



BRIEF



A Christian devotee during commemoration of the Good Friday, in Jammu.

AAP rally

New Delhi: Top INDIA bloc leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, Sharad Pawar, Uddhav Thackeray, Akhilesh Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav will attend AAP's 'Maharally' to be held here on March 31, senior party leader Gopal Rai said on Friday. AAP has received permission of the authorities concerned for holding the rally, being held in the backdrop of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest, at the Ramlala ground on Sunday for an attendance of more than 20,000 people, he said.

'Police informer'

Gadchiroli: A tribal man was allegedly killed by Naxalites on the suspicion of being a police informer in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, police said on Friday. The victim, Ashok Talande, a resident of Dhamranra village in Aheri taluka of the district, was found dead on a road in the wee hours of Friday, they said. A Naxal pamphlet was recovered from near the body, which said that he was a police informer, the police said.

Woman attacked

Palakkad: An elderly woman was severely injured in a wild boar attack at her residence near Kuzhalmannam in this district on Friday. According to police, the woman was attacked when she was doing some work at her home in the morning. "The wild boar attacked her and bit her leg. She tried to escape, but the animal did not let go of her leg, which was severely injured in the attack," a forest official in the area said. The woman is presently hospitalised, the official said.

NIA reward

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday announced a reward of Rs 10 lakh each for sharing information leading to the arrest of two key accused in Bengaluru's Rameshwaram Cafe blast case. The agency requested the general public for information on Mussavir Hussain Shazib alias Shazeb and Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taahaa alias Abdul Matheen Taha wanted in the case, according to a post on X. In a major breakthrough, the NIA had on Wednesday arrested Muzammil Shareef, a key conspirator in the blast case. NIA investigations have revealed that Muzammil Shareef had extended logistic support to the two wanted accused in the case, involving an IED explosion at the cafe located at ITPL Road, Brookefield, Bengaluru, on March 1.

Weather

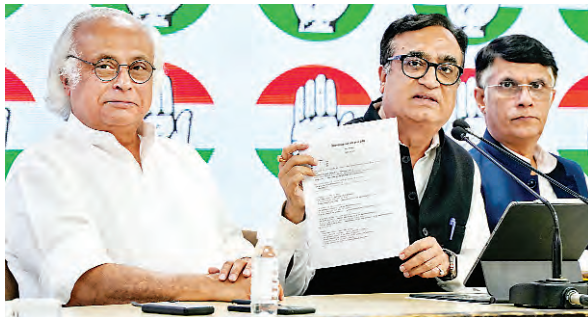
High 41 Low 27

Congress receives fresh I-T notices of over Rs 1,800 crore

New Delhi, Mar 29 (PTI):

The Congress on Friday said it has received fresh notices from the income-tax department, asking it to pay Rs 1,823.08 crore, and accused the ruling BJP of indulging in "tax terrorism" to financially cripple the opposition party ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here along with Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh, party treasurer Ajay Maken alleged that the BJP is in serious violation of income-tax laws and said the I-T department should raise a demand of more than Rs 4,600 crore from the saffron party for such violations. Ramesh alleged that through the "electoral bonds scam", the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has collected Rs



Congress leaders Jairam Ramesh, Ajay Maken and Pawan Khera during a press conference, in New Delhi, Friday.

Cong to hold nationwide protests over weekend against 'tax terrorism'

New Delhi: The Congress will hold nationwide protests over the weekend against fresh income tax demand of over Rs 1,800 crore, which it has described as an "egregious attack" on democracy and imposition of "tax terrorism" amid the crucial Lok Sabha elections. Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal has asked all Pradesh Congress Committees (PCCs) to hold massive public demonstrations at the state and district headquarters in their respective states on Saturday and the following day, involving senior leaders and party functionaries.

8,200 crore and used the route of "pre-paid, post-paid, post-raid bribes and

shell companies". On the other hand, the BJP is engaged in "tax terrorism",

he alleged. "Efforts are being made to financially cripple the Congress, but we are not going to be cowed down," Ramesh said.

He asserted that the Congress's campaign for the upcoming parliamentary polls will continue and the party will take its guarantees to the people of the country.

"We will not be scared of these notices. We will be more aggressive and fight these polls," the former Union minister said.

Maken alleged that the Congress and other like-minded opposition parties are being selectively targeted by the I-T department, which he described as the BJP's "frontal organisation".

The I-T department has launched a premeditated, diabolical campaign against the Congress by reopening matters of old returns on baseless grounds, he said.

Munchingput conspiracy case NIA charge-sheets man for radicalising youths using Maoist ideology

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday charge-sheeted a man for his role in radicalising "vulnerable youths" using Maoist ideology, an official statement said. The probe agency had in May 2021 filed its original charge-sheet in the Munchingput conspiracy case of Andhra Pradesh. Ramakgiri Chandra is the eighth accused to be charge-sheeted in the case related to the radicalisation of "vulnerable youths towards the Maoist ideology and extension of support to the banned CPI(Maoist)", it added. He has been charged under the Indian Penal Code, the Arms Act and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act by the agency in its first supplementary charge-sheet filed before the special NIA court in Visakhapatnam, it said. Chandra was a state committee member of the Pragathiheela Karmika Samakhya (PKS), a frontal outfit of the proscribed CPI(Maoist), the NIA said in the statement. The NIA's investigation has revealed that Chandra had conspired with underground leaders of the CPI(Maoist) to further the activities of the organisation.

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Unaccounted cash, liquor worth over Rs 25 crore seized amid poll code

Raipur, Mar 29 (PTI): Unaccounted cash, illicit liquor and other items worth more than Rs 25 crore have been seized by authorities in Chhattisgarh since the model code of conduct came into force on March 16 for the Lok Sabha elections, an official said on Friday. Various law enforcement agencies, comprising personnel from the excise, police and income tax departments, have been keeping a close watch on illegal transportation and storage of liquor, cash and other items during polls, the official associated with poll duty said. The un-

counted cash, illicit liquor and other items worth over Rs 25.08 crore were seized from different places in the state till March 28. The recovered items include cash worth Rs 5.28 crore, 17,311 litres of illegal liquor worth Rs 41 lakh, 23 kg ornaments worth Rs 94 lakh and narcotics worth Rs 1.48 crore, he said. Chief Electoral Officer Reena Baba Saheb Kangale has issued guidelines to all the district election officers and superintendents of police to take necessary action to maintain law and order during the assembly election.

'Notify guidelines to make films accessible to hearing, visually impaired'

New Delhi, Mar 29 (PTI):

The Delhi High Court has asked the Centre to notify by July 15 the guidelines to make films accessible to persons who are hearing and visually impaired.

Justice Prathiba M Singh said accessibility was enforceable as a legal right and even private parties have to take "reasonable accommodation measures" to enable greater accessibility for the hearing and visually impaired persons.

The court observed that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has framed the "Draft Guidelines of Accessibility Standards in the Public Exhibition of Feature Films in Cinema Theatres for Persons with Hearing and Visual Impairment", and was in the process of finalising the same. "The guidelines shall now be finalised by the MIB and shall be notified on or before 15th July, 2024. It is made clear that the said guidelines shall

make the provision of accessibility features mandatory and provide a reasonable period for compliance by all stakeholders, in an expeditious manner," the court ordered recently. "A hearing or visually impaired person, may get easy physical access to a film theatre but may not be able to enjoy the film at all, if measures to make it enjoyable are not taken by the other stakeholders, including producers, theatre managers, OTT platforms, etc," the order said.

The court stated that non-provision of accessibility features would constitute an offence under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act and the State has a positive obligation to ensure that all reasonably possible steps are taken to ensure access to them. The central government said it "fully intended" to notify the guidelines as soon as possible and its counsel prayed for time up until August 1 to notify as the responses of all the stakeholders had to be considered in detail.

Facebook friend turns out extortionist

Noida: The Noida Police on Friday said they have arrested four people, including a woman, for allegedly extorting money from a city resident after befriending him over Facebook using a false identity. The accused, all aged between 21 and 25 years, had created a Facebook account in the name of a girl "Nagar Pari" and used it to interact with the complainant, who is a graduation student here, the police said.

"The complainant said he was called for a meeting by the girl on March 14 near a private hospital located in Sector 62. When the student reached the decided location, he found a woman and her two male accomplices who were already there," a police spokesperson said.

"The student said he was cheated by them and the trio took his mobile phone and forced him into transferring Rs 17,120 to their account after threatening to kill him," the spokesperson said.

'My priority will be to invest in local research to safeguard daughters' lives'

New Delhi, Mar 29 (PTI):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said his government wants to allocate funds to scientists for local research in cervical cancer for developing vaccines at a minimal cost to ensure all girls are vaccinated against the serious disease.

During an interaction with philanthropist and Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates on a host of issues, Modi said should the NDA be voted back to power, his priority will be to invest significantly in this research to safeguard the lives of India's daughters.

"In the coming days, I want to allocate funds to our scientists for cervical cancer research targeting young girls. I want to give them budget and encourage them to conduct local research to make vaccines. My goal is to vaccinate all girls in our country at a minimal cost to ensure that they are protect-

PM Modi to Bill Gates

ed from cancer," Modi said. "I am working in this direction these days. When my new government will be formed, my priority will be to invest significantly in this research to safeguard the lives of India's daughters," he said. On how India's Covid vaccination campaign became successful with people showing little resistance to the jabs, where in many countries, the fear of vaccination and even rumours about them became a problem, Modi elaborated on how he led by example and followed all protocols to gain people's trust and convinced them. "I emphasised that the fight against the virus involves everyone and it was not virus versus government. I viewed it as a fight of life versus virus from the beginning," he said. Secondly, he narrated, how he started to communicate openly with the na-

tion from day one and personally adhered to all the safety protocols to set an example.

"I followed all Covid-19 protocols publicly to gain people's trust. I made clarification calls to clap, clang utensils, light lamps despite some ridicule. It was crucial for me to unite everyone in this fight. Once the intent was set on protecting themselves and others around, it turned into a mass movement," he said.

This ensured that the citizens followed his requests without questioning him. For example, he said when he advised them to wear masks, people listened and reminded each other.

"It transformed into a people's movement. Because in a democracy, force isn't the answer. In a democracy, people need to be convinced, educated and taken along. In democracy education and collaboration drive progress," Modi stated.

EC orders transfer of IPS officer

Chandigarh: The Election Commission has ordered the transfer of IPS officer Rajesh Duggal, who is the husband of BJP MP from Sirsa Sunita Duggal, and directed that no election-related work be assigned to him till Lok Sabha polls conclude in the state.

Acting on the EC's directive, the Haryana government on Thursday issued the transfer order.

Rajesh Duggal, who was holding the charge as Joint Commissioner of Police, Gurugram, has now been posted as Deputy Inspector General of Police at the Police Headquarters in Panchkula with immediate effect.

"Further, as directed by the Election Commission of India, he shall not be assigned any election-related work till the completion of the current Lok Sabha election in the state," reads the order issued by Haryana's Additional Chief Secretary (Home Department) T V S N Prasad.

Mukhtar Ansari's body leaves for Ghazipur amidst heavy security



Mortal remains of the jailed gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari being taken to an ambulance before leaving for his native place in Ghazipur, from a hospital in Banda, Friday.

Banda (UP), Mar 29 (PTI):

After the completion of postmortem, gangster-politician Mukhtar Ansari's body on Friday left for his native place in Ghazipur amidst heavy security from here, police officials said.

The ambulance carrying the body was accompanied by police vehicles to ensure security along the 400-kilometre-long route via several districts of Uttar Pradesh.

After the postmortem at the Rani Durgavati Medical College, Banda, a

convoy of 26 vehicles carrying Mukhtar Ansari's body left for Ghazipur at 5.45 pm. As many as 24 police vehicles along with the ambulance are in the convoy along with two vehicles of Ansari's family, police said.

As per police officials, Mukhtar Ansari's son Umar Ansari and Abbas Ansari's wife and their two cousins were present inside the ambulance carrying the body.

The state government had in advance chalked out the route for taking the body following the

UP court orders judicial probe into Ansari's death

Lucknow: A chief judicial magistrate's court in Uttar Pradesh's Banda on Friday ordered a judicial inquiry into the death of gangster-politician Mukhtar Ansari, a senior official said. Banda Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) Bhagwan Das Gupta appointed Garima Singh, Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (MP-MLA Court Banda) as the investigating officer in the case, the official said.

gangster's death due to cardiac arrest on Thursday. On the way to Ghazipur, the convoy will pass through districts including Prayagraj, Bhadohi, Kaushambi and Varanasi before reaching Ghazipur. As per the family members of Mukhtar Ansari, the burial will take place in Ghazipur.

A grave has been dug at the family cemetery at Mohammadabad's Kali Bagh in Ghazipur. The timing of the last rites will be decided after the body is brought to Ghazipur.

44 per cent of sitting MPs face criminal charges, 5 per cent are billionaires: ADR

New Delhi, Mar 29 (PTI):

Out of the 514 sitting Lok Sabha MPs analysed, 225 (44 per cent) have declared criminal cases against themselves, according to the self-sworn affidavits analysed by poll rights body Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR). Out of those analysed, 5 per cent are billionaires, with assets exceeding Rs 100 crore.

The report by the ADR, which scrutinised affidavits of the sitting MPs, revealed that among the sitting MPs with criminal charges, 29 per cent face serious criminal cases, including allegations of murder, attempt to murder, promoting communal disharmony, kidnapping, and crimes against women. Out of the sitting MPs with serious criminal cases against them, nine face murder cases. The analysis revealed that five of these MPs belong to the BJP. Furthermore, 28 sitting MPs have declared cases related to attempt to murder, with a majority 21 MPs belonging to the BJP. Similarly, 16 sitting MPs

face charges related to crimes against women, including three allegations of rape. The report also sheds light on the financial aspects of these lawmakers. Among major parties, the BJP and the Congress have the highest number of billionaire MPs, though the analysis shows significant representation from other parties as well.

Regarding the distribution of criminal cases among states, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Himachal Pradesh stand out with more than 50 per cent of their MPs facing criminal charges. Additionally, the analysis unveils disparities in wealth among MPs, with some having assets worth hundreds of crores, while others have minimal assets. Notably, the top three MPs with the highest declared assets are Nakul Nath (Congress), DK Suresh (Congress), and Kanumuru Raghu Rama Krishna Raju (Independent), with assets amounting to hundreds of crores.

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Postal ballot nodal officers meeting held

Bhilai, Mar 29:

As per the instructions of Collector and District Election Officer Richa Prakash Chaudhary, Commissioner Municipal Corporation Bhilai Charoda and Nodal Officer Postal Ballot - Dashrath Singh Rajput chaired a meeting for distribution of the absentee category essential services voters in the election office. Discussion was held regarding the facility of postal ballot. In the meeting, he gave necessary instructions regarding



postal ballots to the nodal officers appointed from seven departments.

Treasury Officer CB Sahu, Railway Transport Service, Public Relations

Office, Electricity Department, BSNL, Post Office, Dr CBS Banjare (Health Department) and Nodal Officer of Food Department were present.

Nodal officer / assistant appointed to coordinate with enforcement agencies

Bhilai, Mar 29:

Collector and District Election Officer Richa Prakash Choudhary directed the Municipal Corporation of Bhilai to establish proper coordination with all the enforcement agencies for the Lok Sabha elections 2024 and to take proper advance action in cases of violation of Model Code of Conduct. Commissioner Devesh Dhruv (IAS) has been appointed as the nodal officer. According to the information received from the District

Office, Himanshu Deshmukh, Executive Engineer, Siddharth Sahu, Deputy Engineer and Balkrishna Naidu, Assistant Revenue Officer have been appointed as duty assistants to perform the duties of the Nodal Officer. As per the order, the said officer / employee will perform the work as per the instructions of Nodal Officer Devesh Dhruv (IAS) Commissioner Municipal Corporation Bhilai. The order has come into immediate effect.

30 units of blood donated in camp organised by CISF

Bhilai, Mar 29:

A blood donation camp was organized by CISF Utai on 28 March to maintain the availability of blood in the District Hospital Durg. The camp was organized under the guidance of CMHO Dr JP Meshram and Civil Surgeon cum Chief Hospital Superintendent Dr AK Sahu. 30 units of blood were donated in the camp. Under the guidance of Durg District Blood Centre's nodal officer Dr Praveen Kumar Agrawal in-charge and officer Neha Nalvaya Bafna, the



camp was conducted by counselor Anthony, senior lab technician Roshan Singh, lab supervisor Rupesh Sarpe, lab technician Mahendra Chandrakar, Dinesh, Amansheel, Kajal, para-medical students Namrata and Siddharth. The camp

was successfully conducted with the special support of Class IV Himanshu Chandrakar, Ashok Manikpuri, Dr Iqbal from CISF and Prashant Dongaonkar, Dilip Thakur, Satish Chandra Surana from Jeevan Deep Committee.

Team in-charges appointed for Video Surveillance Team

Bhilai, Mar 29:

As per the instructions of the Election Commission of India, a video surveillance team has been formed for the Lok Sabha elections 2024 under the guidance of Collector and District Election Officer Richa Prakash Chaudhary. Videographer has been deployed along with the video surveillance team in-charge.

