



BRIEF



RSS volunteers take part in a 'Path Sancharian' on the occasion of Hindu New Year, in Nagpur, Tuesday.

HC relief

Kochi: Former Kerala Finance Minister T M Thomas Isaac, who is contesting the Lok Sabha elections, received relief from the Kerala High Court on Tuesday in connection with the Enforcement Directorate probe into the KIIFB masala bond case. The court directed the ED not to summon Isaac during the election period.

Farewell

New Delhi: Calling Justice Aniruddha Bose a "stellar judge" and a classical Bengali 'Bhadrolok', Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Tuesday bid his Supreme Court colleague farewell. Justice Bose, who was elevated as a judge of the top court on May 24, 2019, is set to join as director of the National Judicial Academy in Bhopal.

New SPs

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government has appointed new Superintendents of Police for Berhampur and Khurda districts, following instructions in this regard from the Election Commission. Sarthak Sarangi was appointed as Berhampur SP and Awinash Kumar became the new SP of Khurda, after the poll panel approved their names from a list of eligible Odisha cadre IPS officers.

Shot dead

Haridwar: Amarjeet Singh Bittu alias Ganda, one of the assailants who allegedly shot dead Nanakmatta Sahib Gurdwara dera kar seva chief Baba Tarsem Singh last month, was killed by a joint team of the STF and police in an encounter on Tuesday. Bittu had a bounty of Rs 1 lakh on his head.

CBI arrests

New Delhi: The CBI on Tuesday arrested three suspects for allegedly trying to smuggle 125 kg of peacock feathers to Bangkok, officials said. They said the feathers were artificially plucked which results in the death of these birds. The agency acted on a complaint from the Customs Department which had intercepted a consignment with peacock feathers to Bangkok, they said.

Kejriwal to stay in jail, petition against arrest rejected

New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTD):

Failing to get any reprieve from the Delhi High Court, the Aam Aadmi Party Tuesday said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will move the Supreme Court against his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate, and maintained the excise policy case was the "biggest political conspiracy of the country" to finish the party.



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal leaves from the Rouse Avenue Court in the excise policy-linked money laundering case, in New Delhi.

Senior AAP leader and Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj told a press conference soon after the HC order that they are hopeful the Supreme Court will provide relief to Kejriwal in the same way it granted bail to AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh recently.

"We respect the institution of the high court but we respectfully submit that we do not agree with its order and will move the Supreme Court against it," Bharadwaj said. "The so-called excise policy scam is the biggest political conspiracy to finish off the party and Kejriwal," he alleged.

He claimed that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) have failed to recover even one rupee of illegal money in the case. "The entire matter is not related to money laundering, rather it's the biggest political conspiracy of the country. It's a conspiracy to crush and finish off Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and AAP governments in Delhi and Punjab," he said. AAP leader Jasmine Shah, who also addressed the presser, said, "The investigation has been going on for two years but not even a single penny has been recovered. But what happens? You arrest top leaders of a national party and put them in jail as part of a conspiracy."

Kejriwal to move SC

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Five Naxalites arrested

Sukma/Bijapur, Apr 09:

Five Naxalites, one of them carrying a bounty of Rs 1 lakh, were arrested on Tuesday in the Bastar division of Chhattisgarh, police officials said. Two of them, Pottam Bhima (35) and Hemla Bhima (32), were apprehended by the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and local police from the forests in the Chintalnagar area in Sukma district during an area domination exercise, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran G Chavan said.

Pottam, who carried a bounty of Rs 1 lakh, was the Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Majdoor Sangh president under the Surpanguda Revolutionary People's Council of the outlawed Maoist organization, he added. Hemla was a Surpanguda militia member, the police official said.

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Sensex breaches 75,000-mark

Mumbai, Apr 09 (PTD):



Benchmark equity indices hit new peaks on Tuesday with Sensex breaching the historic 75,000-mark for the first time during intra-day before ending the session marginally lower on profit-taking at higher levels. Putting a break on its record-breaking rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex de-

clined 58.80 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 74,683.70. During the day, it climbed 381.78 points or 0.51 per cent to reach the all-time peak of 75,124.28.

Cop 'accidentally' fires from his service rifle

Raipur, Apr 09:



Rakesh Yadav

A constable deployed at the Chhattisgarh police headquarters in Nava Raipur near here "accidentally" fired a few rounds from his service weapon on Tuesday, but no one was hurt, an official said. The incident occurred at around 9:30 am when constable Rakesh Yadav was near his barrack after his duty got over at the police headquarters located under Rakhi police station limits, the official said. While Yadav was handling the service weapon, a few bullets got "accidentally" discharged from his Insas rifle, but no one was hurt, he said.

The constable, belonging to the 14th battalion of the Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF), is a native of Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh. The constable was being interrogated and further investigation was underway, the official added.

About the incident..

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Investigation underway...

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MISLEADING ADVT CASE

Ramdev tenders unconditional apology before Supreme Court

New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTD):



Yoga guru Ramdev and managing director of Patanjali Ayurved Ltd Acharya Balkrishna have tendered "unconditional and unqualified apology" before the Supreme Court over advertisements issued by the firm making tall claims about the medicinal efficacy of its products. In two separate affidavits filed in the apex court, Ramdev and Balkrishna tendered unqualified apology for the "breach of the statement" recorded in the November 21 last year order of the apex court. In the November 21, 2023 order, the top court had

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

Chandrayaan-4 mission in 'process of developing': ISRO chairman

Ludhiana, Apr 09 (PTD):



ISRO Chairman S. Somanath with Nehru Sidhant Kender Trust President Rakesh Bharti Mittal during the inauguration of Horizon School of Excellence, in Ludhiana, Tuesday.

Indian Space Research Organisation Chairman S Somanath on Tuesday said the Chandrayaan-4 mission is in the "process of developing". He said space research is a continuous process and the country is on the trajectory of "great progress". He was interacting with the media after attending the twentieth anniversary of the Sat Paul Mittal School here. Dr Somanath said that ISRO is committed to its mission for the moon. He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had set the country's target of landing on the moon in early 2040s and ISRO is on a continuous exploration mission. The ISRO chairman said, besides space research, the organisation is also engaging and involving students across the country in various technology development projects. In August last year, India's moon mission Chandrayaan-3 touched down on the lunar south pole.

IN SUPPORT OF PM



A child holds a placard during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's roadshow in support of BJP's South Chennai candidate Tamilisai Soundararajan, ahead of Lok Sabha elections, in Chennai, Tuesday.

NIA arrests key accused at Attari

New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTD):

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Harwinder Singh alias Soshi Pannu, the key accused in the Rs 700 crore worth narcotics haul case, at Punjab's Attari in 2022, an official statement issued on Tuesday said. The accused, a resident of Naushehra Pannuan in Punjab's Tarn Taran, used to distribute drugs, handle cash and launder drug proceeds through banking as well as hawala channels, as per the NIA investigations. The NIA has made another major breakthrough in the Attari drug seizure case with the arrest of the key accused found to be actively involved in drug dealing and quality testing besides handling the proceeds of narcotics smuggling, the probe agency said in the statement.

MVA seals poll pact in Maha

Sena (UBT) gets 21 seats, Cong 17, NCP (SP) 10



Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, Congress leaders Nana Patole, Prithviraj Chavan and Balasaheb Thorat, NCP chief Sharad Pawar and NCP leader Jayant Patil during a Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) press conference, in Mumbai, Tuesday.

The opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi on Tuesday announced its seat-sharing formula for the Lok Sabha polls with the Shiv Sena (UBT) getting the major chunk of 21 seats, while the Congress will contest 17 and the NCP (SP) 10 seats. The Congress gave up its claim on the contentious Sangli and Bhiwandi seats, which will now be contested by the Sena (UBT) and the NCP (SP), respectively. NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar said there are no differences among the allies over any seat and the distribution arrangement for the 48 parliamentary seats in the state has been arrived at unanimously. While Shiv Sena (UBT) head Uddhav Thackeray said the larger goal of the alliance was to defeat the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), state Congress president Nana Patole said it has decided to be "large-hearted" to achieve this objective. Pawar, Thackeray and Patole announced the poll pact after weeks of hectic negotiations. Addressing a press conference at 'Shivalaya',

CEC Rajiv Kumar gets Z-security after intel report

New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTD)



The government has provided Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar with a Z-category VIP security cover of armed commandos in view of potential threats against him, official sources said on Tuesday. The Ministry of Home Affairs has entrusted the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) with providing a contingent of about 40-45 personnel for the task, the sources said. A threat perception report prepared by central intelligence agencies recommended a "strong" security cover for Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Kumar keeping in view his profile, they said. The move

comes amid preparations for the seven-phase general elections that begin on April 19. The CEC, as well as two Election Commissioners, are currently guarded by a small armed security team drawn from the Delhi Police. This is one of the rarest instances of a CEC being provided a central security cover. Former CEC, late T N Seshan, had a central security cover at one point of time. Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole on Tuesday said his party did not "surrender" but took a step back in the seat-sharing negotiations with its Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance partners as the talks could not go on indefinitely. Patole's statement came even as there was apparent disgruntlement in the state unit over Congress ceding seats such as Sangli and Bhiwandi. "We took a step back, we did not surrender," he told reporters after the seat-sharing formula was announced. "The deal has been finalised after consultations with the party high command. We tried our best to get the seats where we had good prospects of winning. But the talks cannot be stretched too far as the election process has already begun," Patole said.

Weather
High 33 Low 23

MARKET
NIFTY 22,642.75
SENSEX 74,683.70

BULLION
GOLD 71,267
SILVER 82,075

Governor Bais visits Jain Temple in Nagpura

**Bhilai, Apr 09:**

Governor of Maharashtra, Ramesh Bais visited Jain Temple located at Nagpura in Durg on Tuesday. He offered prayers and sought blessings from Lord Shri Parshvanath. The office bearers of the Temple Trust welcomed the Governor with shawls and mementos. The Governor also visited the Gaushala run by the Mandir Trust. During the visit, Trust Chairman Gajraj Pagaria and other office bearers were present. It needs to be mentioned here that this temple of Bhagwan Shri



Parshvanath, the 23rd Tirthankara, is situated on the banks of Shivnath River amidst natural scenery. The temple reminds the devotees about the holy journey of Bhagwan Shri Parshvanath, which he undertook about 3000 years ago during his Shramana period as a Shramain (a wandering mendicant dedicated to self-realization through renunciation). The Jain sculptural remains, large number of devotees and ancient temple with footprints of the Lord prove his historic

visit to the region. The miraculous manner in which this ancient idol was found and restored also clearly proves His divine grace. This temple is an epic of Jain devotional philosophy engraved on stones. A visit to this pilgrimage site inspires generous conduct, self-discipline, austerity and equality in the pilgrims. It is a Jain temple established in 1995 in Nagpura. The complex houses a temple, a guest house, a garden and a naturopathy and yoga centre. The entrance to this temple of Lord Shri Parshvanath made of marble is through a 30 feet gate, which houses the idol of Lord Shri Parshvanath situated on four pillars (which represent the four essential elements of spiritual life i.e. knowledge, introspection, good conduct, penance), it is being worshipped by two elephants. Hundreds of pilgrims visit this temple on the full moon day.

Interstate gang of notorious thieves busted

- Police nabs three residents of Bhopal, MP
- Accused used car and Walkie - Talkie to commit crimes
- Cash and jewellery concealed in car's engine bay and seat covers recovered

Bhilai, Apr 09:

With the arrest of three notorious thieves, police claimed to have busted an interstate gang of thieves. They had committed thefts in Supela and Pulgaon area. The accused, hailing from Bhopal (MP), moved around in a car and used walkie-talkie to communicate with each other. They targeted locked houses to

commit thefts. They had concealed the cash and stolen jewellery in the engine bay of their car. About 30 to 35 cases are registered against the accused in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

SP Jitendra Shukla informed that a joint team of ACCU and Pulgaon Police Station carried out investigation over the cases of thefts and discovered that the thieves were using a silver coloured Swift car. On the basis of technical inputs, cops intercepted a suspicious car near Pulgaon Nullah checking point on April 07. A man came out of the vehicle and suddenly attacked the police constable with an iron rod. The accused sat



in the car and escaped. The constable chased the car on his bike, but the accused hit the bike and when the constable fell on the ground, they tried to run over him by reversing the car. An FIR was lodged against the accused at Pulgaon Police Station. The same car was again intercepted the next day at Pulgaon Chowk. Three suspects were taken into custody. During sustained interrogation, they confessed to committing thefts at several places. On April 07, they were escaping after committing a theft. When the cops intercepted them, they attacked the constable and escaped. They had left Bhopal on April 04 and reached Raipur and Durg in a silver colored Maruti car on April 05 evening. They moved across Raipur and committed theft at a locked house. They escaped with

Officials trained about process of filing nominations

Bhilai, Apr 09:

The process of filing nomination papers under Lok Sabha Elections-2024 is going to start from 12th April. In this regard, officers and employees were given training by master trainers regarding distribution of nomination papers, checking of documents of candidates during distribution, taking security deposit, etc at District Collectorate on Tuesday.

Collector and District Election Officer Richa Prakash Chaudhary gave information about the necessary documents to be collected from the candidates and the necessary documents to be provided to them from the election office. She instructed the officers to maintain necessary registers during the distribution of nomination forms. Collector Richa Prakash Chaudhary, while giving information about the necessary precautions to be taken while providing nomination papers, has instructed the concerned officers to work impartially and



responsibly. During the training, the master trainers gave information about sending the daily nomination information in the prescribed format from 12th April 2024 to 19th April 2024 and about withdrawal of nominations, symbol allotment and printing of ballot papers of the candidates contesting the election in Format 7A till 22nd April 2024.

After filling the nomination letter Form-2A format, it is necessary to submit it with signature, one proposer for the candidate from recognized parties and 10 proposer for the registered unrecognized or registered or independent candidate.

Form 26 Affidavit, all columns completely filled and attested by candidate, notary and signatures of candidate and

notary on all pages (there should not be any kind of cutting in the affidavit stamp, one original copy and 03 photocopies have to be submitted) New bank account opened for election, which is opened at least a day before, will have to be submitted along with complete details of the account number and a photocopy of the first page of the passbook containing details of the account. On receipt of the security deposit, nomination will be made to the candidate. It will be necessary for the candidate to take an oath or affirmation on submitting the nomination.

Form 8 (in duplicate) along with the photograph will have to be given for the election agent appointment. Form 'A' and 'B' nomination in case of candidates from

political parties, will be mandatory to submit by 3 pm on the last date of filing. Candidate's identity card and 4 passport size photographs (including the candidate's name on the back side) along with a declaration that the said photograph is not more than 3 months old should be submitted. If you are a voter of an assembly other than the Durg Lok Sabha constituency, then the abstract copy of the electoral roll of 2024 of the concerned assembly constituency will have to be given in the prescribed form.

On this occasion, Additional Collector Yogita Dewangan, Joint Collector Harvansh Miri and all the officers and employees engaged in nomination were present.

Hindu New Year welcomed with religious and patriotic programme

Bhilai, Apr 09:

Nav Samvatsar, Vikram Samvat-2081, the Hindu New Year was welcomed with a religious and patriotic programme on Monday. For the third consecutive year, BhilaiCanDo Parvat Foundation organised "Ek Sham Shri Ram Khatushyam Ke Naam" at Sector 7 High School Ground, Bhilai.

For the third consecutive year, the program registered its name in the Golden Book of Records for making the largest rangoli of Lord Shri Ram Lala and lighting 51,000 lamps. 'Ram Ayenge to Angana Sajaungi' fame Swati Mishra; Commando trainer and Motivational Speaker Legendary Grandmaster Shifuji Shaurya Bhardwaj; famous bhajan singer of Shyam Jagat, 'Ram Ke Hai Ram Ke The Hum Ram Ke Rahenge' fame Sheetal Pandey, ardent devotee of Baba Shri Khatushyam, Shri Manvendra Ji Chauhan (Khatu), the chief



priest of Khatu Shyam, were present.

Chief guests of the program were Durg Lok Sabha MP Vijay Baghel, BJP District President Mahesh Verma, Durg City MLA Gajendra Yadav, Durg City Mayor Dheeraj Bakliwal, BJP Mahila Morcha Vice President Sheetal Nayak, BJP Mahila Morcha District President Sweetie Kaushik, Bhilai Municipal Corporation Councilor Smita Dodke, Chandeshwari Bande, CSVTU Vice Chancellor Dr MK Verma; Shri Shankaracharya Group Chairman IP Mishra, KK Modi University Vice Chancellor and other dignitaries were present.

IIT Bhilai & AIIMS Raipur jointly develop digital healthcare system

Bhilai, Apr 09:

AI-assisted hybrid digital healthcare system has been jointly developed by IIT Bhilai and AIIMS Raipur to enhance emergency care systems thereby benefiting patients in remote areas and resource-limited settings. It was launched on Tuesday in the presence of the directors of both the institute and a live demonstration was performed from the AIIMS cardiology ICU.

On this occasion Prof Rajiv Prakash, Director IIT Bhilai, informed that the technical part of the solution has been de-



veloped by IIT Bhilai team lead by Prof Santosh Biswas and the overall architecting and casting to the medico needs of India has been performed by AIIMS Raipur team lead by Dr DK Tripathi. The result is going-live of "ST elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI, heart attack) through AI-integrated Clinical Decision Support System." Prof Rajiv Prakash further men-

tioned that the Ayush-Tech, a collaboration between IIT Bhilai and AIIMS Raipur was initiated in June 2023, to blend the Technical and Medico expertise of these two organizations and provide a common platform for the students, faculty members and industries for integrated teaching/training, joint research and development, entrepreneurship etc with a vision to improve med-

ical facilities through state of art engineering technologies. The mission of the joint effort is to optimally utilize resources, infrastructures and knowledge of the people of both the institutes for betterment of society.

