied by a spirited rally.

Further intensifying the outreach efforts, the women's organizations, or "didis," orchestrated a poignant display of solidarity by forming human chains and collectively affirming their commitment to exercise their voting rights. Meanwhile, the

women of Srijan Sankul Sangathan in Bihan Janpad Panchayat Khairagarh creatively disseminated the message of voter awareness by adorning their hands with intricate henna designs.

In a bid to saturate urban spaces with the message of civic responsibility, Khairagarh Municipality embarked on a visually striking endeavour, adorning city walls and government buildings with com-

pellling slogans advocating for voter awareness.

Underscoring the grassroots nature of these initiatives, a spirited voter awareness campaign, resonating with the theme of empowerment, was spearheaded by the women's group and Anganwadi workers of Khairanwapara under the Chhukhadan development block, symbolizing the collective resolve to foster an informed and participatory democracy.

Peace committee meet deliberates vital community issues

Collaborative efforts aim to ensure festive harmony

Central Chronicle News

Kurud, Mar 22: In a proactive move to foster a harmonious celebration of the upcoming Holi festival, a pivotal peace committee meeting was convened at the Kurud Police Station. The gathering witnessed the participation of key community leaders, including Tapan Chandrakar, Chairman of the Nagar Panchayat, Sharada Sahu, District President, Bhanu Chandrakar, Opposition Leader from the Nagar Panchayat, Mulchand Singh, President of the Press Club, Ayub Khan, a prominent figure in the Muslim community, alongside other distinguished members.

During the delibera-



tions, a wide array of pertinent topics were addressed, underscoring the collective commitment towards fostering a safe and joyous environment for all residents. Discussions centered on crucial measures such as the prohibition of harmful chemical colors, the promotion of peace within the city, enforcement of regulations outlined in the Prevention of Violence Act, and the initiation of campaigns to combat drug abuse.

Furthermore, attendees emphasized the importance of curbing reckless

behaviours such as speeding on motorcycles and the use of prohibited high-volume horns and loud exhaust systems. An earnest appeal was made to refrain from hazardous practices such as burning Holika near electric wires and indulging in excessive use of colors, gulas, and tilak during Holi festivities.

Acknowledging the root causes of social unrest, particularly concerning issues of drug addiction, community members highlighted the challenges faced by the towns-

folk. In response, the Kurud police station in-charge reiterated the commitment to enhanced police patrolling and assured stringent enforcement measures.

The event witnessed the presence of prominent figures, including Nagar Panchayat President Tapan Chandrakar, Opposition Leader Bhanu Chandrakar, District President Sharda Sahu, Block President Ashish Sharma, along with esteemed members of the Muslim community such as Ayub Khan, Mehboob Khan, Saif Khan, and Jamil Khan.

Also in attendance were civic officials including Kurud SDM Deendayal Mandali, Tehsildar Manoj Bhardwaj, TI Arun Sahu, Nagar Panchayat Revenue Sub Inspector Gopal, along with various notable citizens and employees of the city.

Administration takes stern action against corrupt officials

Deputy CM's displeasure leads to immediate measures

Central Chronicle News

Kawardha, Mar 22: Addressing concerns over delays and alleged malpractices within the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), the administration has swiftly taken action following the displeasure expressed by Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma and complaints from MLA Bhavna Bohra.

The inspection conducted by Bhim Singh, shedding light on issues ranging from construction delays to allegations of collusion among

engineers and officers, has spurred the government into action. Consequently, recommendations for the suspension of two engineers, along with the transfer of two Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs) and three engineers, including the Executive Engineer of the PMGSY office, were promptly implemented just before the code of conduct was to be enforced. This decisive move has sparked discussions and garnered attention from the district to the state level, underscoring the government's commitment to address longstanding issues within the PMGSY department. It reflects a departure from past practices, particularly during the pre-

vious administration, where contractors and officers allegedly operated with impunity, disregarding public grievances.

Moreover, concerns have been raised regarding the efficacy of investigation teams tasked with scrutinizing road construction quality. The involvement of State and Central investigation teams, such as SQM and NQM, has not yielded desired outcomes, leading to speculation about the integrity of these probes. Allegations have surfaced regarding the conduct of officers associated with these investigations, including claims of luxurious accommodations funded by contractors.

Vibrant Rahasnacha celebrations illuminate Holi festivities

MLA Ajay Chandrakar commends cultural traditions

Central Chronicle News

Kurud, Mar 22: The festival of Holi witnessed the arrival of the Rahasnacha troupes, adorned in captivating attire, to Kurud town, where young children mesmerized spectators with their enchanting Ras dances, the atmosphere brimmed with joy and excitement.

Notably, MLA Ajay Chandrakar lauded the fervour of the Rahasnacha parties, highlighting the significance of their presence in Kurud Nagar during the Holi festival. He emphasized the role of these traditional mystery parties in preserving and showcasing the rich cultural heritage of



Chhattisgarh.