According to the information received from the District Election Office, Chief Municipal Officer, Nagar Panchayat Patan, Saurabh Vajpayee has

been appointed as the team in-charge for the assembly constituency number 62-Patan of the district, along with him, the videographer Purenra Tiwari has been appointed. Chief Municipal Officer Nagar Panchayat Utai, Rajendra Nayak has been appointed team in-charge for Assembly Constituency No 63-Durg Rural. Videographer Dushyant Kumar Singh will accompany him. Assistant Professor Government Danver Tularam College, Utai, Ritesh Kumar Nayak has been appointed team in-

charge and videographer Eidul Hasan have been deployed for Assembly Constituency No 64-Durg City; Assistant Professor Satish Kumar Gota has been appointed in-charge and videographer Gulshan Sinha has been appointed for Assembly Constituency No 65-Bhilai Nagar. Similarly, for Assembly Constituency No 66-Vaishali Nagar, Deputy Engineer Nagar Panchayat Amleshwar, Dhalendra Kumar Yadav has been appointed in-charge and will be accompanied by videographer Karan Sharma. For

Assembly Constituency No 67-Ahiwara, Chief Municipal Officer of Municipal Council Ahiwara, Seema Bakshi has been appointed team in-charge and will be assisted by videographer Ashish Yadav. Assistant Engineer Creda Dinesh Chandra and videographer Chinamay Kumar for Assembly Constituency No 68-Saja (partial). Assistant Engineer Kamdhenu University, Ullas Arvind Deshmukh and his videographer Yashwant Sahu have been deployed for Assembly Constituency No 69-Bemetara (partial).

RMC Commissioner inspects polling stations of Puraina

Bhilai, Mar 29:

Risali Municipal Commissioner Monica Verma reached Puraina, 25 kilometers away from the corporation main office the other day and inspected the polling stations set up in three wards. During inspection, instructions were given to complete the ongoing construction work in the area before the monsoon.

As part of the morning visit, Corporation Commissioner Monica Verma visited wards 38, 39 and 40. She took stock of the ongoing construction of additional rooms in



Mangal Bhawan, school premises and cautioned the engineer to take special care of the quality. She also gave the ultimatum to complete the ongoing construction work in all three wards

before June 15. The Commissioner directed that action will be taken against those who are negligent in work. Here it needs a mention that Puraina has a population of about 9000. During the visit, the Commissioner inspected the polling stations set up in the school building and gave necessary instructions related to the arrangement of stationery, electricity, water and washrooms in the centers. The Commissioner also checked cleanliness in the ward including the toilet. Seeing the garbage spread in front of Mangal Bhawan under construction in Store Para, she gave instructions for immediate cleaning. She also took information about the lighting system and asked to correct the switched off street lights.

BSP's Town Services & Public Health Departments observe 'SwachhataPakhwada'



Bhilai, Mar 29:

"SwachhataPakhwada Abhiyan" Cleanliness Fortnight is being observed by the Town Services and Public Health Departments of SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant to bring an intense focus on the issues and practices of Swachhata by accelerating mass movement for realizing the vision of a 'Swachh Bharat - Clean India'. Under this initiative, special cleanliness programmes and awareness campaigns are being run in different areas of Bhilai

Township and special cleaning of the designated places is being done every day.

The Pakhwada was initiated on March 16, 2024 at Mahatma Gandhi Kala Mandir, Civic Centre premises, near the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, the pioneer of self-reliance and cleanliness. As a part of this ongoing cleanliness campaign, various predetermined locations of the township were cleaned with public participation daily, including cleaning in A-Market Sector-6 on

March 18, 2024, in A-Market Sector-10, and Nehru House of Culture, Sector-1 on 19 and 20 March 2024, respectively. The cleaning of A-Market Sector-4 was done on March 21, while the Chhattisgarh vegetable market, Ruabandha and Civic Centre areas were cleaned with public participation on March 22 and 23, 2024 respectively.

On March 26, 2024, the grounds in front of the Old Civic Centre Kala Mandir were cleaned. Also, awareness programmes for seg-

regating wet waste and dry waste were organized in Sector 5 on the same day while on March 27, 2024 in Ruabandha Sector.

Under the ongoing "SwachhataPakhwada Abhiyan" Cleanliness Fortnight, special cleanliness activities were also conducted in nearby public places like Weldex Complex and Civic Centre. Bhilai Steel Plant's, Town Services and Public Health Departments have appealed to the residents of Bhilai to cooperate with the cleanliness workers by

segregating the wet and dry waste judiciously and take part in the SwachhataPakhwada campaign successfully by keeping the city clean.

It is noteworthy that SAIL is among those rare companies which also establish townships along with its industrial units, and maintain it as well. Similar cleanliness initiatives and tree plantation are taken by the SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant management from time to time for better upkeep of the environment.

Bhilai, Mar 28:

SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant's Ore Handling Plant-B organized a Tree Plantation Drive under the guidance of Tapas Dasgupta, CGM I/c (Iron), to reduce the environmental impact of material handling activities, and enhance the visual appeal and ecological diversity of the surroundings. HK Pathak, CGM (OHP), Mujeeb Hussain, GM (Mechanical-OHP), AK Singh, GM (Operation-OHP), and NG Halder, GM (Electrical-OHP) were present on this occasion, along with other Senior Officials and departmental personnel.

The tree plantation is flourishing near the Merry Go Round (MGR) area, close to the crushing plant of OHP-B. Located near the spot, where wagons are unloaded into track hoppers, this plantation emphasizes the integration of environmental conservation into material handling operations. This Tree Plantation initiative aims to underscore the organization's dedication to environmental sustainability.



Bill payment facility at TSD to be available on Sunday

Bhilai, Mar 29:

For convenience of Township residents and concluding financial year on March 31, the Town Services Department of SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant shall operate on Sunday March 31, 2024, for Bill

payment facility. The Bill payment facility shall be available at the TA Building Counter on Sunday, during the usual office hours like other working days. All the residents of SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant Township are requested to take note of the same.

OBITUARY

Leela Chaudhary

Bhilai: Housing Board Colony, Ward 24 resident Leela Chaudhary left for



heavenly abode on March 28. Last rites of the mortal remains were performed at RamnagarMuktidham. She was the mother of retired DSP Santosh Chaudhary, Prakash Chaudhary and Vijay Chaudhary.

Hukum Singh Thapa

Bhilai: Amrapali Society resident Hukum Singh Thapa left for heavenly abode at the age of 85 years. Last rites of the mortal remains were performed at RamnagarMuktidham. He was the father of Dev Singh Thapa and Hanuman Singh Thapa.

Permanent warrant executed after 19 years

Bhilai, Mar 29:

Under the directions of Superintendent of Police Jitendra Shukla and supervision of Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Abhishek Jha and City Superintendent of Police (Durg) Chirag Jain (IPS), Police Station City Kotwali Durg conducted a campaign for serving the pending indefinite / permanent / arrest warrants. In this sequel, they executed a permanent warrant after 19 years and arrested the accused Harendra Singh Nag. The warrant was issued against him by Judicial Magistrate First Class District Durg in crime number 350/2005. In another case of the year 2010, police executed the permanent warrant with the arrest of the accused Balram Soni (62) son of Late Pardeshi Soni, a resident of Chandrashekhar School, Panchsheel Nagar Durg. Under the special campaign, police teams



were sent several times to the address of the accused. Police discovered that the warrantee had sold his Panchsheel Nagar house 15 years ago and moved somewhere else. Recently, police received information that the warrantee was living in Baghera. Acting on this information, the police station in-charge immediately sent a team to Baghera. The warrantee was arrested and produced before the court. Constable Lalit Sahu and Tilochan Thakur played a vital role.

URM employees earn appreciation for sincere work & commendable performance

Bhilai, Mar 29:

SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant management always recognizes the sincere efforts of its employees and felicitates them for the same. Be it their commendable professional performance at the workplace, or conscious compliance with the safety protocols, the honest endeavors of employees have always been appreciated at BSP. Various accolades are provided to the employees for good work, including Shriomani Awards, Nehru Awards, Shram Awards, etc.

In one such initiative, employees are being felicitated by the Head of the Department with a Letter of Appreciation for their excellent performance during a particular task or a Shift. Eight employees of URM, Bhilai Steel Plant earned appreciation for exhibiting excellent performance. Anish Sengupta, CGM (URM) felicitated departmental employees Sudama



Mahilange, Sr OCT, Madan Gopal, OCT (RSM), E Chiranjivalu, Technician (Mech-Blooming/Billet Mill), Inderjit Singh, Sr OCT (RSM), Pramod Kumar Verma, OCT (RSM), Sudhir Kumar Yadav, OCT (URM), Niteshwar Singh Dhurve, OCT (RSM) and Tatikonda Srikar, OCT (RSM) with Letter of Appreciation. In his appreciation letter to the respective em-

shall ensure smooth supply of oil to the Tandem UF Roll. The work executed by them shall help in keeping the quality of rolls and rails intact, along with reducing the maintenance costs.

Inderjeet Singh, Pramod Kumar Verma, and Sudhir Kumar Yadav were felicitated for their exemplary contribution for utilizing Pump-1 of HPW-III, as a standby pump for Pumps-2 & 3. A new bridge valve system was developed in-house to utilize the pump as an additional standby for HS-2 and HS-3 to supply high pressure water during the cutting process. This has also resulted in reduction in the maintenance costs.

Nitेशwar Singh Dhurve, and Tatikonda Srikar were felicitated with Letter of Appreciation for their commendable contribution in installation of additional manually operated valve to control the pressure of secondary descaler, and for tireless ef-

orts in reducing the maintenance cost. A sudden increase in pressure during the rolling may damage the pipelines and hoses of the system, in which case it becomes necessary to stop the rolling, which causes loss in production. To eliminate this downtime, with the tireless efforts of Nitेशwar Singh Dhurve, and Tatikonda Srikar a manually operated valve was installed in the descaler line and a hose was connected to the valve and inserted into the scale tunnel. This valve can be used to reduce the pressure of the secondary descaler in case of a sudden rise in pressure without any loss in production.

The main objective behind awarding Plant's employees with such appreciation is to acknowledge and honour the sincere efforts and hard work displayed by them at the workplace, by meeting the organizational objectives while adhering to the standard operating practices of safety.

IT notice of Rs 1823 cr to Cong is Modi govt's dictatorship: Baij

Says Modi govt will not succeed in saving power through misuse of constitutional agencies

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 29: Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) President Deepak Baij has termed Income Tax Department's notice to Congress party to deposit fine of Rs 1823.08 crore as dictatorship of the BJP's central government.

A conspiracy is being hatched by the BJP led central government to deprive the main opposition party of resources at the time of Lok Sabha elections in the country, he alleged.

Modi has come to know that there is an atmosphere against him in the country and the time of his departure is nearing, so to stop the opposition



from contesting the elections, the Income Tax Department was put forward, said Baij. The Modi government at the Center and the current leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party are working against the image of fair elections and healthy democracy that the previous Congress governments had created for 70 years, Baij said, and added that BJP hatched a conspiracy to establish a monopoly by snatching away funds and resources from the opposition parties. Baij has accused the Bharatiya Janata Party

and the Modi government at the Center of hatching an anti-democracy conspiracy, saying that the authoritarian Modi government first toppled the Congress-elected governments, traded leaders out of fear and greed, and those who did not bow down were punished.

When the general elections are being held in the country, Income Tax Department is being misused to weaken Congress financially despite the imposition of the code of conduct, Baij said.

Baij said that the electoral bond scam, which the Supreme Court declared illegal and unconstitutional, exposed the ill intentions of the Modi government and the Bharatiya Janata Party. The facts that have come to light are extremely worrying and shameful, the country's investigative agencies ED and IT are being operated as extortion gangs, he said.

GOOD FRIDAY OBSERVED



Christians attended the Church Services on Good Friday which commemorates the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is a day of reflection and reverence, often observed with fasting, prayer services, and church services that recount the events of Jesus's Passion.

Ekta Choubey gets PhD in Biotechnology



Raipur, Mar 29: MATS University has awarded PhD degree in Biotechnology to researcher Ekta Choubey. Ekta completed her research work in Biotechnology on the subject "Study and Characterisation of Anti Oxidant and Anti Cancer Properties of Moringa Oleifera-An Indian Specie" under the guidance of Professor Dr. Bhagyashree Deshpande. Ekta is the daughter of Pramod Choubey, resident of Sunder Nagar Om Society.

Cong to take to streets against IT notice of Rs 1823 cr

Set to stage protest against central govt in districts today

Raipur, Mar 29:

Congress has decided to hold a massive public protest with a torch procession on 30 March 2024 in all the district headquarters of the state against the imposition of tax terrorism on it. Massive protests will also be held next day in all the constituencies under the leadership of Congress Party candidates with participation of local senior leaders and party office bearers.

Pradesh Congress

Committee (PCC) spokesman Sushil Anand Shukla has charged BJP with suppressing the opposition parties to fail the Indian democracy. He alleged that a conspiracy was being hatched to weaken the opposition economically. An illegal attempt to freeze the bank accounts of the main national opposition party Indian National Congress lasted for more than a month, he said, adding that All India Congress Committee received fresh notice from IT department to pay Rs 1823.08 crore. The IT department has already forcibly withdrawn Rs 135 crore from the bank account of the Congress Party, he said.

Undertrial prisoner escapes from the court premises

Raipur, Mar 29: An undertrial prisoner lodged in Raipur jail under the NDPS Act, escaped during his court appearance. He escaped by dodging two constables while going from the lockup to the court room in Raipur court yesterday evening.

The absconding undertrial prisoner was a resident of Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. Directorate General of Revenue (DRI) had arrested him 2 months ago. Meanwhile SSP Raipur Santosh Singh has suspended 2 constables in this case.

Six-year-old girl raped by neighbor

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 29: A six-year-old girl has been allegedly raped by a youth in her neighbourhood. On the day of Shivratri, he allegedly picked up the girl and brought her to his home and then committed the rape. The doctor confirmed rape after examination. On the complaint of victim's parents, the police have arrested the youth. The incident took place in the area falling under jurisdiction of Khamhardih police station.

Victim's mother in her complaint to the police station told that neighbour Mukesh Yadav (29) raped her 6-year-old daughter. She told that on the day of Shivratri on March 8, the entire family of Mukesh had gone out of the house and in such a situation, he brought her daughter to his home and raped her. He threatened her daughter

not to say anything to anyone, victim's mother told police.

According to information available victim did not tell anything to her mother after coming home, but after a few days when her health deteriorated, her parents took her to the doctor who suspected rape during investigation.

After this the doctor told this to the family. Later victim narrated the entire incident in broken words to her mother.

After this the parents registered a case in the police station.

Victim's parents runs a betel shop near their house. On the other hand, the Mukesh works as a mechanic in a hotel in Labhandi area.

The police arrested the Mukesh Yadav within 24 hours of receiving the complaint. On Thursday, he was sent to jail on the orders of the court.

Hundreds of applications pile up in Collector's office!

For break in the election duty; number likely to cross two-three times

New list sought for the election duty

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 29: The leg work of the government officers and employees for the Lok Sabha (LS) polls has intensified and in order to keep themselves away from election duty, hundreds of employees have already given application and on which the Collector is going to make the hearing.

It is just four months back the Vidhan Sabha elections were held in the state and in this more of women employees

were put on duty.

In the two Vidhan Sabha seats of the capital city, i.e Raipur North and West, the entire polling team comprised of female employees.

This included even the differently able woman or those who are seriously ill.

As per sources of the district administration, the responsibility for the Lok Sabha (LS) polls is also being handed over to them now.

No new list of the officers or employees from different government department was sought this time and in this the female employees are finding themselves as the most troubled lot.

Many employees seek holiday:

In the Collector office till Thursday, application of 300 employees has been submitted and in which they have re-

quested or shown unwillingness to attend election duty due to either illness or some family reasons. In addition to this it is more than 100 employees who have sought leave from the election duty. They have either held marriage ceremony treatment or some sad news in the family as the reason for being unable to attend election duty. The elections for the Raipur LS seat is on May 7 and counting will be held on June 4.

There is estimate that by April, the number of applications from the employees is expected to rise two-three times. Collector is the District Returning Officer (DRO) and in view of this it is he only who has the right to take final call on the request or application submitted by the employees.

Brijmohan's jibe at Baghel's remark on EVM hacking

Says EVMs in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka were not hacked when Congress had won



Raipur, Mar 29: BJP candidate from Raipur Lok Sabha constituency and minister in Sai govern-

ment, Brijmohan Agrawal has taken a dig at former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel's statement on EVM hacking. He said that when Congress won in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal, EVMs were not hacked. He said that Baghel's statement on EVM hacking was childish. Regarding the Lok Sabha elections, Brijmohan Agrawal said that he received so much love of public for the last 40 years. He assured that he would always be available to people as usual. 'I consider Raipur as my home and I consider Chhattisgarh as my family', he said.

Fish enters boy's mouth while bathing in pond



Doctors face difficulty in removing the fish stuck in the throat

Central Chronicle News

Janjgir-Champa, Mar 29: In a strange case that has come to light from Janjgir-Champa district a fish got stuck in 14-year-old boy's mouth after entering his mouth while he was bathing in a pond. The incident took place in Karumahu village of Akaltara police station

area. The name of the boy is said to be Sameer Gond.

According to the information received, an attempt was made at the local level to remove the fish from the boy's throat, but due to his deteriorating health, he was sent to Akaltara Community Health Center through 112.

Doctors in Akaltara Community Health Center also tried to remove the fish stuck in the throat, but did not succeed. Later the boy was referred to Bilaspur CIMS for treatment.

Cash and goods worth Rs 25 crore seized by surveillance teams

Since the model code of conduct came into effect in the state

Raipur, Mar 29:

Chief Electoral Officer Reena Babasaheb Kangale has issued necessary guidelines to all the District Election Officers and

Superintendents of Police regarding taking necessary action to maintain law and order during the Lok Sabha General Elections. In compliance with these guidelines, illegal transportation and storage of money and goods is being closely monitored through various enforcement agencies in the state. Under the Model Code of Conduct applicable in the state, intensive investigation proceed-

ings are going on by the monitoring teams.