Dr Ashok Jindal, Director AIIMS Raipur congratulated the team and expressed pleasure to see the first go-live of a solution coming out of this endeavour in less than a year. He further mentioned that this launch marks a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to foster tech with medico for the betterment of society.

15 students selected in campus drive of Mother Teresa College of Nursing

Bhilai, Apr 09:

A day long campus placement drive was organised by Petals Newborn and Children Hospital for the students studying in Mother Teresa College of Nursing, Kumhari. Administrators of Petals Newborn and Children Hospital, Ambika Ghosh and Nirmala Lodh were present in this program. This drive was organized for the passed out students of Mother Teresa College of Nursing along with students studying GNM, BSc Nursing, Post Basic BSc Nursing and MSc Nursing. In the place-



ment drive, a total of 15 students were selected including Utkal Sahu, Meenakshi Sahu, Ritika Sahu, Ambika Modanwal, Purvi Kashyap, Ananya Soni, Suman Sahu, Vaidehi Bhagat, Kiran Sahu, Kalpana Sahu, Savita Chandra, Reena Soni, Anukampa Ekka, Lalita Sahu and Pallavi of BSc Nursing. Shri Rawatpura Sarkar is also instilling important confi-

dence in the students by organizing placement drives on behalf of Group of Institutions. Many placement activities take place every year in this institute.

The selected students attributed their performance to the regular training of the placement cell. All the students of Mother Teresa College of Nursing are bright and intelligent and have good clinical knowl-

edge. Studying in a good institute is not the only desire of all students. Rather, most of the students depend on college placement for a better future. For this reason, a placement cell has been created in this institution with the aim of providing adequate training to the students on these subjects. The aim of this campus drive is to provide good jobs to the students along with good education to the students.

edge. Along with this, on this great success of the students, the Vice Chairman of the organization, Dr JK Upadhyay congratulated the guests present at the drive and all the students.

Obituary

Rakesh Sharma



Bhilai: Ganapati Vihar, Phase-3, Borsi resident Rakesh Sharma left for heavenly abode on April 09 at Hyderabad. Funeral procession will be taken out from his residence around 13:30 hrs on April 10 and last rites of the mortal remains will be performed at Sheonath Muktidham. He is survived by wife Alka Sharma, daughter Dr Ankita Mishra, son Shrikant Sharma and family.

BSP's Fire Brigade Team helped extinguish CSPDCL Raipur's Fire incident

Bhilai, Apr 09:

A massive fire broke out at the Transformer Storage Yard of the Sub-Divisional Office of Chhattisgarh State Power Distribution Company Limited (CSPDCL) the erstwhile Chhattisgarh State Electricity Board (CSEB), at Gudhiyari, Raipur on April 05, 2024. As many as 2,800-3,000 old and new Oil-immersed Transformer of various capacities, oil drums, oil tankers and office building got engulfed in the fire.

Around 20-25 Fire Tenders from various departments including Municipal Corporation, Municipality, Railway, Raipur Airport, Hospital etc. were deployed to extinguish the fire. When the fire could not be controlled despite several efforts, the State Government

Officials contacted SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant, which then made immediate plans to send the fire tenders without any delay. All other fire tenders on one side and BSP's Fire Tenders from other side collectively fought to douse the fast-spreading fire, which was ultimately controlled with the efforts of the Central Fire Station of the Plant. The main reason behind summoning the fire fighting vehicles from BSP's Central Fire Station was that BSP's Fire Tenders are equipped with latest state of art technology, and are operated by skilled, and highly trained fire fighter officials and firemen.

As per the instructions of Anirban Dasgupta, Director I/c (SAIL-BSP) a combined Fire Tender CG 07 CJ 3745 with crew members, was dispatched from



the Central Fire Station of Bhilai Steel Plant. Since the fire was massive and was rapidly spreading to the surrounding areas, another water bower CG 07 MB 5877 was dispatched to provide further assistance.

Emergency situations can arise at any moment, and in such situations, the Fire Services Department of Bhilai Steel Plant is the safety net for Plant and its

employees, and the people of Bhilai as well as nearby areas. With expertise in fire control and unwavering dedication of the employees of Fire Safety Department, the department has been setting an example of excellence in fire prevention and rescue.

SB Dhawas, Dy Chief Fire Officer (Fire Services), and Yogesh Kumar Sharma, Fire

Officer (Fire Services) were deputed to the fire incident site, on the request of State Government officials, to command and monitor the firefighting operation.

Various other officials of Fire Services Department of Bhilai Steel Plant including Karunesh Kumar Devhare, Fire Officer, Mandhata Goyal, Gulshan Kothari, Arun Kumar

Dhruve, Leading Fire Men, Chinappa, Asim Kumar Borkar, Fire Engine Drivers, Talwinder Singh, Dinesh Prasad Gupta, Lekhray Meena, Nitin Kumar Thakur, and Chandan Kanwar, Fire Men cum Fire Engine Driver, played a significant role in controlling the massive fire.

The extreme heat, blazing flames and dense smoke made the operation difficult for firefighters. Moreover the 10-12 acres area at the fire site, put a nearby residential area to a high risk. After reaching the spot of fire, BSP fire tender was deployed on one side of the sub division office, next to the residential quarters. With the hard work and dedicated efforts of BSP fire personnel, the fire was controlled and the nearby residential areas could be saved. It

also prevented the fire from spreading to the 132 KV substation which otherwise would have caused damage to the entire substation.

The collective efforts of all agencies engaged in the operation along with the team from Bhilai Steel Plant helped in dousing the fire. More than 2,750 liters of aqueous film foam compound was used from the fire tender of Bhilai Steel Plant to extinguish the fire. After completely controlling the fire, all the crew members returned safely to BSP Central Fire Station.

With latest equipment and highly trained officers and personnel, the Fire Services Department of Bhilai Steel Plant is always ready to respond promptly and effectively in any such emergency situations.

Tribals do not need to fear heretics, says Sai

Raipur/Jashpur, Apr 09:

Calling for being cautious of those who say that tribals are not Hindus, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said 'tribal people worship Shiva-Parvati, no one can be a bigger Hindu than the tribals'.

People should not be misled by the heretics who are trying to break the unity of the tribals, Sai said while speaking at Sarhul Sarna Puja Mahotsav, the biggest festival of tribals, at Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram in Jashpur. While congratulating and wishing the people of Chhattisgarh on the occasion of Hindu New Year and Navratri, Chief Minister Sai said that it had been a tradition to organize Sarhul Khaddi Puja here every year on the day of Chaitra Pratipada.

Sai said that being a Chief Minister, it would be his responsibility that the name of Jashpur should be high, the name of Jashpur should never be low. 'In Sarhul Khaddi



Puja, we worship the tribal nature, trees and plants, Sarai tree. We the tribals ask for forgiveness from Mother Earth, Mahadev-Parvati for whatever we do and the mistakes we make throughout the year. Today, we worship Mother Earth and Mahadev-Parvati and seek their blessings so that in the coming year, our lives are auspicious and happy, our family lives well, farming is good and rainfall is good. I pray to Mother Earth and Mahadev-Parvati that there should always be happiness and prosperity in Chhattisgarh and that everyone's life should be

happy', Sai said.

'Shakti is worshipped during Navratri. So our nature is also a form of power. Prakriti is also a name of Maa Durga. We tribals worship both nature and power since the beginning', he said.

Remembers Judeo
Remembering Dilip Singh Judeo, the Chief Minister said that Jashpur was saved by Kumar Saheb. He prevented the conversion of tribals, conducted dozens of padyatras, organized homecoming programmes, despite being a king, washed the feet of lakhs of converts and brought them back to Hinduism, Sai said. 'We

carried out several marches against cow slaughter, only then our Jashpur was saved. We have to follow the path shown by Raja Saheb and not get misled by heretics. A befitting reply has to be given to conversion, Jashpur has to be saved', said Sai.

In the festival, Kripashankar Bhagat, MLA Raimuni Bhagat, former minister Ganesh Ram Bhagat, former Rajya Sabha MP Ranvijay Singh Judev, Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram President Satyendra Singh, General Secretary of Sarhul Committee Govind Ram Bhagat, Prabal Pratap Singh Judev, Priyavanda Singh Judev, Jaya Singh Judev, Vijay Aditya Singh Judev, Shaurya Pratap Singh Judev, Yash Pratap Judev, Krishnakumar Rai, Rajsharan Bhagat, District Panchayat President Shanti Bhagat, Municipality Vice President Rajesh Gupta, Suresh Ram, District Panchayat Vice President Rajkapoor Ram were also present.

PRAYERS OFFERED



Devotees offered prayers to Goddess Durga on occasion of first day of Navratri in the temples and (R) 'Jyoti Kalash' of devotees being lighted up in the temple.

Mahant has broken limits of political correctness: BJP

Shivratn seeks apology from Leader of Opposition

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 09: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State Vice President and State Convener of Election Management Committee Shivratn Sharma on Tuesday said Chhattisgarh Assembly's Leader of Opposition Charandas Mahant has again used indecent language against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. By calling PM Modi a defaulter, Mahant has broken all limits of political correctness.

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday evening, he said that an FIR has been registered against Mahant on the instructions of the Election Commission after his initial decent statement against PM. Despite the instructions of the Election



Commission, Mahant and Congress party leaders are day in and day out using vulgar language against PM Modi including bashing his head, abusing him. He sought any apology from Mahant over his fresh remarks. He asked will Mahant term the former CM Bhupesh Baghel a defaulter as his government has failed to deliver the promises made to people in the election manifesto of 2018 polls. Will Charandas Mahant call Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi defaulters for not fulfilling their promises? Will Charandas Mahant call the leaders of the Congress Party, who came to power by making false promises, defaulters?

Sharma said that most of the guarantees of PM Modi have been fulfilled by Vishnu Deo Sai's government in the state in just three months. As per its promise, the BJP government has transferred Rs 17 thousand crore to the accounts of the farmers for the outstanding bonus and difference amount of paddy for the last two years. Two installments of Mahtari Vandan Yojana have also been paid. It has also been announced to purchase tendu leaves from tendu leaf collectors for Rs 5500. Approval has been given to build 18 lakh Prime Minister's houses. Along with this, the remaining promises will be fulfilled soon. The

Congress party is understanding this. This is the reason that instead of contesting the elections, the Congress Party is repeatedly spreading false propaganda about Prime Minister Narendra Modi and when the public has understood the false propaganda of the Congress, the Congressmen have now started abusing. Congressmen know that after the crushing defeat in the assembly elections, this time Congress will be completely wiped out from Chhattisgarh in the Lok Sabha elections.

He said that in Bastar, Lok Sabha candidate Kawasi Lakhma has also lost his mental balance like Mahant. Sometimes they ask people to drink alcohol and dance and sometimes they instigate the tribal community to kill the policemen with bows and arrows. Kawasi Lakhma's statement clearly shows that on whose instructions the target killing is taking place.

'SC ruling has exposed Centre and ED'

Liquor Scam

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 09: Senior Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel has claimed the Supreme Court's decision in connection with the alleged liquor scam in Chhattisgarh had exposed the Centre for using the Enforcement Directorate to target opposition parties.

The apex court on Monday quashed the money laundering case against former IAS officer Anil Tuteja and his son Yash in the alleged Rs 2,000 crore liquor scam, saying there were no proceeds of the crime. In a post on X on Monday, former Chhattisgarh chief minister Baghel said the commitment of agencies like the ED should be towards the Constitution and not any political party.



"Shameful political misuse of ED has been proved and the Modi government has been exposed. Today's decision of the Supreme Court has proved that at the best of BJP, the ED has been conspiring to defame the opposition parties by making every case a case of money laundering," Baghel claimed in the post.

The ED registered a case in the alleged liquor scam just before the 2023

assembly polls to defame the previous Congress government and give a political weapon to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), he alleged.

It has become clear from the SC ruling that the BJP was only spreading lies, the former CM claimed.

The conspiracy of the BJP-led Centre to defame its political opponents by misusing democratic institutions has been unearthed and the public will see that cases lodged to defame the Congress will also be quashed in a similar manner, he said.

In July last year, the ED submitted a prosecution complaint (chargesheet) in the alleged liquor scam case in a PMLA court in Raipur in which it claimed Rs 2,161 crore of corruption money was generated in the alleged 'liquor scam' that began in 2019 in Chhattisgarh and the amount should have

gone to the state exchequer.

A criminal syndicate led by Anil Tuteja and businessman Anwar Dhebar (brother of Congress leader and Raipur Mayor Aijaz Dhebar) had turned these objectives upside down, the ED claimed.

This syndicate comprises senior bureaucrats of the state, politicians, their associates and officials of the excise department, it had said. Early this year, Chhattisgarh's Economic Offence Wing/Anti-Corruption Bureau also registered a case in the alleged liquor scam against 70 persons, including Congress leaders, and companies based on a report of the ED. The ACB/EOW last week arrested Anwar Dhebar and Arvind Singh, who was an employee of the Bhilai Steel Plant, in connection with the alleged scam.

SDJMM Malviya Road distributed food to about 300 people



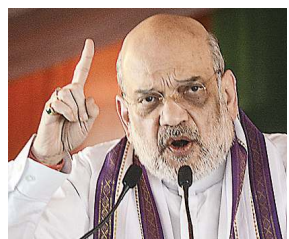
Raipur, Apr 09: Today, on the fourth day of the "15-day Prabhat Pheri" organized under the Lord Mahavir Janam Kalyanak Mahotsav, the Prabhat Pheri was taken out from Tatibandha Gurudwara via Samta Bhawan, Tatibandh Main Road to Kidzie School, Tatibandh. In today's Prabhat Pheri, children wore different costumes. In front of the Prabhat Pheri, people were chanting 'Jyoti aur Jeene Do'. Despite the heavy rain, the enthusiasm of the religion loving members of the Jain community who came to the Prabhat Pheri did not diminish. Irrespective of the rainfall, the

Sangh members of the regional Jain community residing in the surrounding areas showed their enthusiasm and performed their duties with devotion and contributed their valuable time in making this event a success. This Prabhat Pheri is being organized by Shri Sadhumargi Jain Samta Yuva Sangh Raipur for the last many years. After Prabhat Pheri, blood donation camp is being organized daily in which a total of 50 people have donated life-giving blood from April 6th to April 9. Today, on April 9 at 1 pm, in a series of cultural programs, Shri Digambar Jain Mahila Mandal Malviya

Road distributed food to about 300 people outside the Digambar Jain Temple located at Malviya Road. Necessary items like stationery copies were also distributed to the needy in which a total of 500 note books were distributed today. In this program Jaya Jain, Sandhya Jain, Deepthi Jain, Meghna Jain, Madhu Modi, Rohit Jain, Kavita Jain, Alka Jain, Rashmi Jain, Rekha Jain Mamta Jain, Shalu Jain and Soumya Jain was especially present.

At 2.50 pm, pure food was provided to the blind children at Prerna Blind School in which Sandhya Jain, Rekha Jain, Varsha Jain, Preeti Jain, Sugandhi Jain Sangeeta Jain, Mamta Jain, Sandhya Brahmpuri, Abha Jain, Sunita Jain, Rajni Jain, Manda Jain, Sonam Jain, Anju Jain, Mamta Jain, Jyoti Jain, Baby Jain, Lata Jain, Alka Jain were specially present.

Shah to campaign in Rajnandgaon on April 14



Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 09: After the Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched campaign for the Lok Sabha elections in Bastar, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) heavy-weight and Home Minister Amit Shah would be addressing a public meeting at Rajnandgaon on April 14

ahead of the second phase of polling on April 26.

It would be his maiden visit to Chhattisgarh after his earlier scheduled public meeting at Kawardha on April 6 was cancelled.

Apart from him, the Union Defence Minister Rajnath would be visiting Chhattisgarh soon to campaign in favour of the BJP candidates.

Meanwhile, the Chhattisgarh BJP Office-bearers informed that the election management committee is busy to finalise more public meeting in next few days as it is in consultation with the central leadership on the issue.

Chaitra Navratri: Devotees flock to see 'Maa Bamleshwari'



Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 09: Navratri, the nine-day festival of 'Adishakti Mata', has started from Tuesday. Crowds of devotees have started gathering in Dongargarh, the holy abode of 'Maa



Bamleshwari', from Tuesday. Devotees of Mata from all over the country and abroad are also reaching Dongargarh. It is said that Mata Bamleshwari fulfills all the wishes of the devotees in Dongargarh in a moment. This temple of Maa Bamleshwari is thousands of years old. Lakhs of devotees come to visit Mata during

Navratri, for which it is the responsibility of the temple trust to make all the arrangements. Eight hundred police personnel are deployed for security. This time in Dongargarh, in view of the heat, air-conditioned waiting rooms have been made in the ropeway.

Devotees visit the Maa Bamleshwari temple 24 hours a day for nine days. 'Satchandi Yagya' is being performed in the same temple. For the convenience of visitors, the ropeway is operational 24 hours. Besides, all the arrangements are operational 24 hours at various places on the stairs also.