The Rahasnacha festivities extended beyond Kurud town, as performers from villages across the region showcased their talents, delighting onlookers with spirited dance performances and the melodious rendition of Holi songs. Singers like Hulas Ram Sahu and

Bhojram Sahu, veterans in the art of Ras dances, shared their decade-long journey of performances in various cities, including Raipur, Patan, and Abhanpur, now making their debut in Kurud with overwhelming support from the local community.

The Rahasnacha celebrations reached new

heights as the Radha Krishna Raas Mandal captivated audiences with their mesmerizing displays, blending the lively tunes of Holi songs with the rhythmic beats of traditional instruments. Amidst the revelry, spectators marveled at the graceful movements of performers, adorned in capti-

vating attire depicting characters from the tales of Radha Krishna and child cowherds.

From the streets of Kurud to the far reaches of the city, the Rahasnacha troupes from Mohandi of Abhanpur embarked on a joyous tour, spreading the spirit of Holi and enchanting all with their graceful dances. The troupe's singers, led by Hulas Ram Sahu and accompanied by Ganesh Ram Sahu, Bhojram, Ghana Ram Sahu, Bulakho Ram Yadav, Jivarakhn Yadav, Ojas, Golu, Pintu, and numerous other talented artists, epitomized the essence of Chhattisgarh's cultural vibrancy through their captivating performances.

District peace committee advocates harmonious festivities

Appeal to celebrate Holi, Eid, Good Friday and Ram Navami in a peaceful manner

Strict action will be taken against those who apply color forcibly and disturb law and order

Central Chronicle News

Korba, Mar 22: District Peace Committee convened a meeting under the guidance of Collector Ajit Vasant, Additional Collector Dinesh Kumar Nag, and Additional Superintendent of Police UBS Chauhan, alongside esteemed committee members. The session addressed imperative measures to ensure the tranquil observance of upcoming festivals including Holi, Eid-ul-Fitr, Ram Navami, and Good Friday, resonat-



ing with the cultural ethos of the region.

During the deliberations, participants unanimously endorsed an appeal for celebrating festivals in a peaceful and harmonious manner, underscoring the significance of mutual respect and societal harmony. With the Lok Sabha elections looming and the enforcement of Section 144, it was emphasized that festivals should not be politicized, and all gatherings and proces-

sions must obtain requisite permissions from the concerned SDMs.

An emphasis was placed on the prudent usage of herbal colors during Holi, while strict directives were issued against activities that disturb public order and tranquility, including forced color application and unauthorized gatherings. Additional Collector urged collective participation in fostering a spirit of brotherhood during festi-

vals, appealing for cooperation from the district's populace.

In a bid to ensure public safety, instructions were issued for the judicious conduct of Holika Dahan and the implementation of continuous patrolling by law enforcement agencies. Good measures were outlined, including the alertness of fire brigade and emergency medical services, alongside the deployment of additional police personnel at identified

hotspots.

Furthermore, stern action was pledged against offenses such as illegal donations, unruly behaviour under the influence of alcohol, and indecent conduct towards women. The administration urged citizen engagement in combating misleading propaganda on social media platforms, stressing prompt reporting to maintain law and order.

In a bid to foster inclusive celebrations, community leaders were urged to embrace diversity and celebrate festivals collectively. Notable attendees included SDM Shrikant Verma, Deputy Collector Tularam Bhardwaj, CSP Gautam Singh, and representatives from various societies, reaffirming a collective commitment to ensuring peaceful and joyous festivities.

Teachers' association members meet DEO

Central Chronicle News

Rajim, Mar 22: Representatives of the Chhattisgarh Pradesh Joint Teachers Association, District Gariaband, convened a cordial meeting with the recently appointed District Education Officer, AK Saraswat.

The meeting commenced with a warm welcome extended to the teachers of District Gariaband, marked by the presentation of a bouquet, followed by a comprehensive discussion on the fundamental challenges faced by the teacher cadre.

Key issues such as maintaining service records, updating CPF passbooks, expediting examination permission orders, and initiating promotion processes for primary head teachers were among the topics deliberated.



Demonstrating a proactive approach, the District Education Officer attentively addressed the concerns raised, affirming a commitment to resolving them effectively. The assurance provided by AK Saraswat instilled confidence among the teaching fraternity, reassuring them of forthcoming solutions to their grievances.

Present at the gathering were notable figures including Provincial General

Secretary Subhash Sharma, Dharmendra Singh Thakur of the Teachers Association, District President Sanjay Mahadik, Executive President Kuber Meshram, District Secretary Naresh Sahu, Block President Netram Sahu, Secretary Rekh Ram Sahu, along with esteemed members Gyanendra Sharma, Hemant Vishwakarma, Chandrakumar Sahu, Puranik Sahu, Seema Das, and Kalendri Markam.

Ayushman Seva Samiti empowering community

Fostering hope and relief for the needy

Central Chronicle News

Kharora, Mar 22: A group of young individuals from Suhela Panchayat has come together to form the "Ayushman Seva Samiti," dedicated to aiding the destitute and impoverished members of their community.