Since the Model Code of Conduct came into effect for the Lok Sabha general elections in the state, illegal money and items worth Rs 25 crore 8 lakh have been seized. According to the information received from the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, cash amounting to Rs 5.28 crore has been seized till March 28 during monitoring

by the enforcement agencies. During this period, 17311 liters of illicit liquor has been seized, which is worth Rs 41 lakh. During the intensive investigation operation, 784 kg of drugs worth Rs 1 crore 48 lakh and 23 kg of precious jewelry worth Rs 94 lakh were also seized. Apart from these, other materials worth Rs 16 lakh 96 thousand have also been seized.

Anu G Pillai awarded PhD



Raipur, Mar 29: Kalinga University Raipur has awarded Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) to Annu G Pillai for her thesis in the field of Electrical Engineering. Title of her thesis was "Impact of Large Scale PV Connected System on Grid and Investigating the Instability Parameters". Anu G Pillai completed her thesis under the supervision of Dr Vijayalaxmi Biradar.

'Do not deploy 'divyang', female employees on election duty'

COEF urges CEO through a letter

Raipur, Mar 29:

The members of Chhattisgarh Officers-Employees' Federation (COEF) through a letter to the Chief Election Officer (CEO) State Election Office Reena Baba Saheb Kangale have demanded not to deploy the differently able and the female employees for the election duty. The Federation has raised demand to increase the hono-

rarium given to the vehicle drivers and daily wage workers deployed on election duty. Regional Convener of Federation, Kamal Verma informed that such government employees who are physically disabled or are having some serious illness like heart disease or kidney transplant, heart surgery and others, should not be deployed for election duty. In the same way the government employees who are above 60 yrs should also be kept free from the election duty. The

Federation has urged to keep the female government employees away from being a part of the flying squad or sensitive works like VST from the security point of view. The Federation has said that if the services of these employees are very essential, then they can be deployed for the official work in the office and can be attached to the election office. The Federation has also urged the CEO to pay honorarium to the vehicle drivers and daily wage employees put on election duty.

OBITUARY

Harbhajan Kaur



Raipur: Harbhajan Kaur, breathed her last here on Friday. She was 88. The final journey will leave from her residence at Ramkund Raipur, in front of Vivekanand Ashram, to Marwari crematorium on March 30 at 11:00 am. She was mother of Jaswinder Singh Rana (President Ramgariya Sewak Sabha) and grand-mother of Prakash Singh Rana and Indarpal Singh Rana.

Raipur to Jagdalpur flight to start from Sunday

Raipur, Mar 29:



Passengers will be able to fly from Jagdalpur to Hyderabad all seven days. These flights are being started by Indigo Airlines. Besides, flights from Jagdalpur to Hyderabad will also start from the next day i.e. from April 1st. The flight charges from Raipur to Jagdalpur will be Rs 2,299.

Travel operators said that there was a demand for air service from Raipur to Jagdalpur for a long time. It is notable that passengers will be able to fly from Raipur to Jagdalpur four days a week.

According to the information received from the airline, flight number 6E7104 will take off from Hyderabad to Jagdalpur at 10:50 am and reach Jagdalpur at 12:30 pm. This flight will fly seven days a week. Along with this, flight number 6E 7105 will take off from Jagdalpur at 12:50 pm and reach Hyderabad at 2:25

pm. Flight number 6E 7092 will take off from Jagdalpur at 12:50 pm and reach Raipur at 1:50 pm. After this, flight number 6E 7095 will take off from Raipur at 2:10 pm and reach Jagdalpur at 3:10 pm.

The movement of air passengers is continuously increasing at Raipur airport. In the two and a half months from January to March 15 this year, more than four lakh passengers have flown from Raipur airport. Facilities for passengers will also increase in the coming days.

For the convenience of passengers, parking fees are now being charged through FastTag at Raipur airport. With its arrival, the fights between passen-

gers and contract workers have also reduced a bit. Along with this, these days, along with Ola and Uber, other taxis have also started coming to the airport. Some new shops are also going to come up for the passengers. Raipur airport has been ranked fifth in consumer satisfaction.

After the start of air service from Raipur to Jagdalpur, flights from Raipur to Jaipur are also likely to start in the end of April or first week of May. It is being told that the schedule from Raipur to Jaipur has been decided and only new flights are being awaited by the airline. There has been a demand for starting flights from Raipur to Jaipur for a long time.

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 29: In his letter to Bharatiya Janata Party State President Kiran Singh Deo, Republican Party of India National President and Rajya Sabha MP Ramdas Athawale extended full support to the BJP candidates on behalf of the Republican Party of India on all Lok Sabha seats in Chhattisgarh in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Athawale said that Republican Party of India (Athawale) is working as a friendly party in NDA by adopting the ideology of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

In his letter sent to BJP State President Kiran



Singh Deo, Athawale said that India is progressing under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. People of all castes and religions are accepting this declaration of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas'. In comparison to the 70 years of Congress rule, the tenure of Prime Minister Modi is being considered as a golden period.

Therefore, to enable BJP to establish government at the Centre, Republican Party of India (Athawale) will not field its candidates on all the Lok Sabha seats of Chhattisgarh state. Taking the letter from National President, Athawale, RPI (Athawale) state in-charge Abhishek Verma met BJP State President Deo on Friday and handed over this letter to him. It is noteworthy that in the last assembly elections also, the Republican Party of India (Athawale) had given its full support to the BJP candidates in all the 90 assembly constituencies of Chhattisgarh.

Collector Dr. Gaurav Singh inspected electric charging station

Installed in the Collectorate multilevel parking.
Preparation for 10 new charging stations in the city

Raipur, Mar 29:

Under the guidance of the district administration, electric charging stations have been established at four places in Raipur city. Today Collector Dr. Gaurav Singh inspected the charging station established in Collectorate Multilevel Parking and took detailed information. During the inspection, Senior Superintendent of Police Mr. Santosh Kumar Singh, Municipal Corporation Commissioner Mr. Abinash Mishra, Chief Executive Officer of District Panchayat Mr. Vishwadeep were also



present. With these electronic charging stations, it is easy to charge four-wheeler electric vehicles on the road and this will also promote the use of electric vehicles. Having three charging points in the multilevel parking provides the facility of charging 03 vehicles at the same time at the lowest rate.

Under the guidance of Collector Dr. Gaurav Singh, taking steps to-

wards economy and environmental protection, the district administration has installed charging stations for electric vehicles at 04 places in Raipur city. Collector Dr. Singh reached the multilevel parking at the Collectorate on Thursday and took detailed stock of the facilities being provided to the citizens. The charging station has the facility to charge 03 four-wheelers si-

multaneously, providing full charging of the vehicle in less than 45 minutes. It is notable that the capacity of these charging stations is 142 kilowatts. All are fast and AC chargers. Apart from this Electric charging station is also operational in the campus of Jaistambh Chowk Multilevel Parking, I.S.B.T. and Municipal Corporation headquarters. Chargers

with 3 guns have been installed at all stations. There is a fixed fee of Rs 18 per unit from the vehicle owner at the charging station.

During the inspection, it was also informed that Raipur Municipal Corporation, in collaboration with Indian Oil Corporation, has prepared 10 new charging networks of charging stations in the city, under which Subhash Stadium, Raipur Smart City Office Complex, Jawahar Bazaar Parking Charging stations are being prepared near the premises, Lakshmi Textile Market Pandari, near Central Library, Zone 10 Office, LIC Housing Shankar Nagar, Anupam Nagar Garden, Gandhi Udyan Parking and at Amanaka the facility of which will also be available to electric vehicle drivers soon.

Police officials, jawans imparted training

Related to upcoming Lok Sabha elections 2024

Raipur, Mar 29:



Under the direction of Senior Superintendent of Police, Mr. Santosh Singh, (I.P.S.), training related to Lok Sabha Elections 2024 was conducted at Police Transit Mess Raipur on March 28. The training was given by Jyotsna Choudhary, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Headquarters Raipur and Nilesh Kumar Dwivedi, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Raipur. D.P.O. Aarti Gupta and Sharda Singh gave training about the new judicial code and crime.

In the context of the Lok Sabha election year 2024, information was given regarding the Model Code of Conduct, the law related to fair and hassle-free voting, the Representation of the

People Act 1951, provisions of the Indian Penal Code, Noise Act and Defacement of Property Act 1994. Along with this, the work and importance of the team formed for the purpose of conducting fair elections, Flying Squad, Static Surveillance Team, Video Surveillance Team and Audit Team was explained in detail. Information was given regarding the preventive action to be taken by the police officer before voting. The do's and don'ts regarding the responsibilities of police officers on the polling day were explained and the instructions given by the Election Commission

of India in the Lok Sabha election year 2024 were explained to be followed.

Training was given by DPO Aarti Gupta and Sharda Singh. During the training organized, a total of 265 officers/employees were present - 69 from Rakshit Kendra, 50 from Superintendent of Police Office, 64 from various police stations, 82 from the company of Chhattisgarh. At the end of the program, all the officers/employees became aware of the important points given in this training and said that this training will play an important role in contributing to better policing of Raipur Police.

Players of HTPS (W) honoured

For performing excellently in the inter-regional weightlifting and bodybuilding competition

Korba, Mar 29:

By lifting a total weight of 359 kg in the 59 kg weight category of the two-day inter-regional weightlifting and bodybuilding competition organized from March 21 to 22 under the auspices of the Central Arts and Sports Council, Chhattisgarh State Power Company Limited, Raipur, RK Patkar (Chief Security Constable) got the first position, Sanjay Kumar Rathore (Working Assistant Category-3) got the first position by lifting a total

weight of 445 kg in the 93 kg weight category and Tall of Body Building. Adrien Rodrigues (Working Assistant Category-3), brought pride to the plant by securing the first position in the group, and other players, under the leadership of Senior Club, HTPS, Korba West Team Manager Manish Srivastava and Sports Secretary Satish Bardiya, on March 28.

On 10th July, he met the Executive Director (Production) of the plant

Sanjay Sharma and presented him the winning trophy. On this occasion, the Executive Director sent congratulations and best wishes to all the players who have performed excellently in the field of body building and weight lifting, boosted their morale and also encouraged them to perform excellently in the competitions organized at national and international level in this field. Motivated and encouraged the players.

Annual techno-cultural festival 'Meraz-2024' concludes

At IIT Bhilai

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Mar 29: One of the most awaited events in central India, the annual techno-cultural festival at IIT Bhilai took place from March 15 to 17 for three fascinating days. With numerous formal and informal events, the campus buzzed with excitement as participants from far and wide showcased their talent, creativity, and competitive spirit.

The event, boasting over 30 formal events, featured a diverse range of activities catering to every interest. From the immersive "Murder Mystery" to the socially impactful "Nukkad Natak," and from the soul-stirring



"Poetry Writing" to the intellectually stimulating "Escape Room," there was something for everyone. The festival also embraced unconventional competitions like "Robbo Kabaddi" and cutting-edge experiences in "Virtual Reality."

In addition to the formal events, more informal activities created a friendly atmosphere at the festival. Participants engaged in "speed dating", showed their enthusiasm in the "Paper Dance" and tested their goals in games such as "Burst the Balloons,"

"Target Game", "Feel the Beat pass the Heat" and many more.

The excitement of the event spread to campus, drawing people from all over the country. The winners of the competitions were rewarded not only with cash but also with the satisfaction of showcasing their talent on the prestigious stage. The event attracted an impressive attendance of over 1,500 enthusiasts, underscoring its growing reputation and influence.

Adding glamour to the affair was the celebrity nights on the second and third day. The popular Bollywood-mix Sufi band "Qafila" attracted the audience on the second day, followed on the third day by a raucous comedy in-

spired by stand-up comedian Vivek Samatani. The grand finale featured the soulful melodies of Bollywood singer Antara Mitra, leaving the audience spellbound.

As the event reached a crescendo, the DJ night played up the atmosphere with gusto on the final day, providing a fitting end to three days of innovation, entertainment, and camaraderie.

Reflecting on the success of the event, the organizers thanked the participants, sponsors, and volunteers whose combined efforts made it possible to create an unforgettable experience. With each passing year, annual technology -The wonderful culture held at IIT Bhilai sets new standards.

Graduation Day celebration held at Adarsh Vidyalaya



Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Mar 29: Graduation Day was celebrated with a great feeling of joy and enthusiasm by the Adarsh Vidyalaya Devendra Nagar kids in the presence of their parents and teachers. They were

proud of their glittering success achieved by their hard work, determination and ceaseless perseverance coupled with the holistic environment and the right guidance from the teachers. The little scholars were cheered and congratulated with wishes and blessings

for their further enjoyable journey towards glory and success.

The parents and the teachers blessed them and also motivated them to work harder to shine in all walks of life. At the end of a fleeting but eventful year, the kids were glad to re-

ceive their certificates and embark on their further journey with more enthusiasm and zeal. The Principal of the school, Suman Shanbhag, Vice principal KK Unnikrishnan Nair and the Headmistress, Shobha Pillai also congratulated the students, their parents

and the teachers on the glittering success of the little kids. The graceful steps of dancers cheered the gathering and added to the joy of the program was conducted by Mini Philip, informs Suman Shanbag Principal of the School, in a press release.

Cong worker begins fast opposing party's Bilaspur candidate

Wants the ticket for himself

Central Chronicle News

Bilaspur, Mar 29: A Congress worker in Chhattisgarh has launched an indefinite fast opposing the candidature of party MLA Devendra Yadav from the Bilaspur Lok Sabha seat and demanding that he be nominated for it.

Yadav now represents the Bhilai Nagar assembly seat in Durg district.

Jagdish Kaushik (40), a former president of Bodri Nagar Panchayat in Bilaspur district, has opposed Yadav's candidature calling him an "outsider".

Kaushik sat on the campus of the Congress' Bilaspur district office here on an indefinite fast on Wednesday demanding that he be given the ticket

in place of Yadav.

"Why I have not been given a ticket from Bilaspur Lok Sabha seat? What was lacking in my penance? The party high command (State/Central) should address (it). Give justice. Till justice is meted out (the protest will be continued)," reads pamphlets pasted by him on a wall of the Congress office.

Kaushik said his protest will continue till he gets justice from the party high command.

Bilaspur District Congress Committee (Rural) president Vijay Kesharwani said Kaushik is currently a Congress worker and had been the president of Bodri Nagar Panchayat from 2009 to 2014.

Congress MLA Atal Srivastava and other party leaders met him and urged

him to call off his fast but he refused, he said. Efforts are underway to persuade him to end his protest, he added.

Elections to the 11 Lok Sabha seats in the state will be held on April 19, April 26 and May 7 and votes will be counted on June 4. Both Congress and BJP have declared candidates for all the seats in the state.

The two-term MLA Yadav will take on BJP's Tokhan Sahu, a former MLA, in Bilaspur constituency.

Earlier, a local Congress worker had opposed the candidature of former chief minister Bhupesh Baghel from Rajnandgaon Lok Sabha seat. Baghel now represents the Patan assembly seat in the Durg district which falls in the Durg Lok Sabha constituency.

Bilaspur Paralympic team leaves without any financial assistance

Due to imposing of model code of conduct

Bilaspur, Mar 29:

Bilaspur team left for Gwalior to participate in the 23rd National Paralympic competition. By participating in the disabled swimming competition, talented youth will prove themselves by proving their superiority. Although the competing parties always got the necessary expenses under the departmental process, but this time, facing financial difficulties due to the election code of conduct implemented across the country, this party has left with the help of pulses and rice.

when everyone knew that the code of conduct was going to be implemented, then alternative arrangements should have been made in advance. On one hand, while governments are making continuous efforts for sports, players and facilities, on the other hand, the departmental process has become such that even essential facilities are being disrupted, because no efforts have been made to make provision for alternative arrangements. Now the question is as to how the players will win while facing financial difficulties?

Paralympic competition team did not get government support due to implementation of election code of conduct.

IG conducts annual inspection of Korba

Takes parade salute at Rakshit Centre; March-past and Scott of the parade was conducted
Darbar was organized to solve the problems of officers and employees

Korba, Mar 29:

Annual inspection of district Korba was conducted by Inspector General (IG) of Police Bilaspur Dr. Sanjeev Shukla on Mar 29. In which the Inspector General of Police was first welcomed in the district by Superintendent of Police Siddhant Tiwari by presenting him a bunch of flowers. After that the parade salute was taken by the Inspector General of Police. After that he inspected the parade. During the parade inspection, the



IG inspected the turnout of each officer and employee and conducted a group-wise parade, in which the officers and employees who performed best were rewarded with cash prizes.

Thereafter, the kit parade was inspected by the Inspector General of Police, in which information was obtained from all the employees regarding the kit materials received

by them. All the branches of Rakshit Kendra were inspected by the IG, in which all the vehicles and documents of the vehicle branch and Rakshit Kendra were inspected and instructions were given for necessary improvements. After this, the store branch was inspected, in which instructions were given for the maintenance of all the materials and their distribution at

the right time. Besides, the arms branch was also inspected and instructions were given to keep the weapons safe and clean.

On the occasion of inspection, a darbar was organized by the Inspector General of Police to resolve the problems of police officers and employees. In the Darbar, the Inspector General of Police met the officers and employees of District Police Korba and assured them of taking action to solve their problems. Also, in the Darbar, the officers and employees posted in the police station and post were given proper solution to the problems of the victims coming to the police station and good Encouraged to behave.

After this, Inspector General of Police Dr.

Sanjeev Shukla reached the office of the Superintendent of Police and inspected all the branches and took information about the work of their branches. In which instructions were given to complete the necessary entries in the service book. He also took information regarding compassionate appointment, pending pension cases, departmental provident fund, ongoing construction works in the district, budget status, court related cases, suspended officers and employees and their appeals, leave resolution etc. Instructions were given to take immediate action on the applications received from employees and not to keep them pending unnecessarily.