Women to operate 3320 polling stations in the state

Highest number of female voters in Raipur, highest voter sex ratio in Bastar

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 09: Chhattisgarh is one of the few states in the country where there are more women voters than men. The voter sex ratio in the state is 1015 i.e. there are one thousand fifteen female voters for every one

thousand men. The highest number of women voters in the state is in Raipur Lok Sabha constituency where there are 11 lakh 69 thousand 358 women voters while the voter sex ratio is highest in Bastar Lok Sabha constituency. There are 1086 female voters out of total 1000 male voters here. Women of Chhattisgarh are playing a strong and important role not only as voters but also in election work. Similarly, the responsibility of conducting the entire election

in a free, transparent and fair manner has been given to the disabled and youth polling parties.

Voting for Lok Sabha elections-2024 will be held in three phases in the state. To ensure 100 per cent voting, a total of 24,229 polling stations have been set up in the state. Of these, there are 3320 polling stations where only women polling personnel will conduct the voting. All four members of the team will be women. Similarly, 90 dis-

Lok Sabha Elections-2024

abled and 387 youth polling stations have been created. Similarly, 450 model polling centers are also being built in the state, where only youth polling personnel will work.

In the first phase, where elections are to be held in Bastar Lok Sabha constituency, the state has the highest voter gender ratio. Here out of 14 lakh 72 thousand 207 voters, there

are 7 lakh 71 thousand 679 women voters which is 52 percent of the total voters. Out of total 1961 polling stations in Bastar, 191 Sangwari polling stations have been created. At the same time, 36 youth and 08 disabled polling stations have been earmarked. The way women officers and employees have courageously decided to complete the election work in a remote and Maoist affect-

ed area like Bastar is an inspiration for other women.

Apart from women voters and polling parties in the state, a large number of women officers and employees of the state are participating in the elections. Those who have been entrusted with the responsibility of peacefully conducting the elections being held in three phases in the state are also women. Women officers and employees are participating in large numbers for

the extensive preparation of the election and its successful conduct. The responsibility of successful conduct of election work in the state also rests on the shoulders of the senior woman IAS officer. Apart from these, 13,500 women polling personnel including 01 Returning Officer and 17 Assistant Returning Officers are also included. Apart from the 3320 presiding officers in the polling team, the assistant presiding officers are fully engaged in conducting the

elections smoothly in the state. In the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, apart from the CEO, women are working with full dedication in many departments including Assistant Chief Electoral Officer, Joint Director and Deputy Director. Most of the people working in the Media Monitoring Cell are women, while in the State Level Media Certification Committee, women officers are carrying out the election work very efficiently.

LS Polls: Nomination for 3rd Phase from 12th Apr

Four candidates with criminal antecedents in fray in Bastar, Rajnandgaon, Mahasamund and Kanker

Raipur, Apr 09:

The nomination for third phase of Lok Sabha elections 2024 in Chhattisgarh will begin on April 12, 2024. Withdrawal of nomination papers for three Lok Sabha constituencies - Rajnandgaon, Mahasamund and Kanker in the second phase was done till April 8, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer Vinay Agrawal said here today.

As many as 11 candidates are in fray in Bastar constituency while 15 candidates including two women are in fray in Rajnandgaon constituency. As many as 17 candidates including one



Deputy Chief Electoral Officer Vinay Agrawal briefing press.

woman are in fray in Mahasamund Lok Sabha

constituency whereas 9 candidates are in fray in Kanker Lok Sabha constituency. Moreover 4 out of total 52 candidates who are in fray in all those four Lok Sabha constituencies have criminal antecedents.

Total 52,84,938 voters including 26,79,528 women and 60 third gender people will exercise their franchise in second phase of Lok Sabha election in Rajnandgaon, Mahasamund and Kanker constituencies. The total number of polling centres for second phase is 6567 which includes 2 auxiliary polling centres. Moreover the number of 'Divyang' voters in the second phase is 51,306.

SSSSH complete 30000 totally free Child Heart Surgeries & Interventions

Nava Raipur, Apr 09:

The memorable milestone of performing 30,000 Child Heart Surgeries and interventions Totally Free of Cost was completed on Ugadi the 9th April 2024.

The First Sanjeevani Centre opened in Nava Raipur Chhattisgarh on 23 November 2012 and the first girl operated for ASD closure Ms Kirti Verma by renowned Cardiac Surgeon Dr Sampath Kumar. Kirti handed over the Gift of Life to 7 year old Sonali Vishwakarma, operated by Cath Intervention for PDA, from Azamgarh Uttar Pradesh PDA Device Closure in the presence of Dr Raman Singh Former Minister, Chattisgarh and now Speaker Chattisgarh Assembly. Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Team led by



Chairman Dr C Sreenivas were present on this occasion. Speaking on this occasion, Dr. Raman Singh said, "30,000 surgeries is a remarkable achievement. There will be no other Hospital in the world like

Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital rendering totally-free of cost quality paediatric cardiac services. Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital is the Modern Temple and will be remembered as one of the 5

most significant achievements of the Chhattisgarh State. I am fortunate to be associated with such a unique initiative. Perhaps, Bhagwan Sathya Sai Baba chose me as an instrument / medium for his mission in Chhattisgarh."

Recalling his first visit to Chhattisgarh meeting with Dr. Raman Singh in July 2011; Dr. Sreenivas said that 30,000 surgeries is a matter of immense satisfaction to him. He gave credit for this marvelous feat to the Trustees, Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani family members and most importantly the parents of the patients who came to the Hospitals with unmitigable faith and belief."

Dr. Sreenivas concluded by saying that we have a long way to go because of our motto being Serving the Unseen by Reaching the Unreached.

Children learn diverse Arts and Culture

At Happy Hearts Kids Academy Summer Camp



Raipur, Apr 09:

Happy Hearts Kids Academy in Bhatagaon, Raipur, has organized a summer camp, introducing children to a variety of creative and educational activities.

The camp offered training in drawing, painting, dance, music, yoga, clay art, and Zumba, taught by the academy's skilled teachers. Each day began

with the national anthem, setting a respectful and patriotic tone for the day's activities.

The festival of Holi was celebrated within the school premises, filling the environment with colours and joy, showcasing the vibrant faces of children covered in colours and Gulal.

The children were also taught about good and bad manners through the

use of posters, banners, and slogans. Remarkably, the camp was offered completely free of charge, including arrangements for the children's lunch without any additional fees. This initiative greatly impressed both the children and their parents, winning their hearts.

On the final day of the camp, a visit to the Ram Temple located on VIP Road was organized to acquaint children with their religion and culture, marking a commendable effort by the academy.

The school principal praised the efforts of all involved and extended gratitude, reflecting the successful conclusion of a camp that was both educational and enjoyable for the children.

CAIT is giving public speaking and leadership training to young businessmen

Raipur, Apr 09:

Youth CAIT Chhattisgarh, the youth wing of Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), the country's largest trade organization, organised a business meet of youth held every month. This important event was held at Chamber Bhawan, Bombay Market. In this important meeting where the young businessmen of Raipur enthusiastically participated. As the keynote speaker in this public speaking and leadership training, renowned motivational speaker Dinesh Agarwal gave the detailed knowledge about public speaking and leadership skills to young businessmen present.

State President of Youth



CAIT Avneet Singh, Working President Deepak Vidhani, General Secretary Amar Dhingani, Working General Secretary Vikrant Rathore, Treasurer Vijay Patel said that this session was well understood and appreciated by a large number of young businessmen. By adopting this style, they can develop their business and skills and give public speeches on the stage. The youth present pledged to add more new young business-

men to the family of this organization. In the event Avneet Singh, Deepak Vidhani, Vijay Patel, Vikrant Rathore, Amit Minocha, Bhaskar Sahu, Raunak Patel, Girish Patel, Dipesh Patel, Ramesh Patel, Hanish M. Chauhan, Sandeep Gupta, Amit Gupta, Samarth Aggarwal, Nikhil Kumar, Rupesh Patel, Ramesh Khodiyar, Rajesh Bihani, Deepesh Lalka, Prakash Joshi, Hardeep Singh, Suresh Vaswani, Harpreet

Singh, Ratandeep Singh, Harsukh Patel, Naresh Makhija, Harish Virani, Paras Damani, Lokesh Sodha, Satish Agarwal, Prakash Makhija, Monesh Sahu, Anil Agarwal and Sopan Agarwal and a large number of young businessmen were present. It is worth noting that Youth CAIT is continuously organising many workshops for young businessmen, thereby working actively to make the youth aware of progress, entrepreneurship and business-

men. The organization is driven towards innovations and is determined to provide guidance to young entrepreneurs for effective leadership and personal growth. Through this meeting, Young CAITs are connecting young businessmen every month. And by doing business with each other they are increasing each other's business.

Motivational speaker Dinesh Agarwal said that we congratulate the youth CAIT members for their progressive work and wish them success in the coming events. We will remain dedicated to working together to support each other in the community and ensure the growth and development of young traders.

SEPARATION OF SERVICE ROAD



The authorities are constructing barrier to keep the traffic of the service road on one-side of the four-lane Ring Road, so as to ensure safe driving on highways.

NIT Raipur's students procure offers from MathWorks and GE healthcare

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 09: National Institute of Technology, Raipur's final year students Animesh Agrawal, Information Technology and Pramil Kesarwani, Electronics and Communication Engineering have received Pre - Placement Offers from an American privately held corporation that specializes in mathematical computing software "MathWorks". Similarly, the final year students Subham Sahu of Electronics and Communication Engineering and Lakshman Mulchandani, Electrical Engineering have received Pre - Placement Offers (PPO) from an American multi-



national medical technology company GE HealthCare. These students were selected through the Internships. Animesh has secured an offer as an Associate in the Engineering Development Group at MathWorks with a total CTC of 25.91 LPA. Animesh had previously interned at MathWorks for two months. Reflecting on his preparation journey, he started exploring coding languages like Java

during 11th and 12th grade, eventually developing a passion for coding. Pramil Kesarwani, soon to embark on the role of Associate in Engineering Development Group at MathWorks, delights in securing the position with an impressive CTC of 25.91 LPA. Subham Sahu, selected through the Edison Development Program (EDP) and later as a Software Development

Engineer (SDE) at GE Healthcare, Bangalore, boasts an impressive CTC of 16 LPA. Lakshman Mulchandani, destined for a full-time role in the Edison Engineer Development Program at GE Healthcare, expresses his gratitude for securing an offer amidst a recession. The role is equivalent to that of a Software Development Engineer, offering an attractive CTC of 15.11 LPA.

IADVL organises CME on 'Crosstalk- Allergy & Immunology'

Raipur, Apr 09:

Indian Association of Dermatology, Venereology & Leprosy (IADVL) of Chhattisgarh state has organised a CME 'Crosstalk - Allergy & Immunology' at a private hotel on Sunday morning by President IADVL CG , Dr. Pooja Pandey



(Professor & Consultant Dermatology, Bhilai) and Secretary ,Dr.Samdrunil Sinha (Consultant Dermatology, Raipur) for doctors of IADVL CG association which was attended by lot of eminent doctors all over from state . Dr. Vikrantsaoji (Professor &Senior consultant, Nagpur) was invited who presented & discussed about the latest update on treatment & gave practice pearls for providing best treat-

ment outcome for patients suffering with high prevalence rate of a disease called "urticaria" seen amongst all age groups. CME Event was also enlightened by some experienced faculty who discussed their viewpoints in this field (Allergy & immunology) by Dr. Roshan Rathore (Pt JNMCC, Chest Physician, Raipur),Dr. Kanika Rai (ENT, RIMS, Raipur),Dr. Satyaki Ganguly (Prof Skin Dept, AIIMS, Raipur), Dr. Neel Prabha (Asst Prof, Skin dept, AIIMS, Raipur), Dr. Ripudaman Arora (Asso.Prof, AIIMS ENT ,Raipur), Dr. Dennis Henry (Bilaspur), Dr.

Lizaborah (RIMS,Raipur), Dr. Akash Majumdar (Raipur). Program was attended & graced by lot of senior doctor delegates from all over Chhattisgarh who appreciated, enjoyed interacting & discussing about Allergic cases dealt on daily basis with each other like Dr. Shailendra Singh (Raipur),Dr. Sanjay Mukhi (Raipur),Dr. Bharat Singhania (Raipur), Dr. Atul Mohankar (Raipur), Dr. Neha Sori (Raipur), Dr. Mayank Sinha (Raipur), Dr. Nivedita Rathod (Raipur), Dr S Madhub (Dhamtari), Dr Sonkar (Dhamtari), Dr. Daniel Henry (Bilaspur) etc.

Automobile sector gets big boost in Chhattisgarh

Raipur, Apr 09:

In Chhattisgarh, the speed of automobiles is rising quickly. In the three months leading up to March of this year, the state saw the sale of 1,71,512 automobiles. Compared to the first three months of previous year, this sale is 25% greater.

According to reports, the state sold 59,723 cars in March alone, a 30.43 percent increase over the same month in 2023. In the state, more than 5.50 lakh automobiles were sold in 2023. Information indicates that in January of this year, 57,810 vehicles were sold in the state, compared to 46,638 in January of 2023. 53,979 cars were sold in February of this



year in a similar manner whereas 42,001 automobiles were sold in the state in February 2023. This year, the state's car sales are rising dramatically each month. It is notable that the state saw a record-breaking 91 thousand automobile sales in November 2023. Booking of vehicles has already started for Panchami, Ashtami and Navami before Navratri starting from April 9. Consumers

are booking their favorite vehicles. Companies have also started their offers. Traders said that the biggest reason behind the increase in the speed of automobiles is the attractive schemes of finance companies. These days, consumers can get their favorite car financed with minimum down payment of 85 to 90 percent. Along with this, attractive offers are given by automobile companies.

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TMC leaders end protest at Delhi's Mandir Marg police station

AAP extends support**New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTI):**

Raising slogans against the BJP, Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders ended their 24-hour protest at the Mandir Marg police station here on Tuesday evening, a day after they were detained while staging a dharna outside the Election Commission's office.

Leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party, including Saurabh Bharadwaj and Dilip Pandey, met with the protesting TMC leaders who camped overnight at the police station to extend support.

The TMC leaders on Monday met with the full bench of the Election Commission (EC) and urged the poll body to change the heads of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI),



Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders, who were detained by Delhi Police while staging a dharna outside the Election Commission's office, shout slogans during their protest at Mandir Marg police station, in New Delhi, Tuesday.

National Investigation Agency (NIA) and income-tax (I-T) department, alleging that they are acting at the behest of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the Centre.

Later, the 10-member delegation of the party, including Derek O'Brien,

Mohammed Nadimul Haque, Dola Sen, Saket Gokhale, Sagarika Ghose, MLA Vivek Gupta, former MPs Arpita Ghosh, Santanu Sen and Abir Ranjan Biswas and the party's West Bengal students' wing vice-president Sudip Raha, announced

that they were sitting on a 24-hour dharna.

The delegation urged the commission to ensure a level-playing field in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls and stop the "misuse" of central agencies against opposition parties and leaders.

The leaders were asked to disperse by the police, but as they continued their protest, the security personnel forcibly evicted them and detained them.

They were made to board a bus, which O'Brien said drove around for about an hour and a half, after which they were taken to the Mandir Marg police station, where they decided to continue their protest.

Police, however, said the TMC leaders were released on Monday night but they stayed put at the police station throughout the night and continued their dharna.

GUDI PADWA PRAYERS



Maharashtra Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, actor Prajakta Mali and others offer prayers during the Gudi Padwa festival, in Nagpur, Tuesday.

17 rare Telia Fish sold for Rs 18 lakh

Paradip, Apr 09:

Telia fish in Paradip of Odisha was sold for Rs. 18 lakh in Paradip port area said reliable reports on Tuesday. A few fishermen from Paradip area of Odisha had caught a huge number of these rare telia fish from the deep sea.

As per reports, a few fishermen from Paradip area had ventured to the sea yesterday night when a huge number of these rare fish fell in the fishing net. Later it was found to be more than three quintal in weight. A total of 17 fish were caught.

The fishermen later took it to the auction area and these 17 fish were auctioned off at a whopping price of Rs. 18 lakh. There were many takers for the telia fish in Paradip and thus it was auctioned. A



company bought off these fish for Rs. 18 lakh. The intestines of the rare Telia fish is sold at high prices because it is used to manufacture drugs. According to sources, the Telia fish also contains a lot of maw, from which drugs are made which can also be sold abroad.

The fishermen said that such giant haul of Telia fish is very rare. And the fishermen who catch these fish becomes wealthy with just one catch.

'India likely to record normal monsoon this year'

New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTI):

India is likely to experience a normal monsoon this year, private weather forecasting agency Skymet said on Tuesday and predicted more rainfall in the second half of the season.

Scientists at the India Meteorological Department (IMD) have also detected early signs of a favourable monsoon season this year with fading El Nino conditions and reduced snow cover over Eurasia. The Met office will issue a monsoon forecast later this month.

However, normal cumulative rainfall does not mean uniform temporal and spatial distribution of rain across the country, with climate change further increasing the variability of the rain-bearing

system. Climate scientists say the number of rainy days is declining while heavy rain events -- more rain over a short period -- are increasing, leading to frequent droughts and floods.

Skymet said the upcoming monsoon is expected to be "normal", accounting for 102 per cent (with an error margin of 5 per cent) of the long-period average (LPA) of 868.6 mm for the four months from June to September.

Rainfall between 96 per cent and 104 per cent of the LPA is considered normal.

Skymet expects sufficiently good rains in the south, west, and northwest regions. The core monsoon rain-fed zones of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh will receive adequate rainfall.

SKYMET FORECAST



FILE PHOTO

However, the eastern states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal are at risk of deficit rainfall during the peak monsoon months of July and August. Northeast India is likely to observe less than normal rains during the first half of the season.