This group, consisting of 28 active members, has undertaken the noble task of providing essential necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, and daily essentials to those in need.

The inception of the Ayushman Seva Samiti stemmed from a collec-

tive realization among these youths of the stark disparities existing within their society.

Motivated by the plight of the less fortunate, they decided to channel their efforts towards meaningful service, transcending the boundaries of mere rhetoric. With contributions from various quarters, including traders, teachers, villagers, and professionals, the group operates on a monthly contribution basis, pooling resources to extend aid to the needy.

What sets the Ayushman Seva Samiti apart is its unwavering commitment to altruism, devoid of any political affiliations. Over the years, they have tirelessly pursued their mission, plant-

ing over 1000 trees to promote environmental sustainability and organizing blood donation camps to address vital healthcare needs within the villages.

Rukhmin Nishad, a 71-year-old resident of the same village, shared his heartfelt gratitude for the support provided by the Ayushman Seva Samiti. Living with his paralyzed and ailing son, he expressed disillusionment with the limited reach of government schemes, lamenting that despite their dire circumstances, they received minimal assistance.

However, amidst their struggle for survival, the Ayushman Seva Samiti emerged as a beacon of hope, extending essential



provisions such as oil, sugar, spices, pulses, rice, salt, potatoes, and soap on a monthly basis. Additionally, they offered financial aid of Rs 1000 for purchasing vegetables and procured both Allopathic and Patanjali Ayurvedic medicines worth approximately Rs 4000 per month.

Manbod Nishad, a 46-year-old resident, shared

his family's plight, revealing that both he and his mother are afflicted with paralysis. Their situation worsened following the demise of his father a few months ago.

Struggling to cope with their challenges, they found solace when the Ayushman Seva Samiti learned of their circumstances and extended their support. The com-

mittee's selfless service has been instrumental in alleviating their hardships.

A destitute family, comprising a mother and son both afflicted with paralysis, faced a grim reality after the father succumbed to illness a few months prior. With no resources left, they resorted to selling their property to cover medical expens-

es, leaving them with nothing. In their hour of need, the Ayushman Seva Samiti extended a helping hand, providing essential support for the past 8 months.

To date, the committee has shouldered the burden of vegetable expenses, amounting to approximately Rs 75,000 to Rs 80,000, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to the family's welfare.

Reflecting on their journey, committee members like Bhuvaneshwar Verma and Jitendra Nayak underscore the apolitical nature of their service-oriented ethos, emphasizing collective responsibility and solidarity within the community.

Complete ban on using govt vehicles for election campaigning: Collector

Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi, Mar 22:

In a move towards ensuring fairness and transparency in the electoral process, Collector and District Election Officer Leena Kamlesh Mandavi announced a comprehensive ban on the utilization of government vehicles for election campaigning during the Lok Sabha General Election 2024. Following the declaration of the election schedule by the Election Commission of India on March 16, the Model Code of Conduct came into effect, prompting the imposition of stringent regulations.

According to the directive issued, vehicles owned by various governmental entities, including the Central Government, State Government, public undertakings, local bodies, and cooperative societies, among others, are strictly prohibited from being utilized for any election-related activities.

Comeback-man Pant highlight as DC take on Punjab Kings

Chandigarh, Mar 22 (PTI):

Rishabh Pant's resilient return to the cricket field in multiple roles will be the focus when Delhi Capitals take on Punjab Kings in their IPL opener here on Saturday, both teams hoping to erase the disappointment of below-par performances in the last season.

Pant's miraculous escape from a life-threatening car crash in December 2022 has now become a tale of perseverance after the big-hitting wicketkeeper-batter made a faster than expected recovery to be back in action.

He has been cleared to play as a keeper-batter and has the additional responsibility of captaining the side, taking back the position from David Warner, who led DC to a ninth-place finish in the 10-team tournament last year.

It is not yet clear whether Pant will start his keeping duties immediately. In case he doesn't, DC will fall back on either West Indian Shai Hope or South Africa's Tristan Stubbs. DC have a potent

Want to bat as long as possible and get better every day: Pant

Chandigarh: Rishabh Pant is experiencing an entire gamut of emotions from nervousness to excitement as he gears up for his first competitive game in nearly 15 months when he leads Delhi Capitals in their IPL opener against Punjab Kings here on Saturday. Coming back after a painstakingly long rehab following a horrific car crash in December, 2022, Pant feels grateful to be back on the 22-yard strip. "Jittery, nervous, excited...all of it, but at the same time, just happy, being able to come back to professional cricket. I'm just look-



ing forward to playing my first game tomorrow," Pant said ahead of his team's first match of the season. The

ace keeper-batter knows that it will take time to get back to his old self and he wants to take one day at a time with extended batting sessions at the DC nets as that will give him a better chance to execute his wide range of strokes. "Every time I take the field, it's a different feeling altogether. I think, as a batter, as long as I can bat. It is better because the more I bat, I will be in a better position to execute shots, muscle memory is intact even though I haven't played for nearly a year and half," the swash-buckling batter said.

fast bowling arsenal, backed up by an explosive batting lineup.