Traditional Holi spirit flourishes in Bangoli village

Kharora, Mar 29:

In a charming display of cultural heritage, the villagers of Bangoli eschewed the customary practice of Holika Dahan, adhering steadfastly to age-old traditions. As the last full moon of the Phalgun month graced the sky, Holashtak commenced, heralding the onset of festivities characterized by vibrant music and spirited camaraderie.



Unlike neighbouring regions, Bangoli refrained from burning the symbolic Holi pyre, a tradition upheld for generations. Instead, the community immersed themselves in the jubilant spirit of Holi Dhureli, adorning one another with love-colored abir and gulal. From dawn till dusk, children, elders,

and women exchanged heartfelt embraces, fostering bonds of love, harmony, and mutual brotherhood.

As the day unfolded, the melodious tunes of Phag songs resonated through the streets, courtesy of Horiyars and members of the Phag Geet Samiti. Youthful revellers joyously danced to the rhythmic

beat of drums, infusing every corner with the vibrant hues of Holi.

However, amidst the joyous celebrations, a somber note emerged as some individuals indulged in the consumption of alcohol, deviating from the sanctity of Hindu festival traditions. This trend highlights a concerning reality, reflecting the grip of sub-

stance abuse among today's youth.

Nevertheless, the essence of Holi remained untarnished as diverse groups, including women, traversed the village, spreading cheer by applying Gulal and Tika in every household while chanting joyful slogans of "Holi Hai."

Amidst the merriment, the significance of Holi's legendary tales remained at the forefront, enriching the cultural tapestry of Bangoli and surrounding villages.

Remarkably, the day concluded with peaceful celebrations across the region, underscoring the community's commitment to preserving cherished traditions while fostering a harmonious environment for all.

Students cultivate home garden, promote nutritional sustainability

Khairagarh, Mar 29:



Fourth-year students at Rani Avanti Bai Lodhi Agricultural College and Research Center Chhuikhadan have embarked on a transformative journey by establishing a vibrant home garden within the college farm as part of the Module program. Additionally, they have taken the initiative to market the fruits and vegetables grown in the home garden, fostering community engagement and promoting nutritional sustainability.

Explaining the concept of the home garden, the students highlighted its versatility, referring to it interchangeably as a nutrition garden, kitchen garden, or home garden. They described it as an essential component of household agriculture, where seasonal fruits and

a variety of vegetables are cultivated in designated spaces adjacent to homes. This initiative aims to utilize family labor to ensure a steady supply of fresh produce for household consumption.

Recognizing the importance of a balanced diet, the students emphasized the nutritional requirements for individuals, advocating for the inclusion of fruits and vegetables in daily meals. An adult person requires 85 grams of fruits, 300 grams of vegeta-

bles, 125 grams of green vegetables, 100 grams of root vegetables and 75 grams of other types of vegetables per day.

To maximize yield and ensure a steady supply of fruits and vegetables throughout the year, the size of the nutrition garden depends on several factors, including the availability of land, the number of family members, and the time commitment. By adopting practices such as continuous crop rotation, intensive

horticulture, and inter-crop farming, an average family of five members, comprising one woman, one man, and three children, can effectively manage a garden on 250 square meters of land. This approach enables families to cultivate a diverse range of produce and optimize space utilization, thereby promoting self-sufficiency and nutritional sustainability.

Moreover, the home garden initiative promotes environmental sustainability by offering chemical-free fruits and vegetables, thus contributing to the well-being of both individuals and the planet. The students expressed pride in their efforts, acknowledging the guidance and support provided by Dr. B.S. Asati (Associate Professor, Vegetable Science) and Dean Dr. A.K. Gupta.

Farmers struggle as cash limit hinders payments



Mungeli, Mar 29:

The jubilation of selling paddy at support prices quickly fades for farmers as they grapple with arduous efforts to access their own deposited funds. In a district where agricultural livelihoods thrive, the scarcity of cash in cooperative banks coupled with a rigid withdrawal limit of Rs 25,000 and fixed payment dates exacerbates

the plight of farmers.

With 105 production centers facilitating the sale of paddy to 1,04,879 farmers through district cooperative societies, the process of retrieving deposited amounts has become a laborious ordeal. Farmers find themselves toiling not only in rural bank branches but also at the main district headquarters, struggling to access their hard-earned funds.

Despite assurances of timely deposits into their bank accounts post-sale, farmers encounter persistent challenges in withdrawing these funds. The annual recurrence of such predicaments highlights systemic issues compounded by a lack of earnest attention from responsible authorities.

Operated by eight to ten district cooperative banks, these financial institutions witness a continuous influx of farmers from dawn till dusk, all seeking to obtain their rightful payments. As the farming community grapples with these obstacles, urgent intervention is needed to alleviate their hardships and ensure smoother transactions in the future.

First EVM randomization conducted

Khairagarh, Mar 29:

The first randomization of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines took place for Assembly Constituency No. 73 Khairagarh within Lok Sabha Constituency No. 6 in the presence of representatives of political parties in the District Office meeting room under the chairmanship of the District Election Officer.

Under the stewardship of the District Election Officer, Collector Verma elucidated the intricate nuances of the randomization process, assuring the fair and unbiased distribution of EVMs. The gathering witnessed the presence of key officials

including Additional Collector and Nodal (Training) Prem Kumar Patel, Deputy District Election Officer Surendra Kumar Thakur, SDM Khairagarh, Assistant Returning Officer Tanqueswar Prasad Sahu, Tehsildar Chhuikhadan Mokshada Dewangan, Naib Tehsildar Salhewara Amardeep Aanchal, District Information Officer Shweta Choubey and Programmer Johnson.

Ensuring utmost transparency, political representatives such as Minj, Bhikamchand Chhajed, Gyandas Banjare, Manoj Kumar Gupta, and Jitendra Khelwar actively participated, underscoring their commitment to a free and fair electoral system.

Festival of Holi celebrated with pomp and joy



Kharora, Mar 29:

Holi, the great festival of colors, was celebrated with great pomp and enthusiasm in village Keshala including Kharora. The festival of Holi is celebrated on the full moon day of Phalgun month brought in a lot of happiness among the people. Similarly, in the streets of village Keshala, Parsada Kanaki, Navgaon

of Tilda block, the scene of Holi festival was very beautiful and in the main intersection of the locality, groups of villagers were dancing and singing to the beat of drums. People wished and congratulated each other on the festival of Holi and children and young people were all seen colored in the same color, the symbol of brotherhood. People also enjoyed Chhattisgarhi dishes. On

Sunday, the eve of Holi, people in the village, city and other blocks, at the time of Holika Dahan, Holika Rani, made from wood, was burnt at the auspicious time by offering rituals and fasting to Holika Dahan. After the burning of Holika Rani, Fagh Geet of folk and traditional songs was sung and thereafter on Monday Holi was played all across the region.

AM/NS India CSR's Kirandul team conducts free health camps



Dantewada, Mar 29:

AM/NS India CSR's Kirandul team recently organized a series of free health camps at Padhapur Gram Panchayat. Aimed at providing accessible healthcare services to the local people, the initiative involved collaboration between AM/NS India and healthcare professionals from the District Hospital. A team of doctors, pharmacists, and attendants conducted health check-ups for the villagers. The primary objective was to diagnose ailments and provide necessary

medical assistance. A total of 85 individuals availed themselves of the services provided during these camps. Recognizing the importance of early detection and prevention, the health camps also offered free pathological tests for conditions such as malaria and blood sugar levels. The success of these health camps underscores the significance of collaborative efforts in addressing healthcare disparities in rural areas. AM/NS India remains dedicated to furthering such initiatives that positively impact the lives of individuals and communities.

Joyful Holi celebration unites Bilaspur's Goldsmith community

Lawan, Mar 29:

The Progressive Young Goldsmith Society of Bilaspur brought vibrancy and joy to the Holi festivities with their grand Holi Milan program held at Ajit Hotel. Organized by the society officials, this event aimed to infuse the festival of colors with a deeper sense of community spirit and unity.

Members, workers, and esteemed seniors of the society, along with their families, gathered at Ajit Hotel Telipara to celebrate Holi in a harmonious atmosphere. Their collective presence underscored a strong sense of societal awareness and unity, reflecting the inclusive nature of the event.



The highlight of the program was the captivating Phag song presentation by Advocate Ajay Swarnkar and brother Vijay Swarnkar, which infused the gathering with a delightful aura. Additionally, the Progressive Yuva

Swarnakar Samaj Mahila Mandal presented mesmerizing dance performances, soulful singing, and engaging Phag renditions, spreading joy and camaraderie among attendees.

Following the cultural extravaganza, everyone indulged in delightful refreshments, enhancing the overall festive experience. The presence of President Rakesh Soni, along with esteemed patrons Ajay Poddar and Rajkumar Soni, added prestige to the event. Vice President Suryakant Soni, Secretary and Treasurer Ved Kumar Soni, and numerous other society members contributed to the event's success, further solidifying bonds within the Goldsmith community.

Notably, the entire Mahila Mandal actively participated in the colorful festivities, with women like Chandrika Soni, Pratima Soni, Durga Soni, and many others joining in the celebration with great enthusiasm.

District level SVEEP committee meeting concluded



Bijapur, Mar 29:

District level SVEEP committee meeting was called under the guidance of Collector and District Election Officer Anurag Pandey. In this meeting held under the chairmanship of Nodal Officer and Chief Executive Officer, District Panchayat Hemant Ramesh Nandanwar, instructions have been given to organize department-wise activities and conduct voter awareness campaign to ensure 100% voting and to tell the voters the importance of each vote. Deputy Collector Dilip Uike and Deputy Director Panchayat Geet Kumar Sinha were directed to fix the date for department-wise activity. In the meeting,

cleanliness and labor donation under SVEEP program, rangoli competition to encourage women voters, fashion show and cricket competition in all four blocks, tug of war, online quiz, painting, essay writing, slogan writing competition for school children will be organized. Similarly, Women and Child Development was asked to organize awareness programs from Anganwadi level to Block District level. The Social Welfare Department was directed to organize a felicitation ceremony for the disabled and elderly. Instructions were given to prepare an action plan to organize various programs across the district and run voter awareness programs on a large scale.

Collector inspects Physical College, promotes sports excellence



Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi, Mar 29:

In a commendable move to bolster sports development and encourage athletic prowess, Collector Leena Kamlesh Mandavi conducted a comprehensive inspection of Physical College Pendra, emphasizing the importance of providing enhanced sports facilities for players.

During the inspection, Collector Mandavi personally surveyed the college premises, including the sports ground and gym-

nastics hall. Notably, she interacted with young female players aged 14 to 20 years who were actively practicing Kabaddi, offering words of encouragement and support.

Seeking to ensure that athletes have access to top-tier facilities, the Collector engaged with District Sports Officer Seema David to gather information about current sports activities and upcoming tournaments. Recognizing the need for better infrastructure, she instructed SDM Pendaroad Amit

Beck to oversee the construction of a shed within the college boundary, aiming to provide shelter and improved amenities for players. Furthermore, in a bid to maximize training opportunities, Collector Mandavi urged the District Sports Officer to facilitate summer practice sessions for school children and players. This collaborative effort underscores the commitment to nurturing talent and fostering a culture of sportsmanship within the community. During the interaction, Kabaddi coach Kaushal Kumar shared insights into the exceptional talent present among national-level Kabaddi players in both junior and senior categories, highlighting the potential for future sporting achievements.

Sakreli gate to be permanently closed from April 01

Bilaspur: In a move aimed at enhancing road safety and security for commuters, the railway administration has announced the permanent closure of the Sakreli gate, effective from April 1. This decision comes as part of a broader strategy to close level crossing gates and provide alternative road routes, including the construction of road overbridges and underpasses. Human level crossing number 326, situated between Baradwar and Sakti stations under the South East Central Railway Bilaspur Division, will be permanently closed for road traffic due to security concerns. In lieu of this closure, road users are directed to utilize the newly constructed road overbridge on the nearby National Highway (NH-49) as an alternative route.

Voters motivated to vote through Rangoli competition

Korba, Mar 29:



As per the instructions of Collector and District Election Officer Korba and District SVEEP Nodal Officer and under the guidance of the Principal of the college, under the voter awareness program of the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2024, on 27th March, SVEEP unit of Government Engineering Visvesvaraya Post Graduate College Korba conducted a Rangoli competition. In the competition, Preeti Sidar got first place, Riya Banjare got second place and Bhamini Sidar got third place. Keeping in mind the objective of the Election Commission in the upcoming

Lok Sabha Elections, various activities like SVEEP rangoli, drama, songs, debates are being organized in the college under the Voter Awareness Programme, and under this the college

students participated in fair elections. By making an attractive and inspiring rangoli of free and compulsory voting, the message was given that "Voting is our birth right, our vote is our strength."

SVEEP Nodal Officer of the college and Head of Department of Zoology, Professor Balram Kurre, while encouraging the students, said that children, we definitely have to vote in the upcoming elections and also motivate other voters to vote and we have to make efforts that no voters should be deprived of voting. Professor Kanhaiya Singh Kanwar, Lokeshwari, Rajkumar Dewangan, Raman Joshi and students Riya Banjare, Preeti Sidar, Bhamini Sidar, Gungun Kesharwani, Sana, Madhu Rathore, Priyanka Chauhan, Nisha Khunte, Geetanjali, Aarti Dhiwar etc. made important contributions.

Russia launches 99 drones, missiles on Ukraine's energy



Kyiv, Mar 29 (AP):

Moscow launched a large-scale attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure Friday, with a mass barrage of 99 drones and missiles hitting regions across the country, Ukraine's armed forces said.

Air raid warnings rang out across the country, with 10 Ukrainian regions coming under fire, the country's Interior Minister, Ihor Klymenko, said.

Russia has escalated its

attacks on Ukraine in recent days, launching several missile barrages on the capital, Kyiv, and hitting energy infrastructure across the country in apparent retaliation for recent Ukrainian aerial attacks on the Russian border region of Belgorod. Such sporadic attacks, however, have been common throughout the war.

In the winter of 2022-23, Russia targeted Ukraine's energy infrastructure, causing frequent blackouts across the country. Many in Ukraine and the

West expected that Russia might repeat this strategy this winter, but Russia instead focused its strikes on Ukraine's defence industries.

Ukraine's state-owned grid operator, Ukrenergo, said that Friday's attack deliberately targeted thermal and hydroelectric power plants across central and western regions.

DTEK, Ukraine's largest private electricity operator, also said that three of its thermal power plants had been damaged in the attack.

Elsewhere, five people, including a 5-year-old girl, were wounded during the attack in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region, said local governor Serhii Lysak.

He later said that another man had been killed and one more injured in a separate drone attack Friday. The bombardment in the west of Ukraine caused the Polish Armed Forces to scramble its own aircraft, the country's operational command said on social media. Last week Warsaw demanded an explanation from Moscow, after one of its missiles strayed briefly into Polish airspace during a major missile attack on Ukraine, prompting the NATO member to activate F-16 fighter jets.

Romania's defence ministry also said on Friday that an investigation has been launched after fragments that appear to be from a drone were identified on its territory Thursday evening in an agricultural area of Braila county, close to the border with Ukraine.

5 dead and over 100 hospitalised from recalled Japanese health supplements

Tokyo, Mar 29 (AP):

Five people who took a Japanese health supplement have died and more than 100 have been hospitalised as of Friday, a week after a pharmaceutical company issued a recall of the products.

Osaka-based Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co. came under fire for not going public quickly with problems known internally as early as January. The first public announcement came March 22.

Earlier in the week, the number of deaths stood at two people. Company officials updated the number of dead to five Friday, and said 114 people were being treated in hospitals after taking products — including Benikoji Cholesterol Help meant to lower cholesterol — that contain an ingredient called benikoji, a red species of mold.

Some people developed

kidney problems after taking the supplements, but the exact cause was still under investigation in cooperation with government laboratories, according to the manufacturer.

"We apologise deeply," President Akihiro Kobayashi told reporters Friday, bowing for a long time to emphasise the apology alongside three other top company officials.

He expressed remorse to those who have died and have been sickened, and to their families. He also apologised for the troubles caused to the entire health food industry and the medical profession, adding that the company was working to prevent further damage and improve crisis management.

The company's products have been recalled — as have dozens of other products that contain benikoji,

including miso paste, crackers and a vinegar dressing. Japan's health ministry put up a list on its official site of all the recalled products, including some that use benikoji for food coloring.

The ministry warned the deaths could keep growing. The supplements could be bought at drug stores without a prescription from a doctor, and some may have been purchased or exported before the recall, including by tourists who may not be aware of the health risks.

Kobayashi Pharmaceutical had been selling benikoji products for years, with a million packages sold over the past three fiscal years, but a problem crept up with the supplements produced in 2023. Kobayashi Pharmaceutical said it produced 18.5 tonnes of benikoji last year.

Building a new Key Bridge could take years and cost at least \$400 million, experts say

Annapolis (US), Mar 29 (AP):

Rebuilding Baltimore's collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge could take anywhere from 18 months to several years, experts say, while the cost could be at least \$400 million — or more than twice that.

It all depends on factors that are still mostly unknown. They range from the design of the new bridge to how swiftly government officials can navigate the bureaucracy of approving permits and awarding contracts.

Realistically, the project could take five to seven years, according to Ben Schafer, an engineering professor at Johns Hopkins University.

"The lead time on air conditioning equipment right now for a home renovation is like 16 months, right?" Schafer said. He continued: "So it's like you're telling me they're going to build a whole bridge in two years? I want

GOOD FRIDAY RITUALS



Ruben Enaje, center, remains on the cross flanked by two other devotees during a reenactment of Jesus Christ's sufferings as part of Good Friday rituals in San Pedro Cutud, north of Manila, Philippines, Friday, March 29.