According to Jatin Singh, the managing director at Skymet, "El Nino is swiftly flipping over to La Nina. And, monsoon

circulation tends to be stronger during La Nina years."

"Also, the transition from Super El Nino to strong La Nina has historically tended to produce a decent monsoon. However, the monsoon season may start with a risk of impairment, attributable to the remnant effects of El Nino. The second half of the season will have an overwhelming edge over the primal phase," he said.

India received "below-average" cumulative rainfall - 820 mm compared to the long-period average of 868.6 mm -- in 2023, an El Nino year. Before 2023, India recorded "normal" and "above-normal" rainfall in the monsoon season for four years in a row.

El Nino conditions -- periodic warming of surface waters in the central Pacific Ocean -- are associated with weaker monsoon winds and drier conditions in India.

IMD officials earlier this month said La Nina conditions, associated with a favourable monsoon in India, are likely to set in the second part of the season.

Three large-scale climatic phenomena are considered for forecasting monsoon season rainfall. The first is El Nino, the

second is the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), which occurs due to differential warming of the western and eastern sides of the equatorial Indian Ocean, and the third is the snow cover over the northern Himalayas and the Eurasian landmass, which also has an impact on the Indian monsoon through the differential heating of the landmass.

A preliminary forecast of a positive IOD this season will work in tandem with La Nina for better monsoon prospects, Skymet said.

Nonetheless, the start of the season is expected to be aberrated due to the quick transition from El Nino to La Nina. Also, the rainfall distribution is likely to be diverse and inequitable for the season as a whole, it said.

Odisha's Silk city to witness a battle between two turncoats

In Lok Sabha election**Berhampur, Apr 09 (PTI):**

This southern Odisha town in Ganjam district which is also known as the silk city of Odisha will witness a battle between two turncoats in the Lok Sabha elections.

The ruling Biju Janata Dal headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has fielded Bhruagu Baxipatra, who till last week was vice president of the BJP Odisha unit while the BJP has put up Pradeep Panigrahy, who was expelled from the BJD, as its nominee for the Berhampur Lok Sabha constituency.

Panigrahy, a three-time MLA from Gopalpur Assembly constituency was once a close aide of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and even looked after the Ganjam district affairs of the regional party, before being expelled from the BJD.

The Congress has fielded Rashmi Ranjan Patnaik for the Berhampur Lok Sabha constituency.

The Berhampur Lok Sabha constituency was once a strong citadel of the Congress and even Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao had won the Berhampur Lok Seat seat in the 1996 elections.

Ganjam district has been a BJD bastion since 2009. The district is also the home district to Naveen Patnaik's Assembly constituency, Hinjili. BJD has won 12 of the 13 Assembly seats in the district in 2019 elections.

The fight for the Berhampur Lok Sabha seat will be mainly between two turncoats Bhruagu Baxipatra of BJD and Pradeep Panigrahy of the BJP though the Congress nominee is also in the fray.

Panigrahy was expelled from the

BJD on charge of "anti-people activities" and was also arrested on alleged corruption cases by the Naveen Patnaik government.

The BJP candidate in his public meetings is telling the people 'Etha ra Leka Chhi Da e Deba' (This time will end the chapter). The Gopalpur MLA is asking the electorate the end their inclination towards Naveen Patnaik, who he accused of running the government through outsourcing manner.

Panigrahy is also trying to invoke Ganjam sentiment among the people as his rival Baxipatra's activities were mostly confined to the neighbouring Rayagada district before moving to Ganjam in 2019.

To defeat Panigrahy, BJD has picked up BJP's former Berhampur nominee Baxipatra with the sole intention of capturing a certain por-

tion of saffron votes. Both parties are fighting hard to win the Berhampur Lok Sabha seat, which is considered the gateway to southern Odisha.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's close aide and BJD leader VK Pandian in a meeting in Bhubaneswar on Sunday appealed to people to vote for the Conch symbol of the regional party.

"Please do not see who is a candidate. The chief minister is contesting in all the 147 assembly seats and 21 Lok Sabha constituencies," Pandian said appealing to people to look at Patnaik and Conch symbol alone while going to vote.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections BJD candidate Chandrasekar Sahu had won the Berhampur Lok Sabha by 94,000 votes defeating his BJP opponent Bhruagu Baxipatra. Apart from voters, the party work-

ers of both the political parties at the grassroots level also seem to be confused. "We have to campaign for the candidate whom we had strongly opposed last time (2019 LS election)," said a BJD worker from Ganjam district.

The seven Assembly constituencies under the Berhampur Lok Sabha seat are - Chhatrapur, Gopalpur, Berhampur, Digapandi and Chikita in Ganjam district and Mohana and Parlakhemundi in neighbouring Gajapati district. Of the seven, five seats in Ganjam district are held by the ruling BJD while Mohana and Parlakhemundi are represented by Congress and BJP respectively in the Assembly.

Berhampur Lok Sabha seat will go to polls along with three other Lok Sabha constituencies Nabarangpur, Koraput and Kalahandi on May 13.

One lakh students send postcards to parents to vote

Guwahati, Apr 09 (PTI):

One lakh students of Assam's Kamrup district on Tuesday wrote postcards to their parents, urging them to exercise their voting rights in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

The campaign 'Maa-Deutalo Votdanor Ahbaan' (appeal to mother-father to vote) by the Kamrup Election District is targeted to ensure 100 per cent voter turnout when polling will be held in the district in the third phase on May 7.

"We are hopeful of an emotional impact generated by the children appealing directly to their parents as it makes the adults answerable to the future generation," Kamrup district commissioner Keerthi Jalli said.

As part of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, one lakh students from class 8 to 12 from 526 educational institutions across the district wrote postcards, beseeching their parents to cast their ballots on election day for their better future, more participative democracy and growth of India.

"I remember writing letters to friends as an assignment in school. It used to be an exercise we all looked forward to. The nostalgic joy associated with receiving a stamped letter in your name from a postman is unparalleled," she added.

The postcards will be posted with cooperation of the postal department so that they reach the parents within 15 days.

The postcards have been stamped with 'Kamrupa' and 'Luit', the black soft-shell turtles which are election mascots of the district.

Upon receipt of the letter, students will be encouraged to upload selfies with their parents and the postcards. Jalli said the writing exercise is important to inculcate the value of writing letters for a generation most accustomed to computers and phones. As the students are from high schools, these children will always remember this message of need to vote and as they grow into their adulthood, they would carry on their democratic duties by casting their votes on time, Jalli, also the district election officer, said.

BOOK RELEASE



NSA Ajit Doval (C) with Vivekanand International Foundation Director Arvind Gupta (R) and Chairman S Gurumurthy releases a 11-volume book series 'History of Ancient India', at the Vivekanand International Foundation in New Delhi, Tuesday.

EC notice to Cong's Surjewala for remarks on Hema Malini

New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTI):

The Election Commission on Tuesday issued a show-cause notice to Congress leader Randeep Surjewala for his alleged "undignified, uncivilised and vulgar" remarks against BJP MP Hema Malini.

Moving a step further, the poll body also sought a response from Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on the steps taken to ensure strict compliance with its advisories on upholding the honour and dignity of women during public discourse by its leaders.

Both have been asked to submit their responses to the Election Commission. While Surjewala has been asked to respond by April 11 evening, Kharge has been given time till the following evening. In a video posted by BJP IT

department head Amit Malviya on X, Surjewala was seen purportedly making some objectionable remarks about the actor-politician while attacking the ruling BJP. The BJP moved the EC against the Congress general secretary for his "vulgar, sexist and disparaging public utterances" against Hema Malini while campaigning in Haryana. However, Surjewala has said the undated video was edited and distorted and he never intended to insult or hurt the BJP MP.

In its notice, the EC told Surjewala that on careful examination, the comments were found to be "highly undignified, vulgar and uncivilised" and to be prima facie violative of the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct and the poll panel's advisory issued to parties last month.

UCO BANK Zonal Office, Chhattisgarh Eye Hospital Campus, 1st Floor, Telibandha, Raipur (C.G.) 492006

PREMISES REQUIRED

Bank desires to take premises on rent having 800-1000 sq. ft. of carpet area on Ground Floor in Jashpur (CG) city area for shifting of its existing branch.

The details may be collected from Bank's Jashpur Branch or can be downloaded from our Bank's website www.ucobank.com The application in sealed cover in prescribed format is to be submitted at the Jashpur Branch/Zonal Office, Raipur by 16.04.2024.

ZONAL HEAD

Maa Karma Jayanti celebrated ceremoniously in Deori

Khairagarh, Apr 09:

A grand event of Shiromani Maa Karma Jayanti celebration was held on Saturday in the village Deori situated in Vananchal in collaboration with the regional Sahu Samaj Chichka and the village unit Sahu Samaj Deori. District Sahu Samaj President Tishwar Sahu was present as the chief guest in the said program.

District Panchayat Chairman Ghamman Sahu and District Panchayat Chairman Viplav Sahu were present as chief guests in the program, while Tehsil Sahu Sangh President Girdhari Sahu presided over the



function. Executive President of Tehsil Sahu Samaj Yadu Kumar Sahu, District Sahu Samaj General Secretary Nunkaran Sahu, Tehsil Sahu Union Secretary Gopal Sahu, Tehsil Sahu Union Treasurer Bhagat Sahu, Tehsil Sahu Union Patron Parmanand Sahu,

and Patron Amar Singh Sahu were present as special guests.

The chief guest in the program, District President of Sahu Samaj, Tishwar Sahu, said that Saint Maa Karma worked for the upliftment of all sections including the Dalits and the exploited

victims and worked in the interest of the entire society. District Panchayat Chairman and former Tehsil President of Sahu Samaj, Ghamman Sahu, who was present as the chief guest in the program, said that Maa Karma's invaluable contribution to the entire society can never be forgotten.

District Vice President of Journalist Association, Yahiya Niazi said that not only the Sahu community but the entire society will never forget the sacrifice that Maa Karma, the family deity of the Sahu community, has made for her society. Hundreds of members, villagers and others were present.

Addl Collector inspects evaluation process

At Dr. Padumlal Punnalal Bakshi School**Khairagarh, Apr 09:**

Additional Collector Prem Kumar Patel here inspected the ongoing evaluation work at Dr. Padumlal Punnalal Bakshi School, which is board examination evaluation center, and gave necessary guidelines to the officials and evaluator. It may be noted that the evaluation of answer sheets of class 10th and 12th is being done from March 23 in the evaluation center set up in Bakshi School.

During the inspection, the Additional Collector reached all the evaluation



rooms and took information from the examiners about the answer sheets prepared subject wise so far and the difficulties being faced in the evaluation work. He directed to

speed up the evaluation work and issue show cause notices to the absent examiners, on which BEO Neelam Rajput directed the Principal to issue letters to relieve them, while

the examiners who were absent without reason were advised to issue show cause notices and to increase the number of valuers.

Evaluation center in-charge Roshan Lal Verma said that the evaluation work will be completed by April 14 and as per the instructions of the Board of Secondary Education, bonus marks are being given to the questions filled with errors. During the inspection of the evaluation center, evaluation center officer Roshan Lal Verma, assistant officer Kiran Singh, Rashmi Khare, Sunil Kumar Guni, Sanjay Srivastava, Pukeshwar Nishad and the evaluating teachers were present.

Navratri begins in Bazaar Ataria

**Nathela Mahotsav to be organized****Bazaar Ataria, Apr 09:**

Preparations of Navratri has finally culminated in the region, with the beginning of the Hindu New

Shri Nathela Temple Committee told that every year Nathela Mahotsav is organized on a large scale during Navratri festival in Bazaar Ataria and this year too, on the auspicious occasion of Navratri, Nathela Mahotsav will be organized on 15th April in which Chhattisgarh's super star Jas singer Master Sunil Sihore of Shankar Bhola Bhandari Fame and team will present a program.

Apart from this, programS will be presented by famous artists of Chhattisgarh Indrani Verma, Suman Tandon and Dinesh Verma. This year, 342 Manokamana Jyots have been lit by the devotees and it is believed that whatever devotee lights the lamp here, Lord Nathela fulfills all his wishes. Apart from this, fair, swing and selfie zone will be the center of attraction on this day, while on Ashtami, 16th April, there will be a program of light immersion in the night.

Officers, employees and security forces to get free treatment

For Lok Sabha Election-2024**Korea, Apr 09:**

As per the instructions of the Election Commission, services of various levels of officers and employees from various departments have been deployed to complete the election work and Public Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Chhattisgarh has provided free medical check-up in all the government hospitals of the state for the health facilities of officers, employees and Central Security Forces personnel assigned for election work and an order has been passed for the same.

Apart from Shri Balaji Hospital, Mova, Raipur, Shri Narayana Hospital, Devendra Nagar, Raipur, Ramakrishna Care Hospital, Pachpedi Naka,

Raipur, the state of Chhattisgarh has been authorized to provide free medical treatment in case of emergency or non-availability of facilities in government hospitals in the district. There will be also treatment facilities at Care Hospital, Hyderabad and Apollo Hospital, Visakhapatnam.

In case of need in the above mentioned hospitals, treatment facilities for government, non-government officers, employees and security forces and staff involved in election work are not available in the government hospitals of the district, through the district administration through the State Nodal Agency, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, referrals will be made to these hospitals by the Chief Minister Health Insurance Scheme and Directorate of Health Services.

Development of society possible through political participation: Patel

Rajim, Apr 09:

The statue of Mahatma Jyotimba Phule Mata Savitri Phule, was unveiled here under the auspices of Ambargarh Chowki Raj, in a ceremonial function. The Chief Guest of the program was State General Secretary, Gariaband District President Somnath Patel and on the said occasion, he addressing the gathering, said that Marar community has a glorious history, King Emperor Chandragupta and the first teacher in India, a great social reformer, is from our community, who chose public service as their path.

He also said that along with this, the youth of the society were also asked to participate openly in politics along with education, because politics is very important in the development of society. In the



said program, State Convener Rajendra Nayak Patel, Patron Amar Singh Patel, State Executive President Sunil Patel, State Co-Convenor Pawan Patel, State

General Secretary Lalit Patel, State General Secretary Dr. Ghanshyam Patel, Duleswar Patel, State Deputy Treasurer Bheklhal Patel and others were present.

First training of presiding and polling officers starts from April 12

Lok Sabha Election-2024**Baikunthpur, Apr 09:**

As per the instructions of the Election Commission, for the Lok Sabha elections 2024, the first training of Presiding Officer and Polling Officer-1 has been organized on 12th April and the first training of Polling Officer-2 and 3 has been organized on 13th April at St. Joseph's English Medium School, Baikunthpur. The training will take place from 10 am to 5 pm and the employees who are to be trained have been allotted training room numbers along with employee codes.

Training includes employees from School Education, Co-operation, Health, Commerce and Industry, Forest, Public Health Engineering, Public Works, Board of Revenue,

Planning, Economics and Statistics, Women and Child Development, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, Transport, Panchayat and Rural Development, Urban Administration, Technical Education, Revenue and Disaster Management and Water Resources, Chhattisgarh. Officers and employees of departments like State Civil Supplies Corporation, Mineral Resources, Agriculture, Energy, Horticulture and Field Forestry, Higher Education, Housing and Environment, Ayurveda, Tribal Caste and Scheduled Caste etc. have been made presiding and polling officers. On April 12, 897 officers and employees will receive training in Presiding and Polling Officer-I and on April 13, 711 officers and employees will receive training in Polling Officer-II and III.

One-day yoga camp organized

**At Maa Bamleshwari Shanti Udyan****Dongargaon, Apr 09:**

A one-day yoga camp was organized at Maa Bamleshwari Shanti Udyan in the city on Sunday, April 7 and in the

camp, State In-charge Swami Narendradev, disciple of Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev, gave his dignified presence. The virtues of yoga were taught through asanas in the camp to the crowd and thereafter, a yoga program is being organized

every day from 6 AM, the benefits of which are being taken by the city residents.

Besides, after Yoga Pranayama, a review meeting was held and various committees were formed for the tehsil unit from the trainees pres-

ent, in which Bharat Swabhimana Trust in-charge Sadharam Sahu, Patanjali Yoga Committee in-charge Girish Soni, Patanjali Yuva Bharat in-charge Shashikant Borkar and co-in-charge Raja Rajput, Kisan Seva Samiti in-charge Rakesh Ratnakar, Social Media in-charge K.L. Mandavi and co-in-charge Lakshya Kumar Sahu Yagya in-charge Yugal Kishore Thakur and women in-charge Sarita Sahu, women general secretary Akhileshwari Sahu, organization minister, Payal Kothari, Jai Yadav, Rashi Ratnakar and Indu Sahu was selected.

Patanjali Yoga Samiti District Incharge Panchuram Sahu and General Secretary Alkham Sahu had important contributions in the said program.

AAP conducts fasting condemning CM Kejriwal's arrest

**Kharora, Apr 09:**

Under the national fasting program, local workers of Aam Admi Part fasted at Garden Chowk in Balodabazar in protest against the arrest of Aam Aadmi Party national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Giving the above information, the party district social media in-charge Kamal Mahan said that central agencies are taking malicious action against AAP leaders in the alleged liquor scam of Delhi, whereas Sharad Reddy and Company, known as

the kingpin of the alleged scam, has donated Rs 55 crore to BJP through electoral bonds, is now out of ED proceedings and AAP leaders are in jail.

During the fast, loud slogans were raised against the Central Government and demands were made for the release of CM Kejriwal. District President Jagannath Mahilang, Shyamacharan Sahu, Bhuneshwar Singh Dahria, Dilip Fekar, Kamdev Baghel, Rahul Jangde, Chandulal Sahu, Sukhchand Sahu and party workers participated in the program.