Warner, who recently retired from the Test cricket, will be hoping to make a mark and secure a spot in the T20 World Cup-bound Australian side. In Prithvi Shaw, Mitchell Marsh,

Pant and Stubbs, DC have explosive batting line-up, while their bowling attack will be led by Anrich Nortje in the company of Indian veteran Ishant Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel. The Punjab trophy cabinet is empty too. They

have made it to the final only once, in 2014, losing to Kolkata Knight Riders on that occasion.

After finishing sixth for four consecutive seasons between 2019 and 2022, PBKS dropped to eighth in 2023, and will look to turn things around this time.

Sathiyam wins first-ever WTT Feeder title

New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI): Star paddler G. Sathiyam has become the first-ever Indian to win a men's singles trophy at a WTT Feeder Series event in Beirut, Lebanon. He defeated compatriot Manav Thakkar 3-1 (6-11 11-7 11-4) on the final day of WTT Feeder Beirut 2024 on Thursday night. Seeded No.11, Sathiyam enjoyed a rewarding path to the final in the Lebanese capital, taking down No.5 seed Harmeet Desai (15-13 6-11 11-8 13-11) and top seed Chuang Chih-Yuan (11-8 11-13 11-8 11-9) along the way. But the match Sathiyam will remember most is the final as he overcame an early setback to see off No.9 seed Thakkar in four games.

The result marks Sathiyam's first men's singles success at a WTT event, and his first singles title at an international ranking event since ITTF Czech International Open 2021.

Meanwhile, Xia Lian Ni picked up her second WTT Feeder title in women's singles, producing an excellent display to break down Suh Hyo Won's defensive barrier 11-9 11-5 11-5.

Shreyas' comeback in spotlight in Starc vs Cummins showdown

Kolkata, Mar 22 (PTI):

Shreyas Iyer's comeback from a long injury layoff will be in focus as IPL's two biggest signings, Australian pacers Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins, go head to head in Kolkata Knight Riders' opening match against Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Saturday.

The Indian batter, after missing the entire season last year due to a back injury, returns to lead KKR, who have made some tactical additions while keeping the nucleus of the side intact.

Shreyas sparked with the bat with a 95 in Mumbai's Ranji Trophy triumph recently but it remains to be seen whether he'll be available for all the matches, given his fitness concerns.

KKR's most successful leader Gautam Gambhir is back in his second innings as a mentor. His partnership with head coach Chandrakant Pandit, a shrewd tactician in domestic circuit, will be the key to their revival.

"This is your franchise, make it or break it," team principal owner Shah Rukh Khan has told



Gambhir. Under the former India cricketer's captaincy, KKR had a golden run from 2011-2017 -- two IPL titles, five playoffs and a runners-up finish in the now defunct Champions League T20 tournament.

The biggest signing of this IPL is with KKR, and by acquiring Starc at a record sum of Rs 24.75-crore, the left-arm quick will be under huge pressure to perform.

His spell in power-play and the death overs will be the key. Starc and Andre Russell are the only two experienced pacers in KKR's ranks, and with no like-for-like replacements for them, their workload management will be crucial.

Starc will have his skipper Cummins leading SRH in the adjacent dug-out as the Australian captain will also have his task cut out. Cummins (Rs 20.50-crore) is the second-most expensive buy in this IPL and all eyes will be on him to revive the fortunes of the side that has had two wooden-spoon finishes in the last three seasons.

On paper, KKR with a star-studded batting and spin-heavy attack to complement Starc's pace, will be overwhelming favourites.

It still hurts, haven't been able to get over it: Savita Punia on lost Olympic dream



New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI):

The crying didn't help, living in denial didn't help, what helped was picking up the hockey stick again to make a fresh start.

The 'Great Wall' of Indian women's hockey and former captain Savita Punia has been an emotional wreck ever since the

team failed to qualify for Paris Olympics, a massive downfall after the superb fourth-place finish in Tokyo just three years ago.

"Good moments in life are not forgotten but neither are the bad ones. Losing the Olympic qualifiers is such a bad moment that we will probably not be able to forget our entire

life," the 33-year-old goalkeeper told PTI Bhasha in an interview.

"I haven't been able to get over it yet," she admitted rather candidly, the disappointment audible through her soft voice.

The heartbreak is now almost two months old. Punia was among those who were seen sobbing when the final hooter went off in the third-place match against Japan, India down by a solitary goal ending their Paris hopes.

"I didn't want to talk about it because it still hurts a lot. I still can't believe that we are not going to Olympics. We were confident and well-prepared but you cannot predict anything in sports.

"After the qualifiers, we were at home for a week and told all the players that this break is for them to cry and feel sad as much as they want. Keeping it inside will do no good and it is necessary to vent it out. No one talked about the Olympic qualifiers during this break," she revealed.