Imran Khan sentenced in cipher case simply to appease a foreign power: Lawyer

Islamabad, Mar 29 (PTI):

Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's lawyer, while pointing out loopholes in a trial court's verdict in the diplomatic cipher case, has said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi were sentenced in the case simply to appease a foreign power.

The Express Tribune on Friday reported that it emerged during the hearing of appeals by the PTI leaders by a division bench of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday.

The bench, comprising Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb, resumed hearing the appeals of the PTI leaders against their conviction under the Official Secrets Act, 1923, for misusing a diplomatic cipher to the detriment of



national interests.

Just two weeks before the ouster of the PTI government in April 2022 through a vote of no-confidence, Khan had brandished a piece of paper—allegedly a copy of a diplomatic cipher—at a public rally in Islamabad, claiming it as proof of a conspiracy against his government by a foreign power.

During the last Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz-led government, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) registered a case against Khan and Qureshi for misusing the cipher copy.

The ex-prime minister, along with Qureshi, was handed down a sentence of 10 years each in the cipher case in January for publishing contents of a secret cable sent by the country's ambassador in Washington to the government in Islamabad. On Thursday, when Justice Farooq asked Salman Safdar, the lawyer of 71-year-old Khan and 67-year-old Qureshi, about what the former premier had waved in a public rally in March 2022, the lawyer said it was the job of the prosecution—the FIA—to establish what was in Khan's hand during that rally.

Continuing his arguments, Safdar said Pakistan's former ambassador to the US, Asad Majeed, had dispatched the cipher after a meeting with US diplomat Donald Lu.

Israeli airstrikes near northern city of Aleppo inflicts casualties: Syria

Beirut, Mar 29 (AP):

The Syrian army says Israeli airstrikes early Friday near the northern city of Aleppo have killed and wounded several people and caused material damage.

Syrian state media quoted an unnamed military official as saying that the Israeli strikes coincided with drone attacks by Syrian insurgent groups on civilians



suburbs. It did not give targets in Aleppo and its suburbs. It did not give an exact numbers for the

casualties.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said Israeli strikes hit missile depots for Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group in Aleppo's southern suburb of Jibreen near the Aleppo International Airport. It added that dozens of soldiers were killed or wounded in the strikes.

MT TRILAT-24



Navy officers with their counterparts from Tanzania and Mozambique at the conclusion of IMT TRILAT-24, a tri-lateral exercise between countries, in Nacla, Mozambique.

Bus plunges off bridge in South Africa, killing 45 people

Cape Town, Mar 29 (AP):

A bus carrying worshippers headed to an Easter festival plunged off a bridge on a mountain pass and burst into flames in South Africa Thursday, killing at least 45 people, authorities said.

The only survivor of the crash was an eight-year-old child, who was receiving medical attention, according to authorities in the northern province of Limpopo.

The Limpopo provincial government said the bus veered off the Mmamatlakala bridge and plunged 164 feet into a ravine before busting into flames.

राष्ट्रीय परीक्षा एजेंसी
National Testing Agency

(उच्चतर शिक्षा विभाग, शिक्षा मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार के तहत एक स्वायत्त संगठन
(An Autonomous Organization under the Department of Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India)

Public Notice
Dated: 22 March, 2024

Online Applications Form for Joint Integrated Program in Management Admission Test 2024

The National Testing Agency (NTA) will be conducting the JIPMAT 2024 for admission to 5-year Integrated Program in Management at IIM Bodh Gaya and IIM Jammu for the academic year 2024-25, as per following details:

Submission of Online Applications Form	22 March 2024 to 21 April 2024 (upto 05:00 P.M.)
Submission of Online Applications Fee	22 April 2024 (upto 11:50 P.M.)
Correction in Particulars	23 April 2024 to 25 April 2024 (upto 11:50 P.M.)
Date of exam	06 June, 2024 (Thursday)
Mode of exam	Computer Based Test (CBT)
Paper pattern	Multiple Choice questions

Candidates should have passed 10+2/XII/HSC/PUC examination in arts/commerce/science/diploma or equivalent with 60% (55% for candidates from SC/ST/PWD/Third Gender) or more in the years 2022, 2023 or appearing in 2024. The candidate must have passed Class 10 examination with 60% (55% for candidates from SC/ST/PWD/ Third Gender or more in the year not before 2020). Scheme/duration/medium/syllabus of examination, eligibility criteria, tentative intake, reservation of seats, exam cities, important dates, etc., are mentioned in the Information Bulletin hosted on <https://exams.nta.ac.in/JIPMAT/>. Candidates who desire to appear in the exam may read the detailed Information Bulletin for JIPMAT 2024 and apply online only at <https://exams.nta.ac.in/JIPMAT/>. The exam fee is required to be paid online, by using SBI & HDFC Bank Payment Gateway through Net Banking/Debit Card/Credit Card/UPI.

Candidates are advised to be in touch with the NTA website <https://exams.nta.ac.in/JIPMAT/> candidates can write to NTA at jjipmat@nta.ac.in or call NTA at 011-4075 9000

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CBC 21354/12/0017/2324
Senior Director (Exams)



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Ending Food Waste

A Moral Imperative

The world grappling with chronic hunger, the staggering revelation that 19 percent of food goes to waste demands immediate attention. The latest UN report paints a stark reality: despite ample resources, the failure to manage food distribution effectively is not just morally reprehensible but also environmentally unsustainable. This crisis is particularly acute in India, where food wastage poses a significant challenge alongside persistent food insecurity. According to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, one-third of all food in the country is wasted or spoiled before consumption. Household food waste alone amounts to an estimated 50 kilograms per person annually. Furthermore, another UN report has highlighted a troubling nutritional trend in India, with a staggering 74.1 percent of the population unable to afford a healthy diet. The environmental implications of food waste are equally alarming. Like many other countries, India faces adverse effects from greenhouse gas emissions associated with food production and waste. Methane emissions from decomposing food waste in landfills significantly contribute to climate change. The UN's findings should serve as a catalyst for global action to overhaul food systems and prioritize equitable distribution. In India, where millions struggle for adequate nutrition, addressing food wastage is not just a choice but a moral obligation. It demands a comprehensive strategy integrating policy measures, public awareness campaigns, and community-driven initiatives. Government intervention is crucial, with the implementation of regulations to minimize waste and the incentivization of sustainable practices. Collaborative efforts involving government agencies, NGOs, and private enterprises can facilitate the efficient redistribution of surplus food to underprivileged communities. Individual action is also paramount, with practices like meal planning, utilizing leftovers, and supporting food banks playing a crucial role in combating food waste. As stewards of this planet and its resources, it is incumbent upon us to act swiftly and decisively to end the scourge of food waste. Let us commit ourselves to a future where no one goes hungry, and where every morsel of food is valued and utilized to its fullest potential.

Preserving Political Rights

The recent Supreme Court ruling, striking down bail conditions that inhibit individuals from engaging in political activities, stands as a resolute affirmation of citizens' fundamental rights. It underscores the pivotal principle that the democratic exercise of political engagement should not be constrained by restrictive conditions, particularly as a precondition for bail. The case of BJP leader Siba Shankar Das, where the Orissa High Court imposed a bail rider restricting his political activities, serves as a poignant example of the imperative to safeguard individuals' rights to partake in political discourse. Throughout the years, numerous politicians have actively campaigned while out on bail. Leaders like Lalu Prasad Yadav, Sonia Gandhi, Mayawati, and Amit Shah have fervently participated in electioneering despite facing legal proceedings. Their engagement underscores the vital importance of active participation in the democratic process, regardless of legal circumstances. Significantly, the Supreme Court has highlighted the complexities and deficiencies inherent in the current bail system, where decisions often hinge on the discretion of individual judges. It has called upon the government to introduce special legislation on bail, advocating for clear and uniform guidelines to be codified. Such measures are essential to ensure consistency, transparency, and fairness in the administration of justice. The court's ruling serves as a clarion call for the preservation of political rights within the framework of the law. It reaffirms the principle that individuals should not be unduly restricted from exercising their democratic freedoms, even amidst legal proceedings. As custodians of democracy, it is imperative for both the judiciary and the legislature to uphold these principles and enact reforms that uphold the integrity of our democratic institutions. In a democracy, the right to engage in political activities is sacrosanct, and any attempt to curtail it must be met with judicial scrutiny. By safeguarding political rights, we reinforce the foundations of our democracy and ensure that every citizen has the opportunity to actively participate in shaping the future of our nation. Let us uphold the spirit of democracy by protecting the rights of individuals to engage in political discourse, free from undue constraints or limitations.

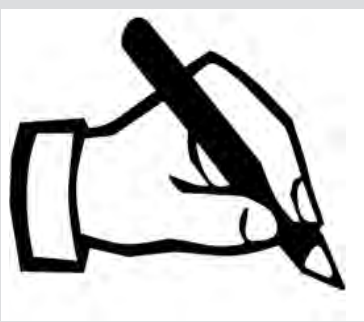
Central Chronicle invites articles, write-ups, and comments on a wide range of issues for our editorial page. Submissions should be between 800-900 words in length. In addition, we welcome letters to the editor for this page. While letters may be edited for clarity, we aim to preserve the integrity of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

GOOD FRIDAY



Christian devotees take part in a religious procession on the occasion of 'Good Friday' at St. Joseph's Cathedral Church, in Prayagraj, Friday, March 29.

Driving Change: Global Initiatives for a Zero Waste Future

DR. KRISHNA KUMAR VEPAKOMMA

Waste generation is a pressing issue globally, exacerbated by urbanization and population growth, particularly in countries like India. The United Nations has underscored the severe environmental consequences of this trend, prompting the designation of March 30 as the International Day of Zero Waste. This annual observance, established on December 14, 2022, serves as a pivotal moment in the quest for a zero-waste future, fostering awareness and inspiring action worldwide. As we approach March 30, 2024, it becomes an opportune time to highlight innovative solutions and accelerate progress towards waste reduction.

A Zero Waste approach holds the promise of delivering significant environmental, economic, and social benefits, from curbing greenhouse gas emissions to enhancing community well-being.

By rethinking consumption patterns, redesigning products, and implementing sustainable waste management practices, countries can transition towards a circular economy where resources are conserved, reused, and recycled. This paradigm shift requires concerted efforts across sectors, from government policies to corporate strategies and individual actions.

India has emerged as a global leader in the pursuit of zero waste, with initiatives like the Swachh Bharat Mission spearheading the nation's efforts. Launched in 2014 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Swachh Bharat Mission aims to transform cities into "Garbage Free Cities" through the implementation of scientific waste management practices and active community involvement. Building upon its success, the Swachh Bharat Mission—Urban 2.0, launched in 2021, em-

powers communities to lead sanitation and waste management efforts. Initiatives like Swachhotsav, targeting the transformation of 1000 cities into "3-Star Garbage Free" zones by October 2024, exemplify India's resolve to tackle waste challenges comprehensively.

Collaboration between governments, businesses, and civil society is essential to drive progress towards a zero-waste future. International partnerships and initiatives, such as the Circular Economy Action Agenda, bring together stakeholders from around the world to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and develop innovative solutions. By pooling resources and expertise, nations can accelerate the transition towards a circular economy, reducing waste generation, and promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Despite the progress made, challenges remain on the path towards zero waste. One of the primary obstacles is the lack of infrastructure and capacity for waste management, particularly in developing countries. Additionally, cultural attitudes towards waste disposal and recycling vary widely across regions, posing a barrier to widespread adoption of zero waste practices. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and collaboration. By investing in research

and development, promoting education and awareness, and fostering partnerships between public and private sectors, countries can overcome barriers and advance towards a zero-waste future.

Technology plays a crucial role in enabling the transition towards zero waste. From advanced recycling technologies to digital platforms for waste tracking and management, technological innovations offer solutions to improve resource efficiency and reduce waste generation. Artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things are increasingly being leveraged to optimize waste collection, sorting, and recycling processes, making them more efficient and cost-effective.

As we commemorate the International Day of Zero Waste on March 30, 2024, let us reaffirm our commitment to driving change and building a more sustainable future. By embracing zero waste principles, fostering global collaboration, and leveraging technology, we can overcome the challenges of waste generation and create a world where resources are valued, not wasted. Together, let us work towards a zero-waste future for the prosperity of current and future generations.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Educational Investment

The revelation that 83% of unemployed Indians are youth underscores a pressing need for action. From 35.2% in 2000 to a staggering 65.7% in 2022, unemployment among educated youth with at least secondary education paints a grim picture. Behind these statistics lie shattered aspirations and a nation risking its demographic advantage. High dropout rates, skill shortages, and gender disparities further tarnish the progress narrative. Policymakers must prioritize investments in education, vocational training, and job creation to address this crisis. It's time to nurture talent, bridge skill gaps, and empower youth for a brighter future.

MK Nair, Raipur

Incarcerated Citizens

The Supreme Court's decision to defend a politician's right to partake in political endeavours is commendable. Bail should prevail as the standard, with imprisonment as the exception. Denying an individual, whether under trial or convicted, the ability to engage in political activities or exercise their voting rights violates fundamental freedoms. Despite their confinement, inmates retain their status as citizens and should not be deprived of democratic participation. Restrictive conditions imposed for bail eligibility should not impede the exercise of political engagement. Upholding these rights ensures the preservation of democracy and the protection of incarcerated citizens' liberties.

Rajender Kumar, Kozhikode, Kerala

Diplomatic Discretion

India's summoning of US Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Gloria Berben under scores rightful objection to unsolicited remarks by a US State Department spokesperson in Washington regarding Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest. Respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs are paramount for bilateral relations. Such statements risk souring relations between friendly nations and establish an unwelcome precedent. Notably, India refrained from commenting on the trial of former US President Donald Trump, raising questions about the US's involvement in domestic matters. It's imperative for the US to exercise discretion and uphold diplomatic norms to preserve amicable relations.

Krishna Kumar, Kannur, Kerala

Electoral Bonds: A Whimper in Corruption's Symphony

K Raveendran

The big noise about electoral bonds will in all probability end up in a whimper like the investigations into the 2G spectrum scam, both of which can be compared in terms of scale and the extent of mischief. Both scams are likely to remain a dark symphony of secrecy, favours, and hidden agendas in contemporary Indian politics.

It is increasingly clear that the electoral bonds were designed as a tool to institutionalise corruption and there is little prospect of the Modi government being held accountable. The bond scheme does involve deep-seated maladies, but as the dust settles and the data unravels, it is evident that these massive corruption and quid pro quo perpetrated through the bonds will fade away in public mind and may turn out to be a non-issue even in the forthcoming elections.

The very design of electoral bonds ensures opacity. Donors remain anonymous, shielding their identities from public scrutiny. Without transparency, it becomes challenging to trace the flow of funds and establish direct links between donors and political parties.

There was much sensation about the disclosure of alphanumeric serial numbers of the bonds, but even such details have failed to directly connect the donors and the recipients.

Despite occasional outrage, the average citizen's attention span is short-lived. So, the bonds compete with a myriad of other pressing issues—economic woes, healthcare, and security. As time passes and approaches the voting day, the fervour wanes, and public pressure subsides.

Political parties across the spectrum have benefitted from the crooked system. While they may publicly decry corruption, their actions often speak louder. There is only difference in scale, every party presented with the opportunity to exploit authority and power has used it to the brim. The web of corruption woven by the bonds extends beyond party lines. Corporations, influential individuals, and politicians are entangled in a complex arrangement. Unravelling this web requires sustained effort, coordination, and unwavering commitment, all of which are missing. Reforming the elec-

toral bond framework would require bipartisan consensus, which seems elusive given the vested interests involved. There is a clear lack of sincerity.

The BJP's playbook involved a sinister twist. First, the government unleashes investigative agencies like the ED, CBI, and IT on targeted companies. The action, questionable in terms of real intention, although justifiable technically as the companies have committed multiple serious offences, invariably leads to donations being made to the right quarters for the company's protection. For instance, at least 14 of the top 30 donors have faced raids. The message is clear: pay up or face the consequences. Investigations revealed that companies, post-raid, were coerced into donating to the BJP. The line between extortion and political funding blurs dangerously.

Most of those who contributed generously were engaged in businesses that were not entirely above board. The Future Gaming & Hotels, the largest donor, accounting for contributions of over Rs. 1200 crore, has been a controversial entity and the man be-

hind it, earning the nickname Lottery King whose proximity to a powerful chief minister is a public secret, at least in some parts of the country. Raided in April 2022, the company donated Rs. 100 crores just days later.

Blatant quid pro quo arrangements have been in place, with the bonds facilitating a dangerous liaison of reciprocity. Companies that donate generously to ruling parties expect favours in return, undermining even the semblance of governance.

Megha Engineering & Infra's is a classic case. After donating over Rs. 800 crores in electoral bonds, the company was swiftly awarded the Rs. 14,400 crore Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel Project. Similarly, Jindal Steel and Power donated Rs. 25 crore in electoral bonds and promptly secured the Gare Palma IV/6 coal mine. The timing remains tantalisingly suspect.

Pharma companies were among the first names to come out in connection with the use or abuse, depending on which side of the fence one is, of the bonds. One of the biggest bond purchasing pharma was Gujarat-based Torrent Pharma, which con-

tributed most of its purchases in favour of BJP. The controversial company had been in the news in connection with the recall of a blood pressure medicine from the US after it was found tainted with a suspected carcinogen.

According to a preliminary assessment, of the Rs 945 crore bonds donated by drug firms, most went to parties ruling states with pharma units. All the companies had faced regulatory issues and the lineup included Reddy's Lab, Covaxin maker Bharat Biotech, Micro Labs, best known for the Dolo tablet, much in demand during the Covid pandemic, which provided a great window of opportunity for drug companies to fleece public.