'Student Induction Program' organized

At Pandit Sundarlal Sharma (Open) University**Bilaspur, Apr 09:**

Pandit Sundarlal Sharma (Open) University organized a Student Induction Program on Tuesday, 09/04/2024 for the newly admitted students of the university in the academic session January to December 2024. The ceremony organized in the auditorium of Sirpur Bhawan from 10.30 am started with Saraswati Vandana. Explaining the objective of the program, Prof. Shobhit Bajpai, Director CIQA presented the outline of the event. After which the Registrar of the University, Bhuvan Singh Raj addressed the

learners. Discussing the context of the event, Mr. Raj said that through such events, information is obtained about the subjects in which you are taking admission, the academic system of those subjects and the facilities provided by the university, which is very beneficial for a learner. In his address, he explained the development story of the university in detail. Discussing the objectives of the university, he said that our goal is to spread quality education and knowledge, which the university is fulfilling with excellence.

Addressing the event as the keynote speaker, the Vice Chancellor of Pandit Sundarlal Sharma (Open) University, Bansh Gopal Singh said that our university is committed to pro-



viding modern and quality education to the students. Explaining the difference between other universities and the open university, he said that in the general universities which are becoming modern now, such programs have been running in the open university for the past several years. For example, the choice based credit system is new for other institutions, but it has been

implemented in our university for the past several years. The technology which is commonly used in other educational institutions is being used on a large scale in the open university.

Regarding the university's objective of "Education at your doorstep", he said that wherever you reside in the state's geographical area, you can get education

from us. There is no time commitment for studies here, there is no age limit. You can study anytime, anywhere. He also discussed the important statement of UGC and the government in which they have said that the degrees of a normal university and an open university are equal. There can be no discrimination in placements. He said that the academic leadership of the

open university is a standard for other universities.

After the conclusion of the first session, in the second session, Dr. Shobhit Bajpai, Director, CDOE, gave detailed information about the National Education Policy 2020. Dr. Manish Sao, Controller of Examinations, expressed his views on the university examination and evaluation system. Dr. S. Rupendra Rao, SLM in-charge, informed the learners about the study material. Dr. Bina Singh, Head of Education Department, Dr. M.L. Chandrakar, RSD Coordinator, Dr. Preetirani Mishra, Head, Library and Information Scheduled Caste, Dr. Om Prakash Patel Librarian, Prof. B.K. Soni, Director Science and

Dr. Dhananjay Mishra, Director Life Science, gave detailed information about the courses being conducted, regional centers, library and lab facilities.

Prof. Shobhit Bajpai Director CIQA, Dr. Anita Singh Head Academic Cell, Shri Praveen Toppo gave information about academic calendar, assignments and other information. Prof. B.K. Soni Director Science, Prof. Shobhit Bajpai Director School of Commerce and Management, Prof. Chandana Mitra Director Social Sciences, Dr. Santosh Bajpai Director Education, Dr. Hiralal Sharma Director Humanities, Dr. Dhananjay Mishra Director School of Life Sciences, Dr. Pushkar Dubey Head of

Management, Shri Resham Lal Pradhan Head of Computer Science gave detailed information about students' counselling, help desk, feedback, fee refund policy and web portal.

Dr. M.L. Chandrakar, Coordinator of Regional Division, gave detailed information regarding training, placement, scholarship, internship. After which Professor Shobhit Bajpai answered various queries and questions of the students. At the end of the program, the Registrar of the University Bhuvan Singh Raj gave a vote of thanks. During this, academic and non-academic officers, employees and more than 4000 learners working in the university were present through online and offline medium.

Pakistan deploys more than 100,000 police and paramilitary forces ahead of Eid al-Fitr

Islamabad, Apr 09 (AP):

Pakistani authorities have deployed more than 100,000 police and paramilitary forces at mosques and marketplaces across the country ahead of the massive Eid al-Fitr holiday, officials said Tuesday. Eid al-Fitr, which means feast, will be celebrated in Pakistan on Wednesday, subject to sighting of the moon. The three-day holiday marks the end of Ramadan, Islam's holy month of fasting. Though attacks during Eid are rare in Pakistan, intelligence agencies alerted the Interior Ministry that militants could use the holiday to target civil-

ians, government and military buildings, and compounds housing police, officials said. The country has witnessed a surge in militant attacks in recent years, mostly claimed by Pakistani Taliban and separatists who mainly operate from the southwestern Baluchistan province. Security was also being beefed up at places where high-profile personalities are expected to say their Eid prayers. Taliban spokesperson for the Interior Ministry Abdul Mateen Qani said forces were fully alert to ensure security during Eid al-Fitr in Afghanistan. He said security forces

will be deployed in all crowded areas, including mosques. In addition, the police chief office in the capital, Kabul, has requested that citizens avoid setting off fireworks or otherwise disturbing the peace. Abdullah Khan, a senior defense analyst and managing director of the Islamabad-based Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, said he had no specific information about possible attacks, but "militants can hit soft targets, as people in a large number say their Eid prayer at mosques and open places." On Tuesday, people were shopped as usual at vari-

ous markets, with women buying bangles, jewelry and clothes for themselves and their children. More than 52,000 police were being deployed at mosques as part of a security plan under which about 8,000 police were sent to sensitive places and markets in the provincial capital Lahore, according to a statement issued by Punjab police. Punjab is the country's most populous province and the home city of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who was elected in March by lawmakers in Pakistan's National Assembly despite protests and allegations that the election was rigged.



OVERCROWDED FERRY
A makeshift ferry overcrowded with residents reportedly fleeing a cholera outbreak sank off Mozambique's northern coast on Sunday, killing at least 98 people including children.

US Indo-Pacific Commander 'very, very concerned' about Chinese aggression in South China Sea

Melbourne, Apr 09 (AP):

The head of the US Indo-Pacific Command said on Tuesday that he was "very, very concerned" about China's aggression toward Philippine forces near disputed islands in the South China Sea. The Chinese coast guard has repeatedly clashed with Philippine patrol vessels near the Philippines-occupied Second Thomas Shoal. Last month, several Filipino seamen were injured when a Chinese vessel sideswiped a smaller Philippine vessel and another two Chinese coast guard ships used high-pressure water spray to shatter the Philippine vessel's windscreens. Asked if the submerged reef in the Spratly Islands

was the most dangerous flash point in his area of command, US Adm John Aquilino told a forum at the Lowy Institute, a Sydney-based international policy think tank: "I'm very concerned about what's happening at the Second Thomas Shoal." "I'm very, very concerned about the direction it's going," Aquilino said. "These actions are dangerous, illegal and they are destabilising the region." "What's next and how far are they willing to go in that area?" Aquilino asked. The United States, Japan, the Philippines and Australia held their first four-way joint exercises in Philippine waters in the South China Sea on Sunday, which they said were intended to uphold

freedom of navigation and overflight in a region contested by China. Aquilino said the joint exercise demonstrated the nations' ability to operate safely, effectively and lawfully in the region. "Those types of events and things are exactly what we need to do to demonstrate that strength amongst the like-minded allies and partners and that we will continue to operate anywhere that international law allows," Aquilino said. China's military said Sunday that it had conducted air and sea patrols and that all activities that "disrupt the South China Sea" are under control, an apparent response to naval exercises by the US and its allies.

Status of Ukrainian nuclear plant occupied by Russia is 'extremely serious'

● UN atomic watchdog

Kyiv, Apr 09 (AP):

An explosion caused by an alleged drone attack at Europe's largest nuclear plant in Ukraine on Tuesday posed no direct threat to its safety but underscored the "extremely serious situation" at the facility that repeatedly has been caught in the war's crossfire, the UN's atomic watchdog agency said. The International Atomic Energy Agency said its team was aware of an explosion at a training centre next to the plant. It said it was "informed" the blast was from a drone attack. The IAEA, announcing the incident on

the social platform X, gave no further details but its information presumably came from Russians occupying and running the plant since the early stages of the war. The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant is one of the 10 biggest nuclear plants in the world, and fighting in the southern part of Ukraine where it is located has raised the spectre of a potential nuclear disaster like the one at Chernobyl in 1986, where a reactor exploded and blew deadly radiation across a vast area. Neither side has in recent months been able to make significant advances along the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line crossing eastern and southern Ukraine.

Moroccan activist sentenced to 5 years

● For criticizing country's ties to Israel

Rabat (Morocco), Apr 09 (AP):

An activist who criticized Morocco's decision to normalize relations with Israel was sentenced to five years in prison, as some of the Arab world's largest pro-Palestinian protests continue to sweep the country. Abdul Rahman Zankad of Mohammedia, Morocco was arrested in March after posting on Facebook about the Israel-Hamas war and Morocco's 2020 decision to establish diplomatic ties with Israel, the Moroccan Space for Human Rights said in a statement. A court on Monday found him guilty of insulting a constitution-

al institution and incitement. He was also fined 50,000 Moroccan dirhams (\$5,000). The civil liberty advocacy group, which organizes the legal defense of protesters, called the charges baseless and said the proceedings violated Zankad's right to a fair trial. Tens of thousands of protesters across the political spectrum have taken to the streets in Morocco to denounce Israel and express support for Palestinian groups, including Hamas. The protesters have criticized Israel's allies including the United States and chanted demands for the government to "overturn normalization." Morocco was one of four Arab nations to establish ties with Israel in 2020, as part of the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords, which

led to both the United States and Israel recognizing Morocco's claim over the disputed Western Sahara. Authorities have allowed protests, with few exceptions, including not allowing a recently planned rally at a northern Moroccan university. Some members of parliament have backed their demands. Both the Foreign Ministry and the Royal Palace have issued statements denouncing the war and expressing solidarity for Palestinians in Gaza but not signaled any intent to cut ties with Israel. Morocco's constitution generally allows for freedom of expression, although it is illegal to criticize the monarchy or King Mohammed VI and those who do can face prosecution.

Pakistani Sikh man runs 'Iftar Langar' on Lahore's outskirts

Lahore, Apr 09 (PTI):

For more than two decades, Sardar Jitendar Singh and his family have followed a unique tradition that draws from the principles of their faith - they run 'Iftar Langar' that provides food for poor Muslims during the Ramadan month. Langar is a communal meal offered to visitors to all Gurdwara where all people are treated equally and offered the same food as part of the Sikh community tradition since the times of Guru Nanak. People also offer langar in their private capacity. Singh, a pharmacist, moved to Lahore along with his family from Peshawar where Sikh families started feeling vulnerable because of rising terrorism incidents in which some Sikhs lost their lives in targeted attacks in re-



Sardar Jitendar Singh, a pharmacist and herbal practitioner, who moved to Lahore along with his family from Peshawar about a year ago because of security reasons, with Muslims at an 'Iftar Langar' organised by him for them during the fasting month of Ramadan, in Lahore.

cent years. In Peshawar, Singh, 38, had his pharmacy shop and also practised as a Hakeem (herbal practitioner) before he shifted to Lahore last year. He opened his clinic and started practising here. Since 2000, Singh's fami-

ly has been involved in philanthropic work in Peshawar. "I had to leave my ancestral province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) because of security concerns. However, I did not leave the practice of helping the destitute, especially widows and orphans, in Lahore too," Singh told PTI on Tuesday. This Ramzan, he has arranged 'Iftar Langar' for Muslims in the Burki area, barely half an hour away from Lahore's city centre. "Besides that, we also offer monthly support money, wheel-chair, sewing machines and free ration for the needy," Singh said and added that some affluent people from his community are also contributing by way of money and material donations. He is of the view that he is doing charity work for

the sake of humanity. "Every Sikh has to dedicate one-tenth of his or her income for charity as per the sayings of Baba Guru Nanak. Sewing machines help widows to earn livelihood, while vendor carts are given to the needy to make their living," Singh said. Free ration is provided to the poorest of the poor and on Eid day, Singh also distributes Eidi (Eid money) to poor children of the locality. Singh was born in the Boner district of the Malakand division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province but sometime in the 20th century, his family moved to Peshawar for business and later to Lahore. When asked about the people's response to his and his community's charitable work, Singh just said: "At times some people are surprised to see Sikhs helping Muslims."

EPA mandates reduction of cancer-causing chemical emissions

Washington, Apr 09 (AP)

More than 200 chemical plants nationwide will be required to reduce toxic emissions that are likely to cause cancer under a new rule issued Tuesday by the Environmental Protection Agency. The rule advances President Joe Biden's commitment to environmental justice by delivering critical health protections for communities burdened by industrial pollution from ethylene oxide, chloroform and other dangerous chemicals, officials said. Areas that will benefit from the new rule include majority-Black neighbourhoods outside New Orleans that EPA Administrator Michael Regan visited as part of

his 2021 Journey to Justice tour. The rule will significantly reduce emissions of chloroform and other harmful pollutants at the Denka Performance Elastomer facility in LaPlace, Louisiana, the largest source of chloroform emissions in the country, Regan said. "Every community in this country deserves to breathe clean air. That's why I took the Journey to Justice tour to communities like St. John the Baptist Parish, where residents have borne the brunt of toxic air for far too long," Regan said. "We promised to listen to folks that are suffering from pollution and act to protect them. Today we deliver on that promise with strong final standards to slash pollution, reduce cancer risk and ensure cleaner air

for nearby communities." When combined with a rule issued last month cracking down on ethylene oxide emissions from commercial sterilizers used to clean medical equipment, the new rule will reduce ethylene oxide and chloroform emissions by nearly 80%, officials said. The rule will apply to 218 facilities spread across Texas and Louisiana, the Ohio River Valley, West Virginia and the upper South, the EPA said. The action updates several regulations on chemical plant emissions that have not been tightened in nearly two decades. Democratic Rep. Troy Carter, whose Louisiana district includes the Denka plant, called the new rule "a monumental step" to safeguard public health and the environment.

Shipwreck: 38 migrants dead, others go missing off Djibouti

Nairobi, Apr 09: (AP)

The United Nations migration agency says 38 migrants are dead and 22 others have been rescued from a shipwreck off Djibouti on a popular route to Yemen. Rescue teams searched for six other migrants who were thought to be on board, the International Organization for Migration aid Tuesday. Djibouti is the main transit country for migrants trying to reach Gulf nations from Horn of Africa nations such as Ethiopia and Somalia in search of work. Tens of thousands use the route every year. The IOM says the route is dangerous as migrants are targeted by traffickers and can face kidnap, arbitrary arrest and forced recruitment into warring groups, particularly in Yemen.

PROTESTS



Supporters of Rastriya Prajatantra Party, or national democratic party, wave their flags as they take part in a protest demanding a restoration of Nepal's monarchy in Kathmandu, Nepal, Tuesday.

Netanyahu vows to carry out Rafah invasion

Jerusalem, Apr 09 (AP):

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has escalated his pledge to invade the southern Gaza city of Rafah, which is filled with around 1.4 million Palestinians, most of whom are displaced from other parts of the Gaza Strip. "It will happen. There is a date," Netanyahu said in a video statement Monday, without elaborating. The United States, Israel's closest ally, has said a ground operation into Rafah would be a mistake and has demanded to see a credible plan to protect civilians. Netanyahu spoke as Israeli negotiators are in Cairo discussing international efforts to broker a cease-fire deal with the Palestinian militant group Hamas. Israeli troops withdrew Sunday from Khan

Younis, another city in southern Gaza, ending a key phase of the war. Defense officials say they're regrouping ahead of a push into Rafah. Palestinians who visited Khan Younis on Monday said the city is now unlivable, offering them little immediate chance to return. Many have been sheltering in Rafah. The Palestinian death toll from the war has passed 33,200, with nearly 76,000 wounded, Gaza's Health Ministry said. The ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its tally, but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead. The war began October 7, 2023 when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 people hostage.

Many eclipse visitors to northern New England pulled an all-nighter trying to leave

Franconia (US), Apr 09 (AP):

Thousands of visitors to northern New England communities in the path of the total solar eclipse were told to pack their patience for the trip. In some areas, they needed it for up to 12 hours after the event started, inching their way back home on packed interstates and secondary roads. In New Hampshire, travelers were stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic much of the way through about 2 a.m. Tuesday, clogging up southbound Interstate 93. Southbound traffic on Interstate 89 also was heavy Monday evening. Southbound traffic was backed up on U.S. Highway 1 in Houlton, Maine. New England had clear skies and mild weather Monday, making for ideal viewing conditions for totality. In New Hampshire, people flocked to places such as Lancaster, Stewartstown, Colebrook and Pittsburg, near the Canada border.