It was inevitable, had to happen: Ashwin on Dhoni relinquishing CSK captaincy



Jaipur, Mar 22 (PTI):

Veterran all-rounder Ravichandran Ashwin says Rituraj Gaikwad has not been rushed into leadership role in the IPL because the way Mahendra Singh Dhoni is, the legendary player must have spoken to the opener for the CSK captaincy long back.

A day before the start 2024 season, Chennai Super Kings (CSK) announced that Dhoni has handed over the reins of the team to Gaikwad.

CSK had attempted the leadership transition even

in the 2022 edition, but it did not work out, with Ravindra Jadeja handing back the captaincy duties to Dhoni after eight games. Ashwin said the decision was not surprising. "This decision was inevitable and it was coming at some stage. I have known MS Dhoni, and he keeps the team at the forefront and keeps thinking about the team's well-being," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

"Because of that, two years ago, he had given the captain's armband to Jadeja. He has handed it to Rituraj now.

Sindhu, Sen bow out; Srikanth and Rajawat in quarter finals

Swiss Open

Basel, Mar 22 (PTI): Two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu's run at the Swiss Open was cut short by a Japanese teenager, while top Indian male shuttler Lakshya Sen lost to Lee Chia-Hao of Chinese-Taipei in the pre-quarter-finals of the Super 300 tournament here.

Ace Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth, Priyansh Rajawat and Kiran George won their respective men's singles round-of 16 matches to advance to the quarterfinals late on Thursday night.

Sindhu, after bowing out in the second round of the recently-concluded All England Championships, lost to Japan's 17-year-old junior world champion Tomoka Miyazaki 21-16 19-21 16-21, while Sen was eliminated by Lee Chia-hao 17-21 15-21 in just 38 minutes in the round-of 16 contest.



Srikanth, though, secured a place in the quarterfinals by defeating top seed Lee Zii Jia of Malaysia 21-61 21-15, while Rajawat got the better of Lei La Xi of China 21-14 21-13 to clinch a last-eight berth.

George struggled against French shuttler Alex Lanier before prevailing 18-21 22-20 21-18 in gruelling 71-minute contest to book a quarterfinal berth.

Srikanth will take on Lee Chia-Hao, while Rajawat will clash against Chinese-Taipei's

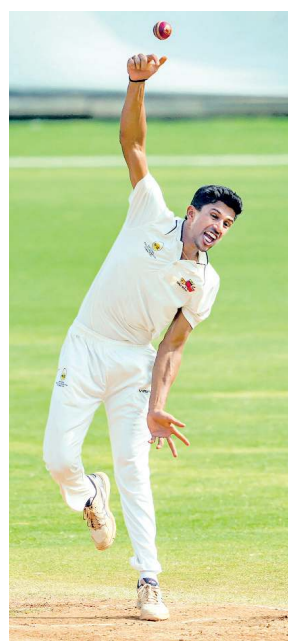
Chou Tien-Chen in the last-eight round. George will look to get past Rasmus Gemke of Denmark to secure a place in the semifinals.

Sindhu, who seems to be returning to form after a long injury layoff, fought her teenaged rival tooth and nail before bowing out in round of 16 with the Japanese shuttler drawing on her youthful energy to make a statement against the two-time Olympic medalist.

Miyazaki, who had claimed the gold medal at the 2022 world junior championships, and has come into the tournament after winning her maiden Super 300 crown at Orleans Masters in France last week, lost the first game 16-21 but staged a fine recovery to take the tie into the decider before winning in 80 minutes.

Miyazaki kept hitting those high tosses to keep Sindhu at the back.

Kotian replaces Zampa at Royals; Sharath joins Titans



New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI):

Mumbai's crisis man Tanush Kotian, who played a key role in their record-extending 42nd Ranji Trophy triumph this season, was on Friday drafted in by Rajasthan Royals as a replacement for Aussie Adam Zampa.

Kotian joined at his base price of Rs 20 lakh, the IPL announced.

Zampa, who picked up eight wickets from six matches for the Royals last season, was retained at his Rs 1.5-crore contract but the Australian leg-spinner pulled out citing heavy workload in the build up to the T20I World Cup in June.

Kotian, an off-spinner and a handy lower-order batter, was expecting an IPL contract in 2023 after playing a vital role in Mumbai's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy triumph but was reported for a suspect bowling action.

But the 25-year-old showed resilience to fight back and become the player-of-the-tournament (502 runs and 29 wickets) in Mumbai's Ranji Trophy triumph this season.

Kotian, who usually bats at No. 8, scored an unbeaten 120 in second innings and followed it up with an 89 not out in the quarterfinal and semifinal games against Baroda and Tamil Nadu respectively.

India, Afghanistan play out goalless draw in FIFA World Cup Qualifiers

Abha, Mar 22 (PTI): India played out a goalless draw against Afghanistan after both sides failed to turn their opportunities into goals in a Group A fixture of the 2026 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers here. It was end-to-end contest in the first half on Thursday night with India coming close to scoring through Manvir Singh on two occasions and the hosts too had their share of chances.