Parties thrive on electoral victories and the pursuit of power often trumps ethical considerations and it is indeed rare that the voters punish them for issues that operate at a higher level of democratic conscience. As for the media, the cycle keeps moving swiftly. What was headline news yesterday fades into oblivion today. Electoral bonds, despite their significance, may lose traction as newer scandals emerge.

BRIEF

Chairman elected



New Delhi: Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association on Friday said Arnab Banerjee, Managing Director (MD) & CEO of CEAT Ltd has been elected as its new Chairman. Banerjee was elected at the Managing Committee Meeting (MCM) of the association held on Thursday evening. Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA) said in a statement. He takes over from Anshuman Singhania, Managing Director of JK Tyre and Industries.

Solar projects

New Delhi: Adani Green Energy on Friday announced the beginning of the operation of its 775 megawatt solar power projects in Khavda, Gujarat. The capacities have been operationalised after securing relevant clearances, Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) said in an exchange filing. Adani Green Energy through its various wholly-owned stepdown subsidiaries has operationalised an aggregate 775 MW solar power projects at Khavda, Gujarat, it said.

Re-appointment



Mumbai: German auto parts maker Schaeffler on Friday said its board has approved the re-appointment of Harsha Kadam as the Managing Director (MD) and CEO of its India arm for a period of three years, effective from October 1, 2024. Kadam, who joined Schaeffler India in 2018, was appointed as the MD and CEO of the company in October 2019 for a period of five years. The re-appointment is subject to the company's shareholders' nod. "The board of directors has approved the re-appointment of Harsha Kadam as the Managing Director & CEO of Schaeffler India Limited for another three-year term from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2027," said Eranti Sumithasri, Chairperson & Independent Director at Schaeffler India.

AI skills

Mumbai: Country's largest IT services company TCS on Friday said it has trained 3.5 lakh employees in generative AI skills. The company, which had in January announced that 1.5 lakh staffers are trained in the skill sets of what is said to be the biggest opportunity for IT services firm in the future, has now taken the number up to over half its employee base. "With over 350,000 employees trained on foundational skills in GenAI, TCS is well-poised to build one of the largest AI-ready workforces in the world," an official statement said.

India needs to grow at 9-10 pc to become \$35 tn economy by 2047: Kant

New Delhi, Mar 29:

India needs to grow at 9-10 per cent for the next three decades to become a USD 35 trillion economy by 2047, India's G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant said. Kant further said India is going to be the third-largest economy by surpassing Japan and Germany by 2027. "India must grow at higher rates. India must grow at 9-10 per cent year after year...for three decades," he said at the Times Now Summit. India's economy grew at better-than-expected 8.4 per cent in the final three months of 2023, logging



the fastest pace in the past one-and-a-half years. The growth rate in October-December helped take the estimate for the current

fiscal to 7.6 per cent. "Our ambition should be that by 2047, not merely we should be a USD 35 trillion economy, but we should be able to raise the per capita income of every single individual to USD 18,000 plus from current USD 3,000," he added. The size of the Indian economy is currently USD 3.60 trillion.

Kant also noted that India needs at least 12 states to become champions of growth, and they need to grow at 10 per cent plus. Noting that eastern states like Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh and Bihar need to grow at high rates, Kant said, "If these states

start firing and growing at 10 per cent plus, then India will grow at 10 per cent plus".

Post-Lok Sabha elections, Kant said India should herald a huge range of reforms across education, health and nutrition "If the quality of governance and implementation improves at the state level, then you will see massive transformation in India's growth story," he said.

Kant said India needs many more large companies, as when large companies come in, they produce their own supply chain in tier 2 and tier 3 cities.

Banks' GNPA's set to improve further to 2.1 pc by FY25: Report

Mumbai, Mar 29:

The gross non-performing assets (GNPA) of the Indian banking system are set to improve further to up to 2.1 per cent by the end of FY25, a report said on Friday. GNPA's are likely to come at 2.5-2.7 per cent in FY24 and will improve further to 2.1-2.4 per cent by the end of FY25, domestic rating agency Care Ratings said in the report. It can be noted that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) began the comprehensive exercise in the middle of the last decade by instructing banks to classify certain stressed assets as NPAs so that the balance sheets represent a true picture. The rating agency also flagged a list of

downside risks, which may result in its estimate not coming true, including a material weakening in asset quality due to the elevated interest rates, the impact of regulatory changes, a tighter liquidity environment and global issues. It said GNPA's surged to 11.2 per cent in FY18 from 3.8 per cent in FY14 due to the AQR process of 2015-16, which pushed banks to recognise NPAs and reduce unnecessary restructuring and added that the stress was emanating from the exposure to big-ticket wholesale advances. Starting from FY19, GNPA's have been seeing an improvement and touched a decadal low of 3.9 per cent in FY23 and were at 3 per

cent in the December quarter of FY24. The asset quality has improved due to recoveries, higher write-offs by banks and much lower slippages, the report said, adding that selling dud assets to asset reconstruction companies has also helped. From a sectoral perspective, the agriculture sector's GNPA ratio reduced to 7 per cent in September 2023 compared to 10.1 per cent reported in March 2020, while the industrial sector reported a 4.2 per cent GNPA ratio in September 2023 against 14.1 per cent in March 2020 and 22.8 per cent in March 2018. The industrial GNPA's were down on corporate deleveraging, resolutions, and write-offs.

Procurement through gov't's online marketplace GeM crosses Rs 4 lakh crore so far this fiscal

New Delhi, Mar 29:

The procurement of goods and services through government's portal GeM has crossed Rs 4 lakh crore so far this fiscal due to higher buying activities by various ministries and departments, a senior government official said on Friday. The Government e-Market (GeM) portal was launched on August 9, 2016, for online purchases of goods and services by all central government ministries and departments. "As of March 28, the procurement has crossed Rs 4 lakh crore. It is historic," GeM CEO P K Singh told reporters here.

He said that defence sector buyers are buying several goods and services from the platform. "Assembly of BrahMos missile is being done through GeM as a service contract. In defence, right from supplying eggs up to the missile parts is being done through the portal," Singh said. In 2021-22 the

procurement value stood at Rs 1.06 lakh crore and it crossed Rs 2 lakh crore last financial year. He said that procurement of services from the portal has jumped from Rs 66,000 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 2.05 lakh crore so far this fiscal. Similarly, goods worth Rs 1.95 lakh crore have been bought from the platform till March 28 this fiscal. About the possibility of opening up the portal for consumer at large, Singh said that is a very different ecosystem altogether. "Yes we will be mulling over, we are preparing for that, we should be prepared for that if the government so desires. If feasible, if practical, we will do a small pilot in this area as well in the coming years, if the approvals are in place," he said. He informed that several countries from Africa and South East Asia are showing keen interest in GeM. "We can provide consultancy services also and can also set up similar platform for them.

Shapoorji Pallonji Group's Afcons Infrastructure files papers for Rs 7,000-crore IPO

New Delhi, Mar 29:

Shapoorji Pallonji Group's flagship infrastructure engineering and construction company Afcons Infrastructure Ltd (AIL) has filed draft papers with markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 7,000 crore through an initial public offering (IPO). The company's mega IPO is a combination of fresh issue of shares worth Rs 1,250 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to Rs 5,750 crore by promoter Goswami Infratech Private Limited. Also, the offer includes a reservation for subscriptions by eligible employees, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Thursday. Currently, promoter and promoter group entities own 99.48 per cent stake in Maharashtra-based Afcons Infrastructure. Moreover, the company may consider raising up to Rs 250 crore in the "pre-IPO placement" round. If such placement is com-

pleted, the fresh issue size will be reduced. Founded in 1865, Shapoorji Pallonji Group (SP Group) is a diversified institution, and has a leading presence in engineering & construction, infrastructure, real estate, water, energy and financial services sectors across the globe. The group companies build mega structures, develop iconic landmarks, drive innovative technologies in water management, renewable energy, oil & gas, and power. The group company Afcons operates across five major infrastructure business verticals - marine and industrial, surface transport, urban infrastructure, hydro and underground, oil and gas. In the last 10 financial years, the company has completed 76 projects across 15 countries with a total contract value of Rs 52,220 crore. In terms of listed industry peers, Afcons compares itself with Larsen & Toubro Ltd (L&T), KEC International Limited

(KEC), Kalpataru Project International Ltd (KPIL), and Dilip Buildcon Ltd (DBL). AIL's order book has increased at a CAGR of 7.6 per cent from Rs 26,249 crore in the financial year 2021 to Rs 30,406 crore in the financial year 2023. As of September 30, 2023, it stood at Rs 34,888 crore. The company's consolidated revenue from operations increased 14.7 per cent to Rs 12,637.38 crore during the fiscal year 2023 from Rs 11,018.97 crore in the preceding year. Besides, profit after tax grew 15 per cent to Rs 410.86 crore in the financial year 2023 from Rs 357.60 crore in FY22. ICICI Securities Ltd, DAM Capital Advisors Ltd, Jefferies India Private Ltd, Nomura Financial Advisory and Securities (India) Private Ltd, Nuvama Wealth Management Ltd, and SBI Capital Markets Ltd are the book-running lead managers to the issue.

NMDC unveils ex-employee portal 'Samman'

Hyderabad, Mar 29:

In an embodiment of its ethos - 'Naukri ke sath bhi, Naukri ke baad bhi' - The Responsible Miner NMDC has taken a significant leap in digital innovation by launching the Ex-Employee Portal "Samman." This initiative was launched on 28th March 2024 at the company's Head Office in Hyderabad, by the CMD (Addl. Charge) Amitava Mukherjee in presence of Vinay Kumar, Director (Technical), B. Vishwanath, CVO, Heads of Projects, Head Office department heads.

As India's largest iron ore producer, NMDC is not just committed to industrial excellence but also deeply values the human resource that



drives its success. "Samman" is a testament to this commitment, offering a seamless, digital platform for ex-employees to manage various med-

ical claims, view personal profiles, dependent details, and application status, all online. This user-friendly portal is designed to ensure on-time reim-

bursements and easy access to all retirement services, bringing comfort and convenience to the doorstep of NMDC's former employees.

Speaking at the launch, Amitava Mukherjee CMD (Addl. Charge) expressed, "We are happy to contribute towards making the lives of our ex-employees easier. 'Samman' represents our pioneering spirit in extending hassle-free benefits to our NMDC family, even after retirement. This initiative reaffirms our belief in respecting and honouring the contributions of those who have been an integral part of our journey."

The introduction of "Samman" not only marks a new chapter in NMDC's digital journey but also reinforces the company's dedication to fostering a caring and inclusive environment for all members of the NMDC family from the past and present.

ANNUAL SESSION



Union Minister of Sports, Youth Affairs and Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur with FICCI FLO co-founder Abha and FLO National President Sudha Shivkumar during the 40th annual session of the FICCI Ladies Organisation, in New Delhi, Friday, March 29.

Smart TV prices to go up this year: Report

Shipments down 16 pc in India in 2023

New Delhi, Mar 29:

Prices of smart TVs are likely to increase in the first half of the ongoing calendar year as prices of panels have gone up in the international market, according to a report on Thursday. The brands are likely to pass on the increase in rates, resulting in a hike in smart TV prices, according to the latest research from Counterpoint's IoT Service. However, the report also expects "smart TV shipments to increase by 9 per cent" this year, as the demand for premium models will increase and consumers will likely upgrade to a larger screen. "The push towards online purchases is set to in-



crease as consumers' confidence in online platforms is increasing, which will encourage them to buy premium models from these platforms. The increasing preference for premium TVs will drive the overall market's average selling price (ASP) further," it said.

In 2023, India's smart TV shipments declined 16 per cent, impacted by a hit in the first half due to macroeconomic challenges and excess inventory, according to a Counterpoint Research report on Thursday. The year also witnessed the premiumisation of the TV market, where consumers moved

towards premium devices and large-screen smart TVs.

Now, smart TV penetration reached its highest level of 93 per cent of the overall TV shipments during the year and the share is expected to continue rising, it added. "QLED TVs are gaining popularity as leading brands such as TCL, Hisense, Acer, Kodak, Thomson, and other long-tail brands have started offering them in 43" screen size variants and at lower prices (sub-Rs 30,000), due to which its shipments more than doubled in 2023, it said. Senior Research Analyst Anshika Jain said smart TVs are gaining popularity due to the streaming of sports events, TV series, and movies, "which create stickiness among consumers".

Fresh housing supply drops 15pc in Jan-Mar to 69K units across top 8 cities: Report



New Delhi, Mar 29:

New supply of residential properties fell 15 per cent during January-March across eight major cities at 69,143 units despite high demand, according to Cushman & Wakefield. Real estate consultant Cushman & Wakefield on Friday released the data for launches of residential properties in the primary (first sale) of eight major cities. New supply has increased in Bengaluru and Mumbai but declined in Delhi-NCR, Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune, Kolkata, and Ahmedabad. Out of the total launches of residential properties in this quarter, the high-end and luxury segment had a 34 per cent share. Listed, large and regionally reputed developers accounted for over 38 per cent of overall launches in the current quarter. As per the data, the fresh supply of housing properties declined to 69,143 units during January-March 2024 from 81,167 units in the year-ago period. Among cities, the new supply increased in Bengaluru to 8,848 units from 7,777 units. New supply in the Mumbai region increased marginally to 19,461 units from 19,063 units. However, the fresh supply of homes fell in Ahmedabad to 4,529 units

from 4,901 units. Chennai witnessed a fall in launches to 5,490 units from 8,144 units. New supply in Delhi-NCR plunged to 3,614 units from 7,813 units. Hyderabad saw a decline to 11,090 units from 14,371 units, while Kolkata witnessed a fall to 4,753 units from 5,292 units. The new supply of residential properties in Pune decreased to 11,358 units during January-March 2024 from 13,806 units in the corresponding period of the previous year. Shalin Raina, Managing Director, Residential Services, Cushman & Wakefield said, "Over the past year, a significant rise in demand for high-end and luxury properties has emerged. This shift reflects a change in homebuyers' growing desire to invest in a place not only to live but as a high-quality asset that reflects their lifestyle aspirations." Furthermore, he said the demand for larger, more luxurious homes has attracted established developers, who have the wherewithal to deliver premium, customized living spaces. "This trend has led to a surge in launches by established developers, significantly increasing their year-on-year contribution to the residential market. We expect this momentum to continue," Raina said.

Illegal liquor being sold openly in Dallirajhara

• And in surrounding villages

Central Chronicle News

Dalli-Rajhara, Mar 29: In the most populous area of Balod district, Dallirajhara and dozens of villages adjacent to nearby villages Darratola, Bital, Dhobedand, Kusumaksa area, due to the connivance of Excise Department officials, illegal liquor is being sold through local liquor coaches.

Regional rural women and public representatives have mobilized several times regarding this issue, but no better solution was availed and the business is



grazing green in almost whole of the region.

Though in the last few days, the police had taken action against some people selling illegal liquor in Dallirajhara and many villages under the police station, despite this, liquor vendors and excise officers are selling illegal liquor indiscriminately.

With the connivance of

the Excise Department, liquor coaches are openly selling English and country liquor by opening shops in their own vehicles in Dallirajhara and surrounding villages, as a result of which brawls, mutual discord and addiction to alcoholism is increasing day by day, leading to families especially women and children being

affected the most.

At the same time, the residents of Dallirajhara and the villagers have alleged that illegal liquor is being sold openly in the area, despite having informed the officials of the Excise Department several times, and calls made to officials of the Excise Department was not reverted.

Open corruption in the funds of SVYPS

Central Chronicle News

Khairagarh, Mar 29: In some Gram Panchayats falling under the District Panchayat area, a new form of corruption has come to fore. As per information, the amount received under the Government's Swami Vivekananda Youth Promotion Scheme has been mis-distributed by the Panchayats without organizing any program.

Under the government's ambitious Swami Vivekananda Yuva Pratsahan Yojana (SVYPS), the youth of rural areas are encouraged to enhance their talent by connecting them with programs like sports, employment training, intellectual, skill development, blood donation camps, street plays, speeches etc., but here in the region without conducting any program, the



government funds are wasted.

The implementation of the scheme has not been properly monitored by the responsible higher officials of the district and it is being told that after the formation of the district, due to mutual differences and ambitions, no officer could stay for long in the District Panchayat. In the Janpad Panchayat, sometimes the Taxation Officer and sometimes the junior officers were given the

charge of Janpad Panchayat CEO.

As a result, the implementation of this scheme and the achievement of its basic objectives became a victim of corruption, whereas the rural youth of the district Panchayat area who were to get direct benefits from this scheme, did not avail much.

Though the scheme was started by the government with the objective of motivating the role of rural youth in traditional cul-

tural genres, rural sports, preservation of historical heritage and indigenous knowledge etc. but the traditional nexus between Sarpanch and Secretary in Panchayats has much ruined the scheme.

What officer says:

No complaint has been received in this regard; if any complaint comes it will be investigated- Shishir Sharma, District CEO Khairagarh.

Ganda community elects new executive committee

Central Chronicle News

Bagbahra, Mar 29: A wave of enthusiasm swept through Bagbahra as the city unit of the Ganda community embraced a new executive committee through democratic elections. Spearheaded by the dynamic leadership of development block president Hiraram Netam, a team comprising Asaram Mongre, Parasram Sonwani, Yashwant Vibhar, Hanumant Nag, and Hemant Tande was appointed as election officers, marking the commencement of a transformative chapter.

Thanwar Kuldeep assumed the mantle of city unit president, with unanimous support from the community. The newly formed executive committee witnessed a harmo-



ny blend of experience and fresh perspectives, with Devkumar Tande unanimously elected as Vice President, and Pulas Tande stepping into the role of Secretary. Gajanand Tande assumed the responsibilities of Treasurer, while Ishwar Sonwani and Dhaniaram Mahanand were entrusted

as Co-Secretaries.