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Kejriwal's Legal Odyssey

HC Upholds Rule of Law

The verdict by the Delhi High Court regarding the arrest of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the alleged liquor policy scam is a reaffirmation of the foundational principles of justice and accountability in our democracy. While the decision might have political ramifications, it's crucial to view it through the lens of upholding the rule of law, rather than mere political maneuvering. The court's decision to uphold Kejriwal's arrest and dismiss his plea sends a clear message that no one, regardless of their position, is above the law. The allegations against the Chief Minister are grave, involving conspiracy and corruption in the formulation of a now-defunct policy. The court's meticulous consideration of evidence presented by the Enforcement Directorate, including statements from witnesses and documents, underscores the seriousness of the accusations. It's noteworthy that Kejriwal is the first sitting Chief Minister to be taken into custody, emphasizing the importance of accountability at all levels of governance. The court's rebuke of attempts to cast doubt on the judicial process highlights the need to respect the legal framework established over decades to ensure fairness and transparency in our justice system. Critics may argue that the timing of Kejriwal's arrest, just before elections, hints at political motives. However, as the court rightly pointed out, political considerations have no place in a court of law. The matter at hand is a legal one, focusing on allegations of corruption and conspiracy that demand thorough investigation and due process, irrespective of electoral timelines. Furthermore, the dismissal of the petition has prompted a predictable exchange of words between rival political parties. While such discourse is expected in a vibrant democracy, it's essential to steer the conversation towards the core issue: the integrity of our institutions and the imperative of holding public officials accountable for their actions. Kejriwal's incarceration in Tihar Jail underscores the gravity of the allegations against him. Despite assertions of innocence and claims of a political vendetta, the legal process must be allowed to run its course unhindered. The provision of basic amenities and considerations for his health needs in jail demonstrate adherence to humane treatment even in the face of legal proceedings. It's crucial to remember that this case is not merely about one individual or one political party. It's about safeguarding the principles of justice, transparency, and accountability that form the bedrock of our democracy. Upholding the rule of law requires unwavering commitment from all stakeholders, including citizens, political leaders, and judicial authorities. As the legal proceedings continue, it's imperative to maintain faith in the judicial process and refrain from politicizing what is fundamentally a matter of law enforcement. Regardless of the final outcome, the Delhi High Court's verdict serves as a reminder that in the pursuit of justice, no one is exempt from scrutiny, and the rule of law reigns supreme.

Political integrity amidst identity crisis

Yash Pal Raihan



The recent episode surrounding the filing of nomination papers for the Wayanad parliamentary constituency has once again brought to light the existential crisis facing the Congress party. The conspicuous absence of the Congress flag in the procession is not merely an oversight; it is symptomatic of the deeper identity crisis plaguing the party. Over the years, the Congress has struggled to maintain its ideological moorings, wavering from its core principles in the face of political expediency. In an attempt to appease various factions and secure electoral gains, the party has often compromised its commitment to secularism, a cornerstone of its ethos. The decision to eschew party flags, including those of crucial allies like the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), reflects the party's capitulation to political pressures and communal tensions. Rather than standing firm in defense of its allies and principles, the Congress has succumbed to the divisive rhetoric of its opponents, prioritizing short-term gains over long-term integrity. At the heart of this dilemma lies the Congress' struggle to assert its identity in a landscape increasingly dominated by communal politics. Faced with relentless attacks and insinuations from political rivals, the party finds itself torn between the imperative to uphold secular values and the temptation to pander to sectarian interests. The Congress' retreat from its professed policy of secularism, epitomized by its handling of sensitive issues like the Shah Bano case and the Babri Masjid demolition, has eroded its credibility among supporters and emboldened its detractors. By abandoning its ideological moorings, the party risks alienating its traditional base and diluting its moral authority. Moreover, the recent dalliance with questionable alliances, such as the offer of support from the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), underscores the party's descent into political expediency at the expense of principle. Such opportunism not only undermines the Congress' credibility but also compromises the larger cause of secularism and democratic governance. In the face of mounting challenges and internal divisions, the Congress must heed the lessons of history and reaffirm its commitment to its founding principles. Rather than succumbing to the politics of appeasement and expediency, the party must reclaim its mantle as the vanguard of secularism and inclusive governance. As the country grapples with pressing issues of inflation, unemployment, and communal tensions, the need for a strong and principled opposition has never been greater. The Congress must rise above its current identity crisis and articulate a clear and compelling vision for the future—one rooted in the values of secularism, social justice, and democratic governance. In the final analysis, the fate of the Congress party—and indeed, the health of Indian democracy—rests on its ability to stay true to its core principles amidst the tumult of electoral politics. Only by reaffirming its commitment to secularism and inclusive governance can the Congress hope to regain the trust and support of the electorate and fulfill its historic role as the conscience of the nation.

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@editorcentralchronicle@gmail.com.

GUDI PADWA CELEBRATIONS



Children dressed in traditional attire participate in celebrations of 'Gudi Padwa', the Maharashtrian New Year, at Girgaon in Mumbai, Tuesday, April 9.

Commercialization of Education & Mounting Insensitivity Among Teachers

SATISH SINGH



The Vice Principal of a renowned private school in Ahmedabad told the father of class 9 student, who is suffering from epilepsy, "Get her enrolled in the open school, so that she gets free from the bondage of going to school every day and has to go to school only to appear in the exam." In response, the parent of student "X" said, "Madam, in this disease, it is necessary for the child to sleep at least for 9 to 10 hours, otherwise it could trigger an epilepsy attack, therefore, if "X" does not get enough sleep on any particular day, she is not able to go to school, due to this even in the previous schools "X" did not have 75 percent attendance, but no teacher or principal ever gave such objectionable advice, being a teacher how can you say such absurd things, do you not know that doing this can have a negative psychological effect on the child's mind, her overall personality development may also be hampered etc."

Such insensitive and unethical advice cannot be expected from the Vice Principal, that too in front of the sick student, but in the transition period in the education sector, it is difficult to envisage that teachers are sensitive. Now the layer of difference between teacher and butcher is being eroded very fast. Perhaps therefore many children in Kota and

across the country are committing suicide every year. If we are talking about facilities in private schools, hardly 5 percent of the schools have playgrounds. In such a situation, how physically fit will children remain by playing indoor games? Generally, private schools neither have a library nor any first aid facility. Nowadays, counsellors are also being hired in private schools to advise children on various issues, but their usefulness is also under question, as issues related to children are mounting day by day in every school. Today, the cases of drugs addiction of school goers and selling of nude picture & videos of schoolgirls in dark market is also flourishing particularly in metro & big cities, but schoolteachers & managements are doing nothing.

In private schools, an annual fee of Rs.1.0 to 1.5 lakh is being collected from parents right from nursery class & onwards. Bus charges are being taken separately. Parents have to spend money in the name of art and craft and other activities. The standard of education in most of such schools is not up to mark. The infrastructure & academic qualities of many private schools are worse than government schools. Due to low salary of teachers in private schools, inefficient & ignorant teachers are teaching. Even, they are not trained in teaching.

Owing to unemployment, youth are ready to teach in school even at low salary, but their household needs are not met with the salary, on account of this, they have to give tuition. It is easiest to convince the parents of children for tuition. For this, children are taught in school in such a way that they do not understand the topics, even they do not cover entire syllabus. Also, in the annual examination in the high school, 20 marks out of 20 in internal assessment tests, projects, extracurricular activities are given to only those children, who take tuition. This process is not transparent and compliance with the rules by teachers is not ensured.

Because of the desire to earn huge money, 40 to 50 children are taught in a class, in which the number of intelligent children is hardly 4 to 5. Teachers pay attention only to the intelligent children in the class, due to which most of the children's concepts are not clear about the subject. However, it is true that if teachers teach properly & pay attention towards every student in the school, then children will never need to take tuition.

Currently, the school is charging commission on the purchase of pen, pencil, copy, school bag, shoes, socks, dress, book etc. Parents are forced to buy all these from a particular shop so that they can get commission on each item. Private schools pretend to sell books at MRP, as their MRP is many times higher than their actual price.

According to a report by the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE), the total number of schools in India in 2022 was 14.08 lakh, while the number of private schools was around 3.40 lakh. Even though the number of government schools is high, financially strong parents prefer to get enrolled their children in the private schools so that they may become proficient

in English, be able to speak English fluently, gain proficiency in communication skills etc. In this category, financially weak parents are also included, because they feel that their children will become self-reliant by studying in a private school.

If we look at it, such an ecosystem has been created in the country today, in which government schools are being looked down upon. It is believed that only if children study in a private school, their future will be safe & bright. Private schools have understood this weakness of parents very well. They have come to know that parents can go to any extent for the better future of their child, that is, they can pay any price to make the future of the child bright. Therefore, teachers and management of private schools do not leave any prospect to extract money from the parents.

In nutshell, we can say that the level of knowledge of teachers in most private schools is average as qualified & efficient teachers do not like to teach in private schools due to low salaries. Education has become a business, because of which sensitivity and humanity is also disappearing in the temples of education. The aim of school management has become to earn profits instead of imparting knowledge to everyone. Therefore, the aura of private schools across the country is being continuously made bright, attractive, and impressive, so that the common people themselves get attracted towards them.

The appearance of English is still very positive in the Hindi belt of the country. Therefore, common people easily fall prey to the allurements offered by private schools to make their children competent in English and develop their overall personality. School was once called the temple of education, but today it has become a market and, in this market, even after paying huge fees, parents are not able to say anything in front of teachers due to fear.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tragic Incident

The arrest of Jayashree Pandhare, along with her friends, for the murder of Ranjit Rathod has shaken Nagpur. Caught on CCTV, the crime occurred after Rathod allegedly ogled at Pandhare while she smoked. This incident underscores the evolving roles of women, including smoking and committing crimes. Pandhare's actions, resulting from ego and anger, destroyed five lives (four daughters and wife). While Rathod's provocation is noted, resorting to violence is unjustifiable. Such incidents reflect societal complexities and the need for conflict resolution mechanisms. Justice must prevail, ensuring accountability and deterrence. As society grapples with changing gender dynamics, fostering understanding and peaceful resolution becomes paramount.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee, Faridabad

Currency Concerns

Over the past decade, the rupee's value against the dollar has sharply declined. In May 2014, Rs 59.44 equated to one dollar, but today, it requires Rs 83.45. This trend demands serious attention from the ruling government, which must address substantive issues rather than sidestepping them. Merely focusing on GDP growth won't uplift the common person, especially in a country witnessing widening inequality. Inclusive growth strategies, bolstering social sectors, embracing labor-intensive technologies, and ensuring social security are imperative to bridge the glaring wealth gap. It's time for proactive measures to secure a more equitable economic landscape for all.

Sujit De, Kolkata

China's AI Threat

The recent disclosure by Microsoft Threat Analysis Centre (MTAC) regarding China's potential AI-driven election interference rings alarm bells. Though unsuccessful in Taiwan, the risk of such manipulation in democracies like India warrants serious attention. The sophistication of AI-generated content poses a grave threat to electoral integrity. Strengthening cyber defenses and enhancing public awareness are critical to thwarting these covert geopolitical maneuvers. Safeguarding our democratic institutions demands collective vigilance against emerging threats.

MK Nair, Raipur

AI Intrigue: Electoral Risks

Microsoft's recent alert on China's potential AI manipulation in India and the US casts a shadow over democratic processes. Geopolitical stakes heighten the urgency for vigilance against this threat. Despite past failures in Taiwan and South Korea, China's persistent refinement of AI tactics poses a significant risk. MTAC's Clint Watts underscores the gravity of the situation, revealing the insidious methods employed by China. As elections approach, preserving the integrity of our democratic institutions is paramount. Strengthening our defenses against this digital menace is crucial to upholding the principles of free and fair elections.

Ram Kumar Mishra, Raipur

Let Merit Be The Last Word

Kajal Chatterjee

Reservation of seats for the senior citizens and specially-abled in Metro Railway coaches are often equated with caste-based reservation in higher education and job sector right from recruitment to successive promotion process! Senior citizenship and maximum cases of physical challenges are nothing but irreversible phenomenon. Even nature or destiny is conspiring against them! So never will it be possible for them to compete with the general population and grab the seat. Also it would be a Herculean job for them to remain stood on fast moving heavily crowded coaches. So it is nothing but demand of humanity to reserve seats for them. Specially because pursuance of such a policy will arrive as a manna from the heaven for the helpless beneficiaries, that too

without causing hardly any harm to the rest of the population. Now can these humanitarianism of a little bit of reservation for physically vulnerable section of population without discomfoting others be equated with caste-based reservation in higher education and job sector with a shrewd clever eye on cheap electoral vote bank which not only rewards umpteen candidate way down the marks-centred merit list, but also deprive innumerable candidates scoring much better percentage from their entitled seats and jobs? If only a token percentage of seats were allotted as reserved, still it could have been tolerable to a certain extent. But with each passing day percentage of reservation is being increased with the general "privileged" section getting more and more cornered. Also what an eyesore to notice how even many candidates of econom-

ically prosperous families are bagging jobs despite faring worse than their better performing counterparts of poorer economic background. Why? Just because the former is affiliated to "non-privileged" reserved category, the latter being "privileged" non-reserved! Is this justice? In the same vein the former will get promotions after promotions in official sector often rendering their much senior "privileged" non-reserved way behind in career scale! Is this justice? Also often it gets seen that the employees enjoying their quota are much inferior in performance efficiency and sincerity than the general category employees. Yet the former gets rewarded at the expense of the latter! Is this justice? Won't the traits of quality merit efficiency reduced to farce? Won't it affect the overall performance of

the sector thereby dealing an adverse blow to the society. In contrast to the natural degeneration of the senior citizens or physical constraints of the specially-abled; intellect or quality of the common Indian population cannot be graded in terms of caste. We are all the same, being children of the Almighty. Yet when reservation gets zealously demanded in the name of caste by its supporters, benefactors and politicians; only two things can be concluded --- i) they hold absolutely no faith upon the competitive qualities of the "reserved" classes thereby demanding reservations for them and indirectly insulting their intellect or ii) they are merely interested in discovering new castes or groups to bring it under the ambit of reservations only to provide its vote bank a further boost. If this is another name of "social equality", even the Almighty would

not succeed in uniting the society in psychological terms, giving rise to more and more fragmentation. Reserving seats for the "deprived" is as ridiculous as reserving berths in the Indian cricket team for players of Ranji teams like Uttarakhand or Arunachal Pradesh because they fail to make it to the national side! Not only would the performance of the team suffer, it would also mean gross injustice to the eligible players. Similarly national interests indeed get assaulted when ineligible personnel are allowed to don responsible posts at the expense of eligible ones. Let education and books be provided free or at nominal rate to all economically poor people irrespective of caste so that all get established on an absolute equal platform and then let merit do the final talking through free and fair neutral competition.

BRIEF

New MD



New Delhi: Merck India on Tuesday said Dhananjay Singh has taken over as the Managing Director of Merck Life Science in India, in addition to his current position as Head of Science & Lab Solutions Commercial, India. He took over effective April 1, 2024 from Sreenath NS, who is retiring after 36 years of service with Merck in India, the company said in a statement. In his role as the Managing Director, Singh will be responsible for driving the Life Science strategy in India, ensuring governance and compliance alongside other leaders from Merck's businesses in India, it added.

IPO papers

New Delhi: Textile company Raghuvir Exim Ltd has filed preliminary papers with markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO). The fresh capital will be used to fund expansion plans, it said. So far this year, over 30 companies have filed draft IPO papers with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). The company's IPO comprises fresh issue of 1.4 crore equity shares and an offer for sale (OFS) of 45 lakh equity shares by promoter Sunil Agarwal, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP).

Appointment



New Delhi: The government has appointed economist Manoj Panda as a member of the 16th Finance Commission. The 16th Finance Commission, chaired by Arvind Panagariya, has four members. Former expenditure secretary Ajay Narayan Jha and retired bureaucrat Annie George Mathew are full-time members of the commission, while SBI Group Chief Economic Advisor Soumya Kanti Ghosh is a part-time member.

March salary

New Delhi: Edtech firm Think and Learn, owner of Byju's brand, has started paying March salaries to its employees after a delay of nine days and the payout process is expected to complete in next 10 days, according to sources. The company in a communication to employees blamed the group of four investors for the delay. "We are pleased to inform you that salary disbursement has commenced today and will be completed over the next 10 days. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, we haven't yet secured approval to access the rights issue funds, because of the action of four foreign investors.

Airfares jump 20-25 pc amid Vistara woes, high travel demand

New Delhi, Apr 09:



Travellers will have to shell out more for domestic flights this summer season, with airfares surging 20-25 per cent amid Vistara flight cancellations and strong air travel demand, according to industry experts. At a time when peak summer travel period is round the corner, the airline industry is grappling with challenges in scaling up capacity to match demand and are even using larger aircraft on domestic routes.

Faced with pilot woes, Vistara has cut 25-30 flights daily or 10 per cent of its total capacity, a development that comes when the country's airline industry is already operating with reduced number of aircraft due to the bankruptcy of Go First and grounding of over 70 planes by IndiGo over engine issues. An analysis by travel portal ixigo showed

that spot fares on certain routes jumped up to 39 per cent during the April 1-7 period compared to March 1-7 period. During the given period, the one way spot fares for Delhi-Bengaluru flights climbed 39 per cent, while it rose 30 per cent for Delhi-Srinagar flights. The rise was 12 per cent for Delhi-Mumbai services and 8 per cent in case of Mumbai-Delhi services, as per the analysis. Bharatt Malik, Senior VP - Air and Hotel Business at travel portal Yatra Online, said the anticipated average airfare

surge in the current summer schedule, encompassing both domestic and international routes, is projected to range between 20-25 per cent.

"Vistara's decision to reduce flights by 10 per cent has affected ticket prices on major domestic routes. We've observed a significant surge in fares, with prices skyrocketing by approximately 20-25 per cent across key routes such as Delhi-Goa, Delhi-Kochi, Delhi-Jammu, and Delhi-Srinagar," Malik said. He also said that one of the key reasons for the higher

airfares is reduction in flight operations by Vistara and added that escalating fuel costs as well as a heightened demand for summer travel has further contributed to the increase. Vistara is to operate more than 300 flights daily in the ongoing summer schedule that started on March 31.