With this result, India climbed to the second spot in Group A with four points from three matches, followed by Kuwait, who are on three points from as many games.

The equation was quite clear for both teams. A win would do either side a world of good. India have provisionally taken the second spot in Group A, three points ahead of Kuwait, who lost to Qatar 0-3 earlier in the night. Afghanistan, following a draw and to losses are fourth in the group. A feisty midfield battle ensued in the opening exchanges as lunging tackles were frequently on display at the Damac Stadium. While Afghanistan looked to use their pace and physical built to assert dominance, India were intent on playing a passing game.

Kalinina rallies to end Wozniacki's Miami Open early

Miami Gardens, Mar 22 (AP): Anhelina Kalinina was down and almost out Thursday with former top-ranked player Caroline Wozniacki one point away from winning in straight sets at the Miami

Open.

But the No. 32-seeded Ukrainian saved that match point and won the last five games of the second set before taking the third in a 5-7, 7-5, 6-4 victory in the second round.

Wozniacki, who won the Australian Open in 2018 and retired from tennis at the same tournament two years later, returned to the sport last year. She had two children during her time away from the game.

Wozniacki reached the quarterfinals in Indian Wells this month but retired from the match against top-ranked Iga Swiatek in the second set because of a right foot issue.



No. 11 Beatriz Haddad Maia also overcame a slow start in hot and humid conditions on the hard courts, rallying to beat Diane Parry 3-6, 6-1, 6-4. It was the Brazilian's first career victory in three tries against Parry, who won both previous matches on clay.

In other women's matches, No. 24 Katie

Boulter advanced when Brenda Fruhvirtova retired from their match while trailing 7-6 (5), 1-0; No. 8 Maria Sakkari beat Yuan Yue 6-2, 6-2; Taylor Townsend defeated No. 25 Elise Mertens 6-2, 6-2; No. 22 Anna Kalinskaya beat Wang Xiyu 6-2, 6-2; and 17th-seeded Madison Keys defeated Diana Shnaider 6-2, 6-4.

Sharath Kamal to be India's male flag bearer for Paris Games

Mary Kom appointed chef de mission

New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI):

Veteran table tennis player and reigning CWG champion Sharath Kamal will be India's flag bearer at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games while legendary boxer MC Mary Kom was on Thursday appointed the chef de mission of the country's contingent.

Sharath Kamal symbolises "the unity and spirit of our contingent as they compete on the Olympic stage", the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) said in a statement while making the announcement.

The IOA has not yet named a female flag bearer but sources said that the sports body will not "compromise" on gender equality and will select a woman athlete later since many quotas for the Games, starting July 26, are yet to be filled.

"There is no change in policy. We will wait for official confirmation of qualifications for women athletes before announcing the name. There won't be any compromise on



that," said the IOA source.

The IOC, in 2020, had changed its protocol to allow one female and one male athlete of each NOC to bear the flag jointly during the opening ceremony of the Summer Games.

Mary Kom and former hockey skipper Manpreet Singh were India's flag bearers at the 2020 Tokyo Games. Hockey player Harmanpreet Singh and boxer Lovlina Borgohain were India's flag bearers at the Hangzhou Asian Games, last year.

Ceiling on net borrowing

SC reserves order on Kerala's plea seeking interim relief

New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI)

The Supreme Court on Friday reserved its order on Kerala government's plea seeking interim relief in a lawsuit contesting a ceiling on the state's net borrowing.

The Kerala government has filed a suit in the apex court accusing the Centre of interfering in the exercise of its "exclusive, autonomous and plenary powers" to regulate the state's finances by imposing a cap on borrowing.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and K V Viswanathan reserved the order after hearing two sides.

The Centre had on



Thursday told the apex court that the Kerala government has been "over-borrowing" in the recent years which reflected its difficult financial situation.

The Kerala government asserted its finances are "sustainable enough" to bear the burden of over-borrowing in the previous years.

On March 13, the Centre had told the top court that

it was willing to allow the Kerala government to borrow Rs 5,000 crore, subject to certain conditions, to deal with the financial issues facing the state as a "very special and exceptional measure".

However, the Kerala government had said Rs 5,000 crore "does not take us anywhere" and the absolute minimum requirement stood at Rs 10,000 crore.

In an original suit filed under Article 131 of the Constitution, the Kerala government has said the Constitution bestows fiscal autonomy upon states to regulate their finances under various articles, and the borrowing limits

or the extent of such borrowings are regulated by state legislation.

Article 131 of the Constitution deals with the original jurisdiction of the apex court in any dispute between the Centre and states.

The suit said the ability to determine the borrowing of the state in order to balance the budget and make up for the fiscal deficit is exclusively within the domain of the states. "If the state is not able to borrow to the extent required based on the budget of the state, the state would not be able to complete its state plans for the particular financial year," it said.

VICTORY SIGN



Former cricketer and TMC candidate Yusuf Pathan flashes victory sign with party leaders at the party office at Berhampore, in Murshidabad district of West Bengal, Friday.