Expressing gratitude for the overwhelming support, President Kuldeep reiterated the committee's commitment to the holistic development of the city, pledging to integrate all segments of society into the mainstream fold.

In the aftermath of the elections, the Block

Council convened a pivotal meeting, adopting resolutions aimed at fostering community welfare and progress. Proposals were passed to uphold the regulations of the Interdistrict Coordination Committee rigorously, extend cooperation in online family surveys, substitute shroud contributions with mone-

etary donations.

Furthermore, under the auspices of the Student Incentive Scheme, a decision was made to honour individuals excelling in fields such as social service, women empowerment, arts, culture, and literature. The scheme also extends recognition and incentives to outstanding students from classes 10th and 12th, underscoring the community's commitment to nurturing talent and fostering excellence.

The meeting witnessed the presence of esteemed dignitaries including Development Block Vice President Gauri Tande, Secretary Narra Raju Tandi, Treasurer Awadesh Tande, and several other dedicated members, reaffirming the collective resolve towards community welfare.

Excise department cracks down on illegal liquor sale

• Seized 664 liters of illicit liquor and 5715 kg of equipment used in its production

Central Chronicle News

Korba, Mar 29: With the Lok Sabha elections 2024 model code of conduct in full force, Collector and District Magistrate Ajit Vasant has issued stringent directives to curb the illicit sale of liquor across the district.

Responding to this call to action, the Excise Department has swiftly taken measures, resulting in the registration of

113 criminal cases during the code of conduct period and the Holi festival.

In a series of steps, the Excise Department has diligently pursued legal recourse, presenting challans in court against the accused individuals. Notably, these efforts have led to the confiscation of 664 liters of illicit liquor and 5715 kg of equipment used in its production, amounting to an estimated market value of Rs 3 lakh.

Underlining their commitment to maintaining law and order, the Excise Department has undertaken operations in various locations including village Bishanpur of

Katghora police station area, Lalghat of Korba area, Kalmibhatha under Uрга, Chhindpur, and Birda under Hardibazar.

The heightened surveillance during the Lok Sabha elections, coupled with the effective implementation of the model code of conduct, underscores the authorities' dedication to ensuring a fair and transparent electoral process.

Citizens are encouraged to report any instances of liquor manufacturing, selling, or smuggling to the control room via mobile number 92445-17388 or the toll-free number 14405.

Educational excursion enlightens college students

• Visit Ultra Drug Private Limited Pharmaceutical Company, Himachal Pradesh

Central Chronicle News

Kharora, Mar 29: Columbia College of Pharmacy Raipur, in Tekari village near Vidhan Sabha, continues its mission of nurturing academic excellence and holistic development among its students. Upholding its commitment to providing enriching experiences, the institution recently organized a captivating educational tour for students enrolled in the B. Pharmacy 6th semester.

This year's itinerary took the students on an enlightening journey to Ultra Drug Private Limited Pharmaceutical



Company, in the picturesque locale of Baddi, Himachal Pradesh. Amidst the state-of-the-art facilities, students delved into the intricate process of pharmaceutical manufacturing, gaining invaluable insights into the production and quality control departments.

Led by the college's esteemed faculty members, including HOD Dr. Ashish Majumdar, Alka Baghel, Manoj Verma, Mukesh Sahu, Priyanka Vishwakarma, and Devvati Puri, the students

were guided through every phase of the production cycle. From understanding regulatory compliance to witnessing hands-on demonstrations, the visit equipped students with a comprehensive understanding of the pharmaceutical industry, paving the way for their future endeavours.

To add an element of adventure to their educational odyssey, the students also explored various tourist destinations, including India Gate in Delhi, Chandigarh,

Shimla, Manali, and Amritsar. This immersive experience not only broadened their academic horizons but also fostered camaraderie and lifelong memories among the student community.

Under the visionary leadership of college principal, Dr. Surendra Saraf, such initiatives exemplify the institution's unwavering dedication to providing students with holistic learning experiences, ensuring their holistic development and future success.

Two Chhattisgarh teachers shine in National seminar

Organized under the Namu Matrubhumi Mission in Gujarat

Central Chronicle News

Bemetara, Mar 29: A proud moment unfolded as two distinguished educators from Chhattisgarh showcased their expertise on a national stage at a seminar held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Organized under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Teaching Training, the seminar, titled "NEP2020: Fostering Excellence in School Education During Amritkal," was part of the Namu Matrubhumi Mission Shardaam initiated by the Government of India.

Amidst stiff competition, where only 30 research papers were to be selected nationwide, Chhattisgarh's educators demonstrated their prowess by securing coveted spots. Vidhi Tiwari, a dedicated teacher from District



Kabirdham, presented groundbreaking research on "Brain Activation" at the national level.

Meanwhile, Nisha Singh, a lecturer hailing from District Surajpur, delved into innovative strategies for overcoming educational challenges and effectively implementing the National

Education Policy. The seminar, graced by eminent personalities including Professor Bharatbhai Joshi from Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Ahmedabad as Chief guest, and Professor Rajiv Ratan Sharma Dean in Faculty of Education Jammu University, witnessed insightful discussions and

knowledge sharing sessions. Notable speakers such as Professor Sharda Sinha NCERT New Delhi, Professor Deepthi MS University Vadodra, Professor Divya Sharma IITE Gandhinagar, Professor Paras IITE Gandhinagar enriched the event with their profound insights.

Collector galvanizes clerical cadre for efficient governance



Central Chronicle News

Bijapur, Mar 29: In an initiative aimed at streamlining government operations, Collector Anurag Pandey spearheaded a comprehensive review meeting encompassing all clerical cadre employees. The meeting, conducted in two shifts on March 28, convened the dedicated workforce to reinforce administrative efficiency and efficacy.

The first shift commenced with the assembly of clerical cadre personnel stationed at the district office, followed by the active participation of clerks from various departments later in the day. Anurag Pandey, with his seasoned leadership, provided invaluable guidance to employees on expe-

ditioning office tasks. Emphasizing the significance of office upkeep, cleanliness, and meticulous documentation, Pandey underscored the importance of swift and empathetic resolution of visitor and applicant concerns.

During the deliberations, the Collector acquainted himself with the diverse spectrum of responsibilities undertaken by the employees, fostering a culture of mutual support and encouragement. The meeting, serving as a collaborative workshop, witnessed the invaluable insights shared by esteemed officials including Joint Collector Kailash Verma, SDM Bijapur Jageshwar Kaushal, Deputy Collectors Narayan Prasad Gawel, Uttam Singh Panchari, and Dilip Uike.

Police nab inter-state gang, recover extorted funds

Central Chronicle News

Mungeli, Mar 29: The vigilant efforts of Mungeli police have led to the exposure and subsequent arrest of an inter-state gang involved in extortion. Within a remarkable span of just two hours, law enforcement authorities managed to apprehend all members of the notorious syndicate, ensuring the recovery of the entire sum of Rs. 178,000 extorted money.

On March 27, applicant Chhabiram Sahu, aged 52 years, along with his younger brother Palan Sahu, lodged a report at Sakin Bodtra Police Station City Kotwali Mungeli District Mungeli Police Station. They had visited the Bank of Baroda branch in Mungeli around 1:00 pm to withdraw KCC money.

Chhabiram Sahu withdrew a total of Rs 200,000 in cash from his account and placed the money in a white bag.

Subsequently, they proceeded to the Punjab National Bank branch in Mungeli to deposit KCC money for Palan Sahu. Palan Sahu had brought Rs 171,000 from home, intending to deposit a total of Rs 193,000. Chhabiram Sahu gave Palan Sahu Rs 22,000 from the money that he had with him.

Following this, Chhabiram Sahu went to Bawa Hotel Padav Chowk Mungeli for drinking water. Upon returning to the bank after drinking water, a person noticed dirt on his shirt and inquired about its origin. Then the applicant took his bag to wash off the dirt on his shirt. While he



was occupied with washing his shirt near the hotel platform, he kept his bag containing the cash and valuables near his feet. However, during this time, an unknown person seized the opportunity and stole a total of Rs 178,000 in cash. Additionally, several important documents were also taken, including the check and passbook of the District Cooperative Bank, passbook and checkbook of

Bank of Baroda in the applicant's name, passbook of the Central Bank, and the PAN card of the younger brother, Palan Sahu. Exploiting the ensuing chaos, the perpetrators swiftly made off with the stolen cash, compelling the victim to report the incident to Bodtra Police Station City Kotwali Mungeli District Mungeli Police Station. Under the strategic guidance of

Inspector General of Police Bilaspur Range Dr. Sanjeev Shukla and the proactive direction of Deputy Inspector General of Police/Senior Superintendent of Police Girija Shankar Jaiswal, Mungeli Police sprang into action. The diligent efforts culminated in the swift arrest of the entire gang within a mere two-hour timeframe.

The meticulous investigation further unveiled the gang's involvement in criminal activities across multiple states, prompting authorities to intensify their probe. In a coordinated operation, police recovered not only the stolen cash but also the Hyundai car used in the crime.

Upon thorough interrogation, the three accused, Vishal Sisodia, Neeraj Kumar Sisodia and

Prashant Sisodia confessed to their involvement in the crime, providing detailed statements in the presence of various witnesses.

Based on their statements, the total value of the stolen items amounted to Rs. 178,000, while the seized assets, including the car valued at Rs. 800,000, totaled Rs. 9,78,000. These assets were formally declared seized in the presence of witnesses on the night of March 28.

The arrested individuals confessed to their involvement in a prior robbery at a wedding venue in Raigarh, shedding light on additional criminal activities. Prompt cooperation between law enforcement agencies facilitated the arrest of the accused within hours of their location being pinpointed.

Rahul-led LSG eye all-round effort against PBKS to pull things back

Lucknow, Mar 29 (PTI):

Lucknow Super Giants will aim for an improved all-round effort when they take on Punjab Kings in their second Indian Premier League match here on Saturday.

K L Rahul-led LSG faltered in the opening game against Rajasthan Royals, losing by 20 runs in Chandigarh. Barring Krunal Pandya, all the LSG bowlers leaked runs and also looked ineffective. In the absence of Mark Wood and David Willey, LSG's pace battery looks thin with the likes of Mohsin Khan, Naveen-ul-Haq, and Yash Thakur expected to do the heavy lifting. Fighting for a place in the upcoming T20 World Cup squad, Ravi Bishnoi too looked ordinary in the team's tournament opener.

Skipper Rahul, who has decided to play the wicket-keeper-batter's role keeping the T20 World Cup in mind, made 58 in his comeback game and would be looking to build on that.

He would be hoping his opening partner Quinton de Kock returns to his bel-



ligerent best against Punjab after missing out against Royals. The team is also banking on the likes of Devdutt Padikkal Ayush Badoni, Deepak Hooda, and Krunal to deliver down the order.

LSG's success will also depend on the form of Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis, who was the leading run-getter for the team last year with 408 runs. PBKS, on the other hand, have a 50-50 record

so far, winning one and losing one. The Shikhar Dhawan-led side needs more fluency in the power-play and that is bound to come if Jonny Bairstow gets going after failing in the first two games. Dhawan, who only plays IPL to IPL, needs to up his strike rate going forward. He himself admitted to batting a bit "slowly" against RCB. Prabhsimran Singh, who came of age last season, has not been able to capitalise on his starts yet.

While all-rounder Sam Curran has shown his prowess with the bat in the two matches, the left-arm seamer has been wayward with the ball. Vice-captain Jitesh Sharma, who is in the running for a World Cup berth, needs to have a stellar season to convince the national selectors.

In the pace bowling department, Kagiso Rabada will look for more support from Curran, Arshdeep Singh and Harshal Patel. Left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar has been impressive while leg-spinner Rahul Chahar needs to up his game.

We trust Nortje will keep getting better: Hopes

Jaipur: Delhi Capitals bowling coach James Hopes feels that the team's under-fire pace spearhead Anrich Nortje will get better with time having recently made a comeback to competitive cricket after six months.

Nortje was taken to the cleaners by Rajasthan Royals' Riyan Parag at the death as he went for 48 in his four overs on Thursday night. RR won the IPL match by 12 runs while defending 185 for 5. Nortje had been out of cricket since September and came into IPL having played just three domestic T20 games earlier this month and failed to nail the yorkers or bowl the hard lengths that he is known for. "I won't say too much bad about the bowlers. They just tried to execute. It was a good first half with the ball but got away from us a little bit in the last five overs," Hopes said after his team's 12-run loss to RR, where the complexion changed during the last part of their bowling innings. "It's the first time that Nortje has been at this level in a while. He had a fair time out of the game, but if you look at all the numbers, he is one of the premier death bowlers in the game. We trust that he is going to keep getting better," Hopes, a former Australia medium pacer said defending the Proteas pacer.

Block it out, it's all irrelevant: Smith on Hardik facing boos

New Delhi, Mar 29 (PTI):

Australian star batter Steve Smith has advised Hardik Pandya to simply "block out" the constant jeers and boos the new Mumbai Indians skipper is receiving from spectators at the IPL so far, as they are "all irrelevant".

Hardik, who replaced five-time IPL-winning captain Rohit Sharma as skipper this season, had a dismal start to his captaincy tenure as MI suffered back-to-back defeats.

On top of the two losses, the former Gujarat Titans skipper was booed by fans at Ahmedabad and Hyderabad - the venue of MI's first two matches - as they were clearly not happy with the way Rohit was removed from captaincy.

"I'd try and just say, to block it out, it's all irrelevant," Smith, who has faced abuse from fans across the world for his role in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town, told ESPNcricinfo.

"No one outside knows what you are going through. No one (from outside) is in that change



room." Smith, who was called "cheat" by fans during the 2019 ODI World Cup in England, feels all these abuse will come as a big surprise for Hardik as he is getting it from his Indian fans at home.

"Personally, for me, it doesn't bother me. I don't care, I don't pay any attention," said Smith, who had to resign as Rajasthan Royals captain in 2018 after the ball-tampering scandal.

"You know it's all white noise, but certainly players do hear things and everyone's entitled to

their own emotions and how they respond to those.

"So is it affecting him (Hardik)? Maybe. It's possible. He probably hasn't experienced that before in, in any walk of life.

"So it's natural, I suppose, and particularly being in India and a star Indian player, to be in that position where some fans are booing you, it's certainly something he wouldn't have experienced."

Hardik had led Gujarat Titans to IPL title triumph in their maiden season in 2022 after he was released by Mumbai Indians.

However, last November, he returned to Mumbai Indians via a monetary trade and was soon made the captain, replacing Rohit, which did not go down well with the Indian captain's fans.

"Hardik is in the middle of a challenging time, losing the first two games of their IPL season. It's a big one for him," said Smith, who had replaced MS Dhoni as captain of now-defunct Rising Pune Supergiant in 2017.

Bopanna-Ebden sail into men's doubles final of Miami Open

Miami, March 29 (PTI):

Indian tennis stalwart Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden sailed into the men's doubles final of the Miami Open with a straight-set win over Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos here.

Bopanna and Ebden, the Australian Open winners, hardly broke a sweat to get the better of Spain's Granollers and Argentina's Zeballos 6-1 6-4 in the semifinals on Thursday night.

Bopanna had slipped to second spot in the doubles rankings after a quarterfinal loss at the Dubai Championships and a round-of-32 exit at the



Indian Wells Masters, but the semifinal win here will help the Indian regain the top spot when they are updated on Monday. Following the Australian Open triumph, the 44-year-

old Bopanna had climbed to the world No.1 spot in the ATP rankings, becoming the oldest player to do so. In the final, Bopanna and Ebden will take on Ivan Dodig of Croatia and American Austin Krajicek, who beat the German duo of Kevin Krawietz and Tim Putz 6-4 6-7(7) 10-7 in the other semifinal.

For Bopanna, this will be his 14th ATP Masters 1000 final and the first in Miami. Overall, this will be his 63rd ATP Tour level final. He has so far won 25 doubles titles.

This will also be the fifth appearance in an ATP Masters 1000 final for the Bopanna and Ebden pairing.

Execution wise, it was probably my best last over: Avesh Khan

Jaipur, Mar 29 (PTI):

Rajasthan Royals pacer Avesh Khan feels the last over he bowled against Delhi Capitals in the ongoing IPL was probably his best effort in the death overs. The India pacer had to defend 17 runs in the last over on Thursday night and he was able to do that rather comfortably, landing one yorker after the other. Delhi could only get four runs from that over, ensuring a 12-run win for the home team. Going into the season, Lucknow Super Giants had traded Avesh to Royals. "It is not the first time I bowled the last over. Last year I defended against Rajasthan. When I played for Delhi (bowled the last over there also),



execution wise this was my best over. All the balls were in the same spot, wide yorkers," said Avesh, who has played eight ODIs

and 20 T20s. The 27-year-old also spoke about how his role has changed compared to last season when he turned up for LSG. "In

Lucknow and DC, I used to bowl one over upfront or two overs in the power-play. Here I bowl two overs after powerplay and in the

death as well I get to bowl. Team management and Sanju (Samson) give gull freedom to execute plans and that is helping. Sanju is a bowler's captain. "There was also no dew factor tonight and that helped me being accurate. Dew may impact your execution at times," Avesh said. He gave due credit to Royals' new number four Riyan Parag, who single-handedly kept his team in the game after an ordinary start, smashing an unbeaten 84 off 45 balls.

"It was a match changing innings considering we had lost wickets early and run rate was on the lower side. He helped us post a fighting total. He is in good touch and showed that in this and the last game," Avesh added.