"We are carefully scaling back our operations by around 25-30 flights per day, i.e. roughly 10 per cent of the capacity we were operating. This will take us back to the same level of flight operations as at the end of February 2024, and provide the much-needed resilience and buffer in the rosters," Vistara said in a statement on Sunday. ixigo said spot fares have surged by 20-25 per cent on some routes due to rising demand before the peak summer travel season and some flight cancellations. "However, this is a temporary disruption caused by

last-minute flight cancellations and fares should stabilise in a few weeks as soon as flight schedules normalise," it said. Jagannarayan Padmanabhan, Senior Director and Global Head, Transport, Mobility, and Logistics Consulting at CRISIL Market Intelligence and Analytics, said the impact of higher airfares on travellers is expected to be substantial.

"As we enter the busy season, we anticipate a 5-7 per cent increase in airfare, with pricing pressure particularly notable on trunk routes like Delhi-Mumbai and Mumbai-Bengaluru. Given that much of the upcoming travel will be for personal reasons and with family, the impact is expected to be substantial. "Consequently, a considerable number of travellers might choose rail travel for shorter distances instead," he noted.

EU carbon tax may have limited impact on domestic primary aluminium producers

New Delhi, Apr 09:

Rating agency Icria on Tuesday said that the proposed European Union's carbon tax may have a limited impact on the domestic primary aluminium producers. The CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) or carbon tax (a kind of import duty) will come into effect from January 1, 2026.

"The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) ruling on exports to the European Union (EU) will have a limited impact on the domestic primary aluminium producers. This is because the present notification covers the financial impact w.e.f January 1, 2026, on direct process-related emission only, while excluding the indirect emission, which contributes 80 per cent to the total emissions in the primary aluminium production process," Icria said in a statement. The indirect emission primarily results from the production of

electricity that is subsequently consumed in the smelting process.

India exported around 0.7 metric million tonnes (24 per cent of exports) of primary aluminium to European countries in FY23. However, unlike steel, the carbon tax is not expected to materially impact the export competitiveness of the domestic primary aluminium players, as the taxes arising from CBAM are likely to remain in the range of USD 50-140 per metric tonne between 2026 and 2034, which would be 2-6 per cent of the current aluminium prices, Jayanta Roy, Senior Vice-President and Group Head, Corporate Sector Ratings, ICRA said. However, in case the indirect emission is also included in future, then the impact would be severe, equivalent to 27-30 per cent of the current aluminium prices, as domestic entities are significantly dependent on the coal-fired power plant for sourcing electricity.

Electric vehicle retail sales grow across segments in FY24: FADA

New Delhi, Apr 09:



Electric vehicle retail sales in India increased last fiscal with all the segments, including passenger vehicles and two-wheelers, witnessing enhanced registrations, according to automotive dealers' body FADA. The overall sales of electric passenger vehicles rose to 90,996 units in 2023-24 as compared to 47,551 units in FY23, registering an increase of 91 per cent. Tata Motors led the segment with registrations of 64,217 units, up 66 per cent over 38,728 units in the 2022-23 financial year. Similarly, registrations of electric two-wheelers rose by 30 per cent to 9,47,087 units in 2023-24 fiscal as compared to 7,28,205 units in FY23. Ola Electric led the space with retail sales of 3,29,237 units, followed by

TVS Motor Company with registrations of 1,82,969 units. Electric three-wheeler retail sales rose 56 per cent to 6,32,636 units last fiscal as against 4,04,430 units in FY23. Mahindra Group retained 60,618 units last fiscal, registering a growth of 69 per cent over 35,916 units in the 2022-23 fiscal. Similarly, retails of electric commercial vehicles rose to 8,571 units last fiscal as against 3,111 units in the 2022-23 financial year, up three-fold over the 2022-23 fiscal. Tata

Motors sold 5,590 units in FY24, followed by JBM Auto with registrations of 530 units. "While the base for EV adoption in India is still expanding, these figures underscore the accelerating shift towards electric mobility and highlight the market's potential for sustainable transportation solutions," Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) President Manish Raj Singhania said.

Markets settle lower after hitting record peaks in intra-day

Sensex breaches 75,000-milestone

Mumbai, Apr 09:

Benchmark equity indices ended marginally lower on Tuesday amid profit-taking after the BSE Sensex breached the historic 75,000-mark for the first time ever in early trade and the Nifty climbed to its fresh peak. Putting a break on its record-breaking rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 58.80 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 74,683.70. During the day, it climbed 381.78 points or 0.51 per cent to reach the all-time peak of 75,124.28. The NSE Nifty dipped 23.55 points or 0.10 per cent to 22,642.75. During the day, it advanced 102.1



points or 0.45 per cent to hit the record peak of 22,768.40. From the Sensex basket, Titan, Reliance Industries, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, UltraTech Cement, Wipro and ITC were the major laggards. ICICI Bank, Infosys, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, Axis

Bank, Bajaj Finance, Nestle and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the major gainers. In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul ended lower. European markets were trading mostly lower. Wall Street ended on a mixed note on Monday.

Skill development plays crucial role in setting up efficient logistics: DPIIT

New Delhi, Apr 08:

Capacity building and skill development play a crucial role in establishing efficient and cost-effective logistics and infrastructure systems, an official statement said on Monday. Speaking at a workshop in Vadodra, Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Rajesh Kumar Singh highlighted on integrating logistics and infrastructure development courses into the curriculum of Central Training Institutes (CTIs), State Administrative Training Institutes (ATIs). It would help officers to better prepare to tackle the complexities of infrastructure development, enhance logistical efficiencies, and contribute significantly to India's economic growth and development agenda.

Housing sales up 68pc in Jan-Mar to nearly Rs 1.1 lakh crore: Report

New Delhi, Apr 09:



Housing sales rose 68 per cent in value terms to nearly Rs 1.11 lakh crore during the January-March period across major cities on higher volumes as well as price appreciation, according to PropTiger.

In its quarterly report 'Real Insight Residential? January-March 2024', real estate brokerage firm PropTiger.com said that housing sales in value terms rose to Rs 1,10,880 crore in the January-March period of this calendar year from Rs 66,155

crore in the year-ago period. Vikas Wadhawan, Group CFO of REA India and Business Head of PropTiger.com, said, "Growth in housing sales both in volume and value terms augurs well for the

overall economy as more than 200 ancillary industries, including cement and steel, are dependent on the real estate sector." In terms of area, housing sales surged 63 per cent to 162 million square feet in the first quarter of this calendar year from 99 million square feet in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Housing sales grew by 41 per cent to 1,20,640 units during January-March 2024 from 85,840 units in the corresponding period of the previous year. "India's housing

market is having a dream run. Sales of residential properties in the top eight primary markets have been growing at a rapid pace, buoyed by robust growth, steadfast mortgage rates, and an escalating desire for homeownership," Wadhawan said.

As investor confidence gradually resurfaces, coupled with robust demand from Non-Resident Indians, he said the trajectory of housing demand appears poised for solid growth, barring any unforeseen spikes in prices.

AI-ENHANCED LAPTOPS



HP India Senior Director (Consumer Sales) Vineet Gehani during the launch of new AI-enhanced gaming and creation laptops, in Bengaluru.

Steel industry says surge in imports 'warning signal' for country's Atmanirbhar mission

New Delhi, Apr 09:



The Indian steel industry has expressed concern over India becoming a net importer of steel in 2023-24, saying it is a "warning signal" for the country which strives to become Atmanirbhar.

As per the steel ministry's Joint Plant Committee, India has registered a 38 per cent surge in imports of finished steel to 8.319 million tonnes (MnT) over 6.022 MnT imported during the preceding 2022-23 fiscal. "The surge in predatory imports from China is a big threat to the Atmanirbharta in steel. The country becoming net importer is a warning sig-

nal to our march towards Atmanirbharta (self-reliance)," Alok Sahay, secretary general of apex industry body Indian Steel Association (ISA) said. Looking at the situation, it is very important to arrest predatory imports, he said and demanded for a trade remedial action on an urgent basis to arrest the in-bound shipments.

CII Southern Region to focus on innovation, regional resilience: Chairperson

Chennai, Apr 09:



The Confederation of Indian Industry, Southern Region would coordinate with state governments and industry and facilitate micro, small, and medium enterprises towards realizing the economic goals, a top official has said.

The industry body would focus on innovation, economic growth, and regional resilience, its Chairperson, R Nandini said here. "We will continue to work closely with the Southern State governments and industry, assisting and facilitating in empowering MSMEs, catalyzing the tier II and III cities across the region, and promoting

sustainable industrial growth in the coming years," she said. Referring to Tamil Nadu's vision to become a USD 1 trillion economy by 2030, she said, "CII SR has chalked out a three-pronged strategy -- to promote Southern States as an attractive in-

vestment destination globally, to work with existing industries for their competitiveness development and help industries follow ESG practices." The CII Southern Region would contribute to Viksit Bharat aimed at transforming India into a fully developed nation by 2047, she said.

"For the Southern Region, the key focus areas are innovation, economic growth, and regional resilience as it stands as a cornerstone of India's economic prowess showcasing a diverse industrial landscape, a skilled labour force, and a robust infrastructure," Nandini who recently assumed the role of Chairperson for 2024-25, said.

Maruti Suzuki expands Manesar plant capacity by 1 lakh units per year

New Delhi, Apr 09:



Maruti Suzuki India on Tuesday said it has expanded the production capacity of its Manesar facility by one lakh units per annum. The auto major has added a vehicle assembly line to the existing Plant-A of the three manufacturing plants functioning at Manesar, in Haryana. "The new vehicle assembly line has the capability to manufacture 1 lakh units per annum," Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) said in a statement. With the additional assembly line, the total manufacturing capability at Manesar stands at 9 lakh vehicles per annum, it added. "We aim to nearly double our

capacity to 4 million vehicles per annum over the next 7-8 years and this capacity addition of 1 lakh vehicles per year is a step towards this goal," MSI Managing Director & CEO Hisashi Takeuchi said. It will help the company serve its customers faster and enhance overall capability to manufacture up to 23.5 lakh units per annum, he added.

Acharya Narendra Dev visits Manohar Gaushala's holistic cow care

Yoga disciple delighted by Kamdhenu's charm

Khairagarh, Apr 09:

Acharya Narendra Dev, esteemed disciple of Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev, graced the serene premises of Manohar Gaushala in Khairagarh on Monday. Coming all the way from Patanjali Yoga Vidyapeeth in Haridwar, his visit was met with profound appreciation for the care bestowed upon Kamdhenu Mata Soumya and her bovine companions.

In awe of the holistic approach towards serving the cows, Acharya Narendra Dev expressed his sentiments, highlighting the rarity of witnessing Govind in the form of



Kamadhenu. "Here, the cows are nurtured with body, mind, and wealth," he remarked, visibly moved by the devotion exhibited at Manohar Gaushala.

Grateful for the opportunity to behold such divine presence, he fervently prayed for the expansion of this noble work worldwide, envisioning a future

where such sanctuaries thrive globally.

Taking note of the unique practices, particularly the garland and mat crafted from cow dung, Acharya Narendra Dev lauded the innovation. He extended appreciation for the gift of the cow dung mat to the Prime Minister of India, recognizing its

significance.

Looking ahead, he hinted at Baba Ramdev's prospective visit to Chhattisgarh, where a visit to Manohar Gaushala and Kamdhenu Mata would be on the agenda, inviting all to experience the bliss of encountering Govinda in the form of Mother Cow.

Traffic awareness drive ensures safer roads

Public awareness camp boosts safety measures

Khairagarh, Apr 09:

In a commendable move under the Samarath campaign, the traffic branch of the district police orchestrated a comprehensive traffic awareness camp at the district headquarters. Led by District Traffic Incharge Shakti Singh, the event aimed to enhance public awareness and adherence to road safety measures.

Under the vigilant eye of SP Trilok Bansal, the camp, held at Fateh Maidan, focused on ensuring the physical and document verification of vehicles, along with conducting health and eye tests for bus, auto, and van drivers from all schools across the



district. Dr. Vinay Ramte from the health department spearheaded the health check-ups, while eye specialists Dr. Purnima Chandel and colleagues ensured thorough eye examinations.

In alignment with Supreme Court guidelines, school operators and drivers were briefed on the necessity of maintaining safety equipment in vehicles and adhering to prescribed dress codes. A total of 57 drivers underwent health check-ups, with 42 receiving eye examinations. Furthermore, corrective measures were taken for insurance and licensing issues, with on-the-spot number plate adjustments for vehicles lacking proper identification.

Additional SP Neha Pandey personally inspected drivers, rectifying any identified deficiencies to ensure the safe transportation of children. SP Trilok Bansal emphasized the importance of a smooth traffic system, urging drivers to abstain from

intoxicants and adhere strictly to traffic regulations. Additionally, drivers were briefed on appropriate conduct with school children and the stringent laws outlined in the POCSO Act regarding child protection.

Participating drivers hailed from various educational institutions, including prominent schools like Wesleyan English Medium School and Neeraj Mile Stone School. District Traffic Incharge Shakti Singh affirmed the ongoing commitment to scrutinizing such vehicles, ensuring continued safety.

SP Bansal encouraged citizens to report any traffic violations or incidents promptly to the control room number 9479247401, underscoring the collective responsibility in maintaining road safety.

Karmamata jayanti celebrated

Girls from Kaudiya village embrace tradition and unity

Khairagarh, Apr 09:

In a display of tradition and unity, 31 girls from Kaudiya village, including Neelam, Neha, Nona, and many others, took part in a vibrant Kalash Shobha Yatra. Filling their Kalash with sacred Ganga water, they embarked on the procession to commemorate the auspicious occasion of Karmamata Jayanti, a celebration honoring Lord Jagannath devotees.

Led by the spirit of devotion, the girls, amidst chants and cheers, paid homage to Shitala Mata Devla as they made their way from the river. Upon reaching the venue, they reverently installed the urn around the Karma Mata idol, conducted prayers, and shared Khichdi Prasad with the



community. Highlighting the significance of this social event, Chief Guest Viplav Sahu lauded the efforts of the Kaudiya girls, emphasizing how they've not only earned respect locally but have also won the hearts of people across the nation.

Under the guidance of Jagat Sahu, and with the

coordination of Rekhhchand Sahu and organization by Basant Sahu, the event witnessed the presence of esteemed guests like Hariram Sahu, Dr. Harkalal Sahu, and others, who showered blessings and accolades upon the girls, further encouraging their endeavors.

Kavita selected for National Athletics Competition

Dongargaon, Apr 09:

In a remarkable achievement, a talented student from Government Higher Secondary School, Mohad development block, Dongargaon, stands poised to represent Chhattisgarh in the upcoming National School Athletics Competition. Kavita, a diligent student of class 11th, has earned this prestigious opportunity through her exceptional performance.

Kavita's journey to the national stage commenced during the state-level school athletics competition held in Jagdalpur last October. There, she showcased her prowess in the cross-country race, securing her place while proudly representing the Durg division.

Now, with the backing of her school and community, Kavita embarks on the next leg of her athletic



journey, set to compete in Bihar from 6 to 8 April. Expressing their unwavering support, school principal T.R. Nagvanshi, along with G. Mahala, Aanchle, R.R. Devangan, Bhupesh Yadu, and the entire staff, extend their heartfelt wishes for Kavita's success.

District Panchayat member Jagriti Chhuni Yadu joins in sending positive vibes, epitomizing the collective spirit of encouragement and solidarity as Kavita prepares to represent her state on the national stage.

Fair electoral process begins with EVM randomization

Political representatives witness transparent procedure

Korea, Apr 09:

In a significant step towards ensuring transparency and fairness in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, the initial randomization of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) units took place in the NIC room of the Collectorate. Led by Collector and District Election Officer Vinay Kumar Langeh, the process unfolded in the presence of political party representatives.

With meticulous attention to detail, EVMs and VVPATs were allocated to specific polling stations through a randomized selection method, witnessed by officials and party delegates. Following this crucial phase, the strong room within the Collectorate complex underwent thorough inspection, under the vigilant eye of



Collector Vinay Kumar Langeh, accompanied by Pradeep Gupta from the Congress and Shailesh Shivhare representing the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Emphasizing the paramount importance of security, stringent measures have been implemented to safeguard the integrity of the electoral equipment. From round-the-clock surveillance with CCTV cameras to strict regulations preventing unauthorized access,

every precaution has been taken to maintain the sanctity of the electoral process.

Furthermore, cleanliness, electricity, drinking water, and toilet facilities were meticulously reviewed to ensure optimal conditions within the strong room. With such meticulous planning and execution, stakeholders can rest assured that every effort is being made to uphold the principles of democracy and fair elections.

Voter awareness blossoms in Atal Udyan



Khairagarh, Apr 09:

In a spirited effort to galvanize voter participation ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, a voter awareness program blossomed in the verdant surroundings of Atal Udyan, under the vigilant gaze of Collector and District Election Officer Chandrakant Verma, alongside Deputy District Election Officer Surendra Kumar Thakur.

Crafted under the SVEEP action plan, the event, hosted by the municipality at Civil Line, aimed to ignite civic fervour among citizens. Against the backdrop of lush greenery, the Collector led the charge by

administering an oath in the local dialect, urging women to pledge a resounding 100 percent voter turnout.

Furthermore, in a gesture symbolizing civic empowerment, newly married women, stepping into their roles as new voters, were presented with flower pots as tokens of encouragement to exercise their franchise. The event witnessed the presence of Chief Medical Officer Pramod Shukla, SVEEP Assistant Nodal KK Verma, along with a multitude of officers, employees, and enthusiastic women attendees, collectively sowing the seeds of democratic participation.