DK defends party giving ticket to children of 5 Ministers for LS polls



Karnataka Dy CM D K Shivakumar during a press conference at KPCC office, in Bengaluru, Friday.

Bengaluru, Mar 22 (PTI)

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Friday defended Congress giving tickets to children of five Ministers in the state in its second list of candidates for the coming Lok Sabha polls, indicating that winnability was a key factor in their selection. On criticism of nepotism against the party, the state Congress chief claimed that the political system in the entire country has changed now and, in all polit-

ical parties, family members or children of Ministers or leaders are being fielded to contest elections.

"We are looking at new faces, we are looking at youngsters, we are looking at those who have a solid background, we want to win elections," Shivakumar told reporters. "All local leaders are supporting them (Ministers' children who are candidates), they have been working for the party, they are the office-bearers of the party, and they have been selected." Children of five Ministers figure in the list of 17 nominees announced by the Congress on Thursday. Satish Jarkiholi's daughter Priyanka Jarkiholi (Chikkodi), Ramalinga Reddy's daughter Sowmya Reddy (Bangalore South), Shivanand Patil's daughter Samyukta S Patil (Bagalkot), Laxmi Hebbalkar's son Mrinal Ravindra Hebbalkar (Belgaum) and Eshwar Khandre's son Sagar Khandre (Bidar) will be contesting in the polls.

Unauthorised Ayurvedic medicines seized

Palghar, Mar 22 (PTI)

A firm in Vasai in Palghar district was raided by the Food and Drug Administration and Ayurvedic medicines manufactured without licence and other items worth Rs1 crore were seized, an official said on Friday.

The raid was carried out by the Intelligence Branch of FDA, Mumbai on a tip off on Thursday, he said.

"It held a manufacturing licence for Panchkula in Haryana but was carrying out manufacturing activities in its firm in Navghar in Vasai. Further investigation is under progress and suitable legal action would be taken against the said manufacturer after completion of investigation," the official said.

NHRC issues notice to Punjab govt over 5 deaths in Sangrur allegedly due to spurious liquor

New Delhi, Mar 22 (PTI)

The National Human Rights Commission on Friday issued a notice to the Punjab government over the reported death of five people after consuming spurious liquor in Sangrur district.

The commission has sought a report within four weeks.

"The NHRC has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report that five persons died after consuming spurious liquor in Gujran village in Sangrur District, Punjab on the intervening night of 19-20 March 2024. Reportedly, another five persons are undergoing treatment at the hospital," an official statement by NHRC said.

The Commission has observed that the contents of the media report, if true, amount to serious issues of violation of the human rights of the victims.

"Apparently, the incident shows the negligence

of the local administration and the state government in prohibiting the sale and consumption of spurious liquor. Accordingly, it has issued the notices to the chief secretary and the director general of police, Punjab calling for a detailed report in the matter at the earliest but not later than four weeks," the Commission said.

"The report should include the status of the FIR registered by the police, medical treatment of the victims and compensation if any, granted to the aggrieved families. The Commission would also like to know about the action taken against the delinquent officers, responsible for the incident," it added.

According to the media report, the victims had consumed the spurious alcohol on March 18, 2024. They were rushed to the hospital when their condition deteriorated.

Retired cop and former Congress MP cries foul over RJD claiming his seat

Patna, March 22 (PTI)

Senior Congress leader Nikhil Kumar on Friday accused ally RJD of breaching coalition ethics by allocating party tickets for constituencies where its partners had rightful claims. Expressing his expectation for a party ticket from Aurangabad, a constituency he secured for the Congress in 2004, Kumar claimed that if the alliance with the RJD came apart, "it would be a greater loss" for the regional ally.

He reminded them of the 2019 elections when the RJD failed to secure any seats while the Congress still managed to win one in Bihar.

"Of course, coalition dharma is being violated. Tickets are being distributed by them (RJD) without finalising seat-sharing with alliance partners. If they are labouring under the impression that they can win more, they should recall that in 2019 they had drawn a blank while we still won a

seat in Bihar", said the Congress leader, who had taken the political plunge after retiring as the Delhi Police commissioner. Kumar, whose late father Satyendra Narayan Sinha was a former chief minister of Bihar and a multiple-term MP from Aurangabad, also frowned upon the RJD giving party ticket to JD(U) turncoat Abhay Kushwaha.

He said, "The candidate is not even a local. People in Aurangabad do not know who he is. So the contention that winnability factor has been kept in mind does not hold water". Notably, Kumar was preceded, as Aurangabad MP, by his late wife Shyama Singh. He lost the seat in 2009, when the Congress was similarly ditched by the RJD and both parties ended up fighting each other, helping JD(U)'s Sushil Kumar Singh win the seat by a comfortable margin. Kumar, thereafter, took up gubernatorial assignments in Kerala and

Nagaland. In 2014, the party fielded him from the Lok Sabha seat again, but he lost to Sushil Kumar Singh, who had by then switched over to BJP, by a margin of a little over 65,000 votes. Kumar reminded the RJD, "We were part of Mahagathbandhan in 2019 and besides them, we are the only ones to have continued with the alliance.