Andy Murray to miss Monte Carlo and Munich tournaments

London, Mar 29 (AP):

Andy Murray still has no timetable to return from an ankle injury as the three-time Grand Slam champion's management team confirmed on Friday that he'll miss upcoming clay-court tournaments in Monte Carlo and Munich.

The 36-year-old Murray tore ligaments in his left ankle on Sunday during a match at the Miami Open and announced the next day that he'd be sidelined "for an extended period."

"At this stage, it is still not clear how long Andy will be out of action, and he is continuing to review options with his

medical team," Friday's statement from his management team read.

"Obviously this is very disappointing news for Andy and he has reiterated his desire to get back on court as soon as possible."

The former world No. 1 rolled his ankle on an approach to the net late in the third set against Tomas Machac. Murray finished the match, losing 5-7, 7-5, 7-6 (5).

The Monte Carlo Masters begins April 7, and the BMW Open in Munich is the following week.

Murray, who has said he's unlikely to play past this summer, has been holding out hope of competing for Britain again in the Paris Olympics.

Jaipur, Mar 29 (PTI):

Architect of Rajasthan Royals' win over Delhi Capitals, young batter Riyan Parag revealed that he was not well for the last three days and had to take painkillers to recover in time for their IPL match here.

Considered a precocious talent, the 22-year-old from Assam finally came off age as he slammed a blistering 84 not out off 45 balls to set up a 12-run win for Rajasthan Royals against Delhi Capitals.

"I have worked very hard, the last 3 days I was in bed, I was on painkillers. I just got up today and I'm very happy," said Parag, who was adjudged the Player of the



Match, during the post-match presentation.

Despite his talent, Parag struggled to live up to the expectations and had underwhelming numbers to show in the last few seasons but his hard work

paid off as he hit his highest IPL score to lift RR to 185 for 5 here.

"(Emotions) They are settled, mom is here, she has seen the struggle, the last 3-4 years," he said.

"I know what my opin-

ion is about myself. That does not change regardless of whether I get a zero or not."

He played as a finisher in the earlier editions but this time, the team management gave him an extended role at No. 4. Parag was also coming into the season after scoring loads of runs at the Deodhar trophy and Syed Mushtaq Ali T20s. "That's a lot to do with the type of season as well, I had a great domestic season and that helps," he said.

"Someone in the top four has to play the 20 overs, the wicket was keeping low and stopping, in the first game Sanju bhayya did it." Parag's performance also impressed his captain Sanju Samson.

Anuja's century gives West Zone upper hand against Central

Pune, Mar 29 (PTI):

Former India all-rounder Anuja Patil hit an attacking century as West Zone took a substantial 111-run first-innings lead against Central Zone on the second day of the Women's Inter-Zonal Multi-Day Cup here. After Central scored 245 in their first essay, Patil's 122 off 120 balls was well supported by Jemimah Rodriguez (69 of 97 balls) as the pair added 155 runs for the fifth wicket with West ending their first innings at 356.

At stumps, Central reached 68 for no loss in the second innings, cutting down the deficit to 43. Openers Punam Raut (32 batting) and Nuzhat Parveen (35 batting) safely negotiated the 25 overs bowled in the final session of the day. Earlier, starting the day at 26 for no loss, West were reduced to 98 for 4 before Patil counterattacked with 20 fours and a



six, scoring at more than a run a ball. Jemimah was rock solid at the other end.

Only Devika Vaidya looked good in the top order, scoring an aggressive 52 off 58 balls while West skipper Smriti Mandhana only came down to bat at number 8 but contributed a stylish 50 off 52 balls. Among Central bowlers, leg-spinner Poonam Raut got 7/116 in 25 overs.

Grigor Dimitrov ousts top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz

● Miami Open

Miami Gardens (US), Mar 29 (AP):

Eleventh-seeded Grigor Dimitrov came out strong against top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz and went on to win 6-2, 6-4 in the Miami Open quarterfinals, his first victory over a top-five player in nearly five years.

Fourth-seeded Alexander Zverev, who beat unseeded Fabian

Marozsan 6-3 7-5 on Thursday night will play Dimitrov in the semifinals on Friday. Second-seeded Jannik Sinner will face No. 3 Daniil Medvedev in the other semifinal, a rematch of last year's final that Medvedev won.

Dimitrov said he didn't want to evaluate the quality of his play against Alcaraz "since I have to play again tomorrow. I'm trying to stay on point. This is how our sport is. You appreciate it, of

course. You're very happy with the current win. Then you have to quickly move on and start focusing on the next match."

Alcaraz, the 2022 champion, entered this tournament off a victory over Medvedev at Indian Wells. But the world's second-ranked player had trouble finding his game against Dimitrov and became visibly frustrated numerous times in the first set.

But Alcaraz didn't go away even after falling behind a break at 4-2 in the



second set. He broke Dimitrov at love and then held serve to even the set at 4-4. Dimitrov, though, won the final two games, breaking Alcaraz in the clincher. Alcaraz said Dimitrov played "almost perfect."

"I have a lot of frustrations right now because he made me feel like I'm 13 years old," the 20-year-old Alcaraz said.

"It was crazy. I was talking to my team saying that I don't know what I have to do. I don't know

his weakness. I don't know anything." This was Dimitrov's first victory over a top-five player since he beat then-No. 3 Roger Federer in the quarterfinals of the 2019 US Open.

On the women's side, fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina once again had to go three sets, pushed to the edge before beating No. 27 Victoria Azarenka 6-4 0-6 7-6(2) in the semifinals.

Rybakina, ranked fourth on the WTA Tour,

will on Saturday face unseeded Danielle Collins, who defeated No. 14 Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-3 6-2. Rybakina also made last year's final, losing in straight sets to Petra Kvitová. "This year, it's much different," Rybakina said. "I was not expecting, honestly, to be in the final because I was not prepared that well for this tournament, but really happy that I managed to battle through all these matches and be in the final again."

Special court convicts 7 people in BSP MLA Raju Pal murder case

New Delhi, Mar 29 (PTI)

A special CBI court in Lucknow on Friday convicted seven people in the killing of former BSP MLA Raju Pal in 2005, a case in which murdered gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmad was also an accused, officials said.

The proceedings against Atiq Ahmad, his brother and prime accused Khalid Azim alias Ashraf, and Gulbul alias Rafiq were abated after their death, they said.

Raju Pal, a Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader from Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, was gunned down on January 25, 2005, as a result of political rivalry with Atiq Ahmad's brother Ashraf, whom he had defeated in the 2004 bypoll to the Prayagraj West seat.

The BSP leader had lost the election to the seat to

Atiq Ahmad in 2002 but when the latter vacated it after being elected to the Lok Sabha, Pal defeated Ashraf in the bypoll.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had taken over the probe into the case in 2016.

The Special Judge CBI, Lucknow, held Ranjeet Pal, Abid, Farhan Ahmad, Israr Ahmad, Javed, Gulhasan, and Abdul Kavi guilty in the case for criminal conspiracy and murder among other serious charges.

Accused Farhan Ahmad was additionally held guilty under the Indian Arms Act.

Raju Pal's wife Pooja Pal welcomed the court's judgment but said they should have been sentenced to death. "I am satisfied with the court's decision. But these accused should have been given death sentence because an MLA was murdered in broad daylight," she told PTI over phone from Lucknow.

She said along with her husband, two other people were murdered. "This crime is so heinous that the culprits should have been given the death sentence," Pooja Pal said.

On April 15 last year, Atiq Ahmad and his brother Ashraf were killed in a sensational on-camera shooting when assailants opened fire on them near a medical college in Prayagraj while in police custody. The shooting was caught on camera as mediapersons were following the duo being escorted to the hospital by the police for a medical checkup.

At least two people were seen firing from close range at Atiq Ahmad and Ashraf who fell to the ground, while police personnel overpowered the attackers.

Members of the ASI team reached the controversial complex around 6 am, carrying gadgets, bags and files with them. "In addition to the existing force, 35 additional policemen were deployed at the Bhojshala complex on Friday. In the past, around 1,600 people used to offer namaz at the site. But after the ASI launched its survey, around 2,400 people offered prayers there between 1 pm and 3 pm last Friday," Superintendent of Police Manoj Singh told PTI over phone.

So more than 150 police personnel are posted at the

ASI's survey of Bhojshala complex continues on Day 8

Dhar, Mar 29 (PTI)

The court-mandated survey of the Bhojshala/Kamal Maula Mosque complex in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar, being conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), continued on the eighth day amid heightened security arrangements.

The security has been stepped up in view of the Friday prayers to be offered by the Muslim community members at the site, a police official said.

Both Hindus and Muslims stake claim to the complex. Hindus consider Bhojshala to be a temple dedicated to Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati), while the Muslim community call it Kamal Maula Mosque. As per an ASI order of April 7, 2003, Hindus are allowed to worship inside the Bhojshala complex every Tuesday, while Muslims are allowed to offer namaz at the site on Fridays.

The High Court's Indore bench had directed the ASI to carry out a scientific survey of the medieval-era Bhojshala complex in Dhar district on March 11.

At the same time, the JD(S) patriarch underlined the need for better coordination between his party and BJP to achieve the target of winning all the 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka.

JD(S) joined the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in September last year. As part of the seat-sharing deal in the State, BJP will contest in 25 constituencies and the JD(S) in three.

Noting that the role of former Chief Minister and BJP stalwart B S Yediyurappa was very important, Gowda said he must forget whatever had happened in the past "because the time is very short". "Our opponents are so strong. Don't think that we are going to win all the 28 seats unless and until we forget what all had happened in the past and our differences," the 91-year-old said at a coordination meeting of the two

site at present, another official said.

Two new experts have joined the ASI team on the eighth day of the survey.

"As part of the security arrangements, CCTV cameras were installed in and around Bhojshala from the day the survey started," Singh said.

This is the third Friday of Ramzan, observed by Muslims across the world as a month of fasting, prayer and reflection. During the namaz last week, the ASI team had stepped out of the complex.

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So more than 150 police personnel are posted at the

'Only Modi & Shah can solve all problems at national level'

Bengaluru, Mar 29 (PTI)

Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda on Friday said there are no leaders other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah who can solve all the problems at the national level.

At the same time, the JD(S) patriarch underlined the need for better coordination between his party and BJP to achieve the target of winning all the 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka.

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Noting that the role of former Chief Minister and BJP stalwart B S Yediyurappa was very important, Gowda said he must forget whatever had happened in the past "because the time is very short". "Our opponents are so strong. Don't think that we are going to win all the 28 seats unless and until we forget what all had happened in the past and our differences," the 91-year-old said at a coordination meeting of the two

parties here. Stating that "other than Modi there is no leader in this country", Gowda said he knows each and every corner of the nation having served the country as Prime Minister for a decade.

"Only Modi and Shah are the two leaders who can solve all the problems at the national level," the nonagenarian leader said.

Gowda cautioned the BJP and JD(S) leaders against taking the Congress lightly as, he claimed, the Mallikarjun Kharge-led outfit has "huge financial resources." "In the present



JD(S) supremo H D Devegowda during the BJP-JD(S) Co-ordination meeting, in Bengaluru, Friday.

parties here.

Stating that "other than Modi there is no leader in this country", Gowda said he knows each and every corner of the nation having served the country as Prime Minister for a decade.

"Only Modi and Shah are the two leaders who can solve all the problems at the national level," the nonagenarian leader said.

Gowda cautioned the BJP and JD(S) leaders against taking the Congress lightly as, he claimed, the Mallikarjun Kharge-led outfit has "huge financial resources." "In the present

Congress government (in Karnataka), money reserve is one of the major areas for them. Can you challenge? Entire Bengaluru and every department are in the hands of one leader. It is not easy to challenge the Congress resources. Not so simple," he said. According to Gowda, no one knows how much money has been pumped in by the Congress in Mandya from where his son and former Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy is contesting as the BJP-JD(S) alliance candidate.

"Today this so-called Congress is only in four states and the money has to be supplied from Karnataka. The president of AICC (Kharge) is from Karnataka. Please understand. It is not so easy (to win the election)," he said.

To highlight the "resource mobilisation" by the Congress in the Lok Sabha election, Gowda said never ever in the history of Karnataka 94 MLAs are holding the position of cabinet rank (including by way of holding positions as chairpersons of various state-owned boards and corporations.)

Himachal multi-crore scholarship scam

CBI files charge sheet against 20 institutes, 105 individuals

Shimla, Mar 29 (PTI)

The CBI has concluded its investigation in the Himachal Pradesh multi-crore scholarship scam with the filing of charge sheets against 20 institutes and 105 persons, officials said on Friday.

The charge sheets have been filed against the owners of educational institutes, the staff of Directorate of Higher Education, Shimla; bank officials and other private persons involved in the misuse of funds under scholarship and reimbursement scheme of fees launched by the Union government and implemented through the state government to help the students of SC, ST and OBC categories, a statement issued by the CBI said.

The scholarship scam started in 2012-13, when the scholarships for

Schedule Caste (SC), Schedule Tribe (ST) and Other Backward Class (OBC) students of the state for pre-matric and post-matric students under 36 schemes were not paid to the eligible students. Eighty per cent of the scholarship money was paid to the private institutions.

The scam was unearthed following reports that the students of the government schools in the tribal Spiti valley in Himachal's Lahaul and Spiti district had not been paid a scholarship for the past five years.

A case was registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the year 2019 on the request of the Himachal Pradesh government against the private educational institutions in Himachal for fake and fraudulent claims of scholarships of about Rs 181 crore during the

year 2013 to 2017.

Searches were earlier conducted at about 30 places on the premises of some people which led to the recovery of incriminating documents. Subsequently, 19 accused, including the chairman, vice chairman, directors and employees of the educational institutes; bank officials and officials of the education department were arrested.

The scholarships of about 32,000 students were not credited in their accounts and 80 per cent of the scholarship money was paid to private institutions.

Twenty two educational institutions were on the CBI radar in the scholarship scam for not only committing irregularities but also for allegedly asking the students to pay money for the release of scholarship.

The investigations had

revealed that fake letterheads were used by several educational institutions to show false affiliation in order to mislead the education department which failed to ensure physical verification of the infrastructure and the strength of students.

The other discrepancies included non-submission of Aadhaar numbers of the students by the institutions, using same Aadhaar accounts to withdraw the scholarships of multiple students who did not exist and opening of fake accounts in three nationalised banks.

The then superintendent grade-II in the higher education department, Arvind Rajta, who was dealing with disbursement of scholarships, had given over Rs 28 crore of scholarship money to nine fake institutions in which his wife had 33 per cent stakes.

ROADSHOW



BJP candidate actor Kangana Ranaut during a roadshow ahead of Lok Sabha elections, in Mandi.

10 people killed after SUV falls into gorge

Banihal/Jammu, Mar 29 (PTI): Ten people were killed after an SUV skidded off the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and fell into a gorge in Ramban district on Friday, officials said.

The vehicle, a Tavera, was on its way to Jammu from Srinagar and it fell into a 300 feet gorge at the Battery Cheshma area of the district around 1.15 am, they said.

The bodies of nine passengers and the driver of the sports utility vehicle (SUV) have been recovered, the officials said.

They said the car's driver, Balwan Singh (47), of Amb Ghrotha in Jammu and Vipin Mukhiya Bhairagang of West Champaran in Bihar are among the deceased.

The operation to retrieve the bodies was carried out by police and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) personnel amid heavy rains in the area, the officials said.

In a post on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief on the accident and extended his condolences to the bereaved families.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund would be given to the next of kin of each of the deceased.

President Droupadi Murmu mourned the loss of lives in the road accident and conveyed her condolences to the bereaved families.

GOOD FRIDAY



Christians re-enact crucifixion of Lord Jesus to commemorate Good Friday at Kharghuli, in Guwahati, Friday.

Govt to boost Coast Guard capability: Defence Secretary

Okha (Gujarat), Mar 29 (PTI)

The government is committed to increasing the Coast Guard's strengths and capabilities so that it can protect the Indian coastline without any trouble, Defence Secretary Girdhar Aramane said on Friday.

The maritime force is also acquiring new capabilities to keep watch on faraway areas in the sea, including the Pakistan coast, he said.

The Centre is trying its best to provide all the required equipment to the Indian Coast Guard, he said, adding the ICG now has several patrol vessels, fast boats and aircraft.

Aramane was speaking after inaugurating a hovercraft maintenance unit of ICG at Okha in Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka district.

Director General Rakesh Pal and senior officials were present at the inaugural ceremony, ICG said in a release.

The hovercraft maintenance infrastructure shall provide a fillip to the operational readiness in forward areas, the release said.

Hovercrafts are used in amphibious operations. With the help of hovercraft, one can reach difficult terrains easily, such as small marshy islands near the coast, Aramane said.

ICG along with the Indian Navy, Border Security Force and Narcotics Control Bureau are working together to stop drug trafficking through the sea route, Aramane said.

Gujarat police are also contributing in the effort, he said, adding all these security agencies are keeping a close watch on the traffickers and points of origin.

चोट एवं जलने के बाद घाव की प्लास्टिक सर्जरी

कालड़ा बर्न एवं प्लास्टिक कोस्मेटिक सर्जरी सेंटर आर.के.सी.के.सामने, चौथे कालोनी एन एनपी नारा, धर्मपुरी रोड, कलकत्ता के पास, रायपुर कॉल : 9827143060/8871003060

(NABH & NCTV द्वारा) सुयश हॉस्पिटल 1 से 6 अप्रैल तक निरंतर दंपतियों के लिए निःशुल्क परामर्श प्रथम 15 पंजीयन में IVF/ICSI फंड में 20% की छूट 93000 30000 97551 62611 FOLLOW US ON कौनसे टिकट में 20% की छूट कोटा-गुडियारी रोड, होटल पिकाडली के पीछे, रायपुर