We contested nine seats, winning one. They contested a much bigger number but won zero. As such, a respectable share for us would have meant nothing less than the number we contested the last time".

He added, "If the coalition collapses in Bihar, they will stand to lose more than us. I say it on the basis of performances of the two parties in last general elections.

I hope our state president, who is known to have excellent relations with the RJD, would ensure that the interests of the Congress are protected".

SECURITY CHECK



Police personnel check a vehicle at Lakhanpur border, ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha election, in Kathua district.

Ponmudy sworn in as Minister by Governor Ravi

Chennai, Mar 22 (PTI)

Senior DMK leader K Ponmudy was on Friday sworn in as Minister by Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi, a day after the Supreme Court's nudge.

About three months after he lost his post following his conviction by the Madras High Court on 19 December 2023 in a disproportionate assets case, Ponmudy is now again the Tamil Nadu Minister for Higher Education.

In a simple ceremony at the Raj Bhavan, Ravi administered the oath of of-

After SC nudge

ice and secrecy to Ponmudy in the presence of Chief Minister M K Stalin and a couple of other Ministers including Udhayanidhi Stalin and Ma Subramanian.

Ponmudy was assigned higher education portfolio, which was briefly held by Backward Classes Minister R S Rajakannappan. The subject of Khadi and Village Industries Board held previously by Rajakannappan has been restored to him.

R Gandhi had held the subject of Khadi in addition to his portfolio Handlooms and Textiles.

In December, consequent to Ponmudy's conviction portfolios were reshuffled. Ponmudy's swearing-in as Minister marks the end of a face-off between Stalin and Ravi. While Stalin had on March 13 written to Ravi to swear in Ponmudy as Minister and allot him higher education, it was declined by Governor who said Ponmudy's conviction had only been suspended and not set aside.

Bengal gov gives assent to KMC bill exempting schools from property tax

Kolkata, Mar 22 (PTI)

West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose on Friday gave his assent to "The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2023", which exempts schools from paying property tax, a senior official said.

"It is considered necessary and expedient to amend the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Act, 1980 (West Ben. Act LIX of 1980), inter alia, for the purpose of making provision for exempting the lands or buildings comprising educational institutions, administered or aided, by the state government from payment of property tax," the Bill, which was passed by the state assembly in September last year, states.

"The Bill would bring clarity and transparen-

cy in the book of account of KMC as each year the government and government-aided schools generate more than Rs 10 crore unrealisable property tax bills," Municipal Affairs and Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim had said soon after the Bill was passed in the House.

According to an official, there are currently 1,329 primary schools, 556 secondary schools, and 78 colleges in KMC jurisdiction, totaling around 1,963 premises.

Karnataka HC allows govt to conduct board exams for Classes 5, 8, 9, and 11

Bengaluru, Mar 22 (PTI)

The Karnataka High Court on Friday granted permission to the State Government to proceed with the conduct of board exams for classes 5, 8, 9 and 11 for the academic year 2023-24, overturning the March six order of a single judge bench.

The decision of the division bench comprising Justice K Somashekar and Justice Rajesh Rai K, came after the State Government filed an appeal challenging the earli-

er ruling.

The single judge's verdict had nullified the State Government's decision, made in October 2023, to hold board exams for these classes through the Karnataka State Examination and Assessment Board (KSEAB).

The judge had argued that the scheme for conducting these exams lacked the necessary framework provided by Sections 22 and 145 of the Karnataka Education Act, 1983, which mandate the formulation of rules

for implementing the examination system and require input from stakeholders before finalising such rules.

The division bench's ruling interpreted the notifications issued by the State Government regarding the board exams as guidelines rather than strict regulations, based on its understanding of the powers granted under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.

The court's decision now allows the government to continue and

complete the halted exams for classes 5, 8, and 9 and also finish evaluating the exams conducted for class 11.

The exams for classes 5, 8, and 9 were stopped midway following a judgment by the apex court, creating uncertainty among students and educational institutions.

The bench also directed the government to engage in consultations with stakeholders before issuing a formal notification for conducting board exams for the next academic year.

TMC lodges complaint against Bengal gov for interfering in poll process

Kolkata, Mar 22 (PTI)

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Friday filed a complaint with the Election Commission (EC) against West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose, accusing him of unlawfully meddling in the upcoming Lok Sabha poll process and trying to run a parallel office similar to the EC. Hitting out at the Raj Bhavan occupant for launching a new portal 'Log Sabha' to listen to the grievances of voters and directly connect with

them during the polls, the TMC said it not only undermines the power of the EC, but takes away its authority to address grievances, leading to unnecessary confusion among the masses. "In such circumstances, we call upon you to restrain CV Ananda Bose from running a parallel election-reporting system of so-called reporting of complaints and supervising the elections under the name and style of Log Sabha," the letter said.

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