Actress Shilpa Shetty honours Abdul Ghaffar Memon

Municipality Chairman's dedication earns prestigious accolade

Mainpur, Apr 09:

In a heartwarming ceremony, renowned film actress Shilpa Shetty bestowed honour upon Municipality Chairman Abdul Ghaffar Memon for his outstanding contributions to social welfare. The esteemed Shakti Samman event, hosted by a private channel at the elegant Mayfair Hotel in Nava Raipur, witnessed the celebration of numerous state luminaries and social workers who have demonstrated exemplary commitment to community service.

Amidst the gathering of notable personalities, Shilpa Shetty graced the occasion as the chief guest, extending her gratitude to all social workers and presenting them with



well-deserved accolades and citations. Notably, this isn't the first recognition for Memon, as previously the Chhattisgarh State Child Welfare Council Raipur had also lauded him for his remarkable endeavours in social service.

Abdul Ghaffar Memon's altruistic spirit has garnered him acclaim, including the prestigious Good Samaritan Award from the district police department. His benevolent actions, spanning over the past five years, have left an indelible mark on the community.

Expressing his gratitude for the honour bestowed upon him by the iconic Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty, Memon remarked, "It is a moment of immense pride to receive recognition from a stalwart of Hindi cinema and a national figure like Shilpa Shetty. Her cinematic contributions have inspired generations." Reflecting on his service to society, he added, "Bringing solace to the needy is a source of profound joy. I consider myself fortunate to have the opportunity to serve and find inner fulfillment through it."

Abdul Ghaffar Memon's unwavering dedication to social causes has been evident through his consistent involvement in various philanthropic activities. From extending aid to the underprivileged to promptly assisting acci-

Ashish Yadav wins prestigious award

Mungeli, Apr 09:

Ashish Yadav, hailing from Setganga in the district, has brought pride and acclaim to the local community by clinching the esteemed Khel Ratna Award. The accolade was bestowed upon him at the National Referee Seminar and Award Distribution Ceremony organized by Khelo Taekwondo Youth National Organization on March 30-31.

A proficient black belt holder in Taekwondo, Ashish Yadav's journey to success spans international podiums, where he has showcased his exceptional talent and skill. Notably, he has not only earned recognition as an International medalist but also holds the distinction of being a National Referee.

His illustrious achieve-



ments include prestigious honors such as the Mahatma Gandhi Lifetime Award in 2021, the Major Dhyanchand Award in 2023, and the National Best Achievement Award in 2023, underscoring his dedication and prowess in the realm of sports. In recognition of his outstanding accomplishments, Mungeli MLA Punnul Mohale extended heartfelt congratulations to Ashish Yadav, expressing optimism for his continued success and bright future ahead.

Farewell ceremony organized in JNV

Lavan, Apr 09:

The esteemed corridors of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Lavan, resonated with warmth and nostalgia as colleagues and friends came together to bid adieu to C. Dinesh Kumar, the dedicated Office Superintendent who retired on March 31st.

In a touching ceremony held within the school premises on April 7th, the entire school family gathered to express gratitude and extend best wishes for Dinesh Kumar's future endeavors. Hailing from Kotamuri village in Kotayam district of Kerala, Dinesh Kumar, fluent in Malayalam, has been an integral part of the Chhattisgarh commu-



nity, dedicating his service to various schools across the region.

As a token of appreciation, the teachers and staff members presented heartfelt gifts to Dinesh Kumar, acknowledging his invaluable contributions to the school and its community. Notably, Dinesh Kumar is the husband of school principal B. Girja, adding a personal touch to the

farewell proceedings.

Amidst the camaraderie, a cultural program infused the air with melodies of songs and music, celebrating the vibrant spirit that Dinesh Kumar brought to the school environment. To culminate the evening on a festive note, a delightful dinner party was organized, graciously hosted by librarian Rajendra Sikha.

Women spreading awareness through creativity

Creative initiatives promote electoral awareness

Arang, Apr 09:

In a remarkable display of creativity and community engagement, over 200 women from the Amrit Cluster Gullu Group, affiliated with the Bihan Group, took the lead in spreading awareness about the importance of voting through various activities, guided by Chief Electoral Officer, District Collector Gaurav Kumar Singh, and District Panchayat CEO Vishwadeep.

Under the direction of Assistant Returning Officer Pushpendra Sharma and Chief



Executive Officer District Panchayat Arang Kumar Singh Lahare, the women embarked on a journey of empowerment, utilizing Mehndi designs, Rangoli

art, Lamp and awareness rally, and sports events like chair races to convey their message of electoral awareness.

Through the chair race,

the women emphasized their desire for the country to progress on the path of development fueled by 100 percent voter participation. The enthusiasm among participants was palpable, reflecting their commitment to the democratic process.

The event was further bolstered by the efforts of the SVEEP Arang team, with teachers Mahendra Kumar Patel and Arvind Kumar Vaishnav leading the charge by raising awareness slogans and providing running commentary for each activity. Notably, Seema Bhandekar actively participated, enhancing the collaborative spirit of the occasion.

Acknowledging the success of the program, special support from BPM Ramratan Tengwar, Devanand Nirmalkar, Cluster in-charge Yogesh Chandrakar, Gulendra Dani, Surendra Burman, and ADEO Chhatradhari Sonkar played a crucial role.

The commendable presence of more than 200 women and villagers, including Bhuvaneshwari Sahu, Anita Banjare, Lakshmi Chandrakar, Ratna Jangade, Anusuya Sahu, Bhoj Bai Pal, Heera Nishad, and Rajeshwari Vishwakarma, highlighted the collective commitment towards promoting electoral awareness and women empowerment in the community.

It's Nikhat's time, Lovlina needs to be more proactive: BI Fernandez

**New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTI):**

Former Indian men's boxing coach Blas Iglesias Fernandez has backed world champion Nikhat Zareen (50kg) to bag a medal at this year's Paris Olympics but feels that Tokyo Games bronze-medallist Lovlina Borgohain's (75kg) chances will boil down to her level of aggression in the ring.

The 68-year-old Cuban, who served for over two decades as the men's coach and also became the first and only overseas Dronacharya awardee, has been appointed by the Sports Authority of India as High Performance Coach for a two-year period.

Fernandez is stationed at the National Boxing Academy in Rohtak, Haryana.

Speaking recently on the sidelines of the multi-nation camp for junior boxers

at the National Centre of Excellence in Rohtak, Fernandez evaluated India's chances at the upcoming Summer Games.

"I love the boxing (style) of Nikhat. She is very intelligent. She has good ring tactics. She knows when she is winning and when she is losing," Fernandez told SAI Media.

"This is Nikhat's time to prove herself. It's true that she had lived in the shadows of Mary Kom but now it's her chance to prove herself and make India proud," he said. The Cuban was a part of the Indian men's coaching staff when Vijender Singh claimed the first Olympic medal in the country's boxing history back in the 2008 Beijing edition. He also hit the headlines in 2014 for coping a disciplinary ban for losing his cool after L Sarita Devi's controversial semifinal loss in the Asian Games.

Jaiswal's form a concern as RR look to keep winning juggernaut rolling

Jaipur, Apr 09 (PTI):

Yashasvi Jaiswal would be desperate to let his bat do the talking when an unbeaten Rajasthan Royals take on an under pressure Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League here on Wednesday.

RR could not have asked for a better start to the season, registering four consecutive wins from as many games.

But Jaiswal, who has been terrific for the national team of late, has tallied just 39 runs in four games.

If he is back amongst the runs, it will be icing on the cake for RR as his opening partner Jos Buttler returned to form with an unbeaten century against Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Sanju Samson has been leading RR from the front, scoring 178 runs from four games including two fifties. But it is Riyan Parag's performance with the bat that has been a revelation for RR. The all-rounder from Guwahati is the third highest run-getter in the tournament so far with 185 runs, including two unbeaten half-centuries.

The likes of Shimron Hetmyer and Dhruv Jurel



also needs to contribute more in the middle-order.

Rajasthan also boast of potent bowling attack in the form of pacers Trent Boult and Nandre Burger; and leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, who has been their stand-out performer with

eight wickets, the second highest so far. But Ravichandran Ashwin's patchy form is a surprise. He has taken just one wicket from four matches while giving away eight runs per over; GT, on the other hand, witnessed a mixed bag

campaign so far with two wins and three losses out of five games.

The Shubman Gill-led side would look to avoid a hat-trick of losses on Wednesday but it would be easier said than done against an opponent on rampage. They would be looking to bounce from back after a 'poor' effort with the bat against Lucknow Super Giants.

Gill, personally, have had a decent outing with the bat so far, scoring 183 runs from five games with a strike rate close to 147.

His opening partner B Sai Sudharsan too has been among runs but is yet to register a fifty in the tournament. He replaced Wriddhiman Saha at the top in the previous and is expected to bat alongside Gill also on Wednesday.

Veterans Mohit Sharma and Umesh Yadav have been the stand-out performers with the ball for GT but they fell flat in front of little-known Punjab Kings cricketers Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma in a thrilling tie.

The Afghan trio of Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad also need to raise their game.

Injuries are mentally challenging: Mirabai Chanu

**New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTI):**

She heaved her lowest weight in years at the World Cup recently but Olympic silver-medallist Mirabai Chanu is actually quite chuffed about her performance as she managed it on the back of just one month's training after enduring a challenging injury breakdown.

With only four months to go for the Paris Olympics, Chanu, who was competing in her first tournament since her Asian Games breakdown, finished 12th at the IWF World Cup with a total effort of 184kg (81kg+103kg), a whopping 33kg behind China's Hou Zhihui, who will look to defend her Olympic title.

"I was delighted to be back in competition. Everything is okay now, recovery is good. I'm training at 70 per cent," Chanu told PTI.

After watching her op-

ponents raise the bar by breaking records in the 49kg weight class, Chanu's confidence received a significant boost when she heaved the barbell after just a month of training.

"It felt very good. After the injury (at Asian Games), I lifted weights after 4-5 months and I got a lot of confidence," she said.

"Weightlifting is different, there is always fear as to what will happen. I felt confident that I was able to make a recovery so fast," added Chanu, who is exclusively managed by IOS Sports.

An Asian Games medal is the only one that Chanu, who has a personal best of 88kg in snatch and 119kg in clean and jerk, hasn't been able to get her hands on. She has stood on the podium at the Olympics, World Championships, Commonwealth Games and the Asian Championships.

India start off with easy win in Billie Jean King Cup

Changsha, Apr 09 (PTI):

Rutuja Bhosale did not lose a single game while Anika Raina too had an easy outing as the Indian team expectedly blanked Pacific Oceania 3-0 on the opening day of the Billie Jean King Cup here on Tuesday. Bhosale double bagged Fiji's Tarani Kamoe to put India ahead. The country's number one singles player Raina then sealed the contest with a 6-1 6-3 win over Saoirse Breen, who is also from Fiji. In the inconsequential doubles, the Indian combination of Shrivalli Rashmika Bhamidipaty and Prarthana Thombare outplayed Mehetia Boosie and Ruby Coffin 6-1 6-1. A group of small nations of the Southern, Southwestern, Central and Western Pacific Ocean compete collectively as one country in both the Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup. A tough challenge awaits India on Wednesday when they face hosts China.

Amir, Imad recalled to Pakistan squad for NZ T20I series

**Lahore, Apr 09 (PTI):**

Having reversed their decisions of retiring from international cricket, fast bowler Muhammad Amir and left-arm spinner Imad Wasim were recalled to the 17-member Pakistan squad for the five-match T20I series against New Zealand, starting April 18.

The 10-day series will feature three games in Rawalpindi and two games in Lahore. Amir, who was convicted for spot-fixing charges and also briefly did jail time in England,

had last played international cricket in 2020 before calling it quits to ply his trade in T20 leagues. He retired from international cricket due to his differences with erstwhile coaches Misbah ul Haq and Waqar Younis.

Imad, a spin all rounder had retired from international cricket in November 2023 but took back his retirement after persuasion from the board and selectors after he had a productive Pakistan Super League in which the team won the title.

England to play three cricket Tests in New Zealand

London, Apr 09 (AP):

The England and Wales Cricket Board on Tuesday announced a three-Test tour to New Zealand starting at Christchurch on November 28. After the series opener at Hagley Oval, the tour will move to the North Island for tests in Wellington from December 6-10 and in Hamilton from December 14-18. The last time the Test teams met in February and March of last year, they split a two-match series after England was on the verge of a 2-0 victory when skipper Ben Stokes enforced the follow-on. New Zealand won by one run — only the fourth team in history to win a Test after following on — in the second Test after England won the first by 267 runs.

For Djokovic and Bopanna, dedication, experience is mantra for success

Monte Carlo, Apr 09 (PTI):

For Rohan Bopanna, experience counts a lot while unflinching dedication towards the game is paramount for Serbian great Novak Djokovic to be successful on the challenging ATP Tour as the two oldest world number ones in singles and doubles formats engaged in a fun chat at Monte Carlo Masters.

Bopanna, at the age 44, was already oldest player to hold number one rank in the world in the doubles and 36-year-old Djokovic surpassed Roger Federer to become the oldest number one in the latest singles rankings chart.

The ATP Tour brought the world number ones for a short conversation as they prepared for the prestigious tournament.

"Tennis teaches us so many wonderful things. Experience wins and that is where I have got it," Bopanna told Djokovic in a video posted by ATP.

The Serbian responded by saying it is not just all about experience. "I would say experience but also still being dedicated and devoted to the game every single day."



We could have assessed the pitch better: Varun Chakaravarthy

Chennai, Apr 09 (PTI):

Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakaravarthy says misreading the pitch contributed immensely to their downfall against hosts Chennai Super Kings here. The pitch used for the game on Monday behaved differently compared to the ones used for the first two games.

KKR managed only 137/9 and CSK chased it down in 17.4 overs. "When I saw the wicket, it appeared to be a flat one. But the way it behaved was totally different," said Chakaravarthy in the post-match media interaction. "We could have assessed the pitch better because it was very slow initially. It was tough to connect the ball, but I felt 160 would have been a par score."

Candidates chess: Indians in hunt, but Nepomniachtchi clear favourite

Toronto, Apr 09 (PTI):

The great Viswanathan Anand felt Indians were "a long shot" in the Candidates Chess Tournament but the duo of D Gukesh and R Praggnanandhaa have done surprisingly well to withstand the early storm as the prestigious event took its first rest day of the ongoing edition.

The Indians were never the favourites in the bigger scheme of things but yet, Gukesh has held his own and so has Praggnanandhaa. However, the same cannot be said about Vidit Gujrathi, who became a favourite after his stunning win over world No.3 Hikaru Nakamura.



With four rounds done out of 14, there are 10 more games still to play. Things have been going well for the Indians but not in the purest way possible. Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia, who has to play under the FIDE flag

due to sanctions against his country, is sitting firmly at the top of the table on three points out of a possible four and he could not have hoped for a better start to his campaign. With victories against Gujrathi and Firouzja Alireza of France and two draws, the Russian got a heads-up to what could possibly be a third attempt to fight for the crown of world champion.

Historically, no one has ever won the candidates three times in a row.

Nepomniachtchi became the first sole leader in the event following his second victory with white pieces and he is now followed by Fabiano Caruana and Gukesh on 2.5 points apiece.

India eye cohesive effort to keep 5-Test hockey series alive

Perth, Apr 09 (PTI):

The Indian men's hockey team would aim for a cohesive effort to avoid a hat-trick of losses when it takes on a formidable Australia in the third Test of the five-match series here on Wednesday.

The Indians were drubbed 1-5 and 2-4 by Australia in the first two matches of the series, which is a part of preparations for this year's Paris Olympics for both the



sides. The tour is of huge significance for India as it will provide valuable in-

puts about the areas to improve to chief coach Craig Fulton.

Was told about leading CSK in 2022: Gaikwad

Chennai, Apr 09 (PTI):

The charismatic Mahendra Singh Dhoni told Ruturaj Gaikwad to be prepared for Chennai Super Kings captaincy back in 2022 and he has been ready ever since even though there were no "deep conversations" between the two on how to lead one of the most successful IPL units. Gaikwad, who led from the front in the win against Kolkata Knight Riders on Monday night, was stunningly appointed CSK captain a day before the IPL opener on March 22.

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March 2024 warmest ever, 12-month average temp reaches new record

New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTI)

The world experienced the warmest March ever due to a combined effect of El Nino and human-caused climate change, making it the 10th consecutive month since June last year to set a new temperature record, the European Union's climate agency said on Tuesday.

The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said the average temperature of 14.14 degrees Celsius in March was 1.68 degrees Celsius higher than the month's average for 1850-1900, the designated pre-industrial reference period.

It is 0.73 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average for March and 0.10 degrees Celsius above the previous high set in March 2016.

"The global average temperature for the past



A woman uses a cloth to protect herself from the scorching sun on a hot summer day, in Bengaluru.

12 months (April 2023-March 2024) is the highest recorded, at 0.70 degrees Celsius above the 1991-

2020 average and 1.58 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average," the climate

agency said.

C3S said the global average temperature breached the 1.5 degrees

Celsius threshold for an entire year for the first time in January.

A permanent breach of the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit specified in the Paris Agreement, however, refers to long-term warming over many years.

According to climate scientists, countries need to limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Earth's global surface temperature has already increased by around 1.15 degrees Celsius compared to the average in 1850-1900, a level that hasn't been witnessed since 1,25,000 years ago, before the most recent ice age. This warming is considered the reason behind record droughts, wildfires and floods worldwide.

BAISAKHI FAIR



A camel performs during Baisakhi Fair, in Amritsar, Tuesday.

Gold medal to NTPC Nava Raipur

● For Best Branding Initiatives

Lucknow, Apr 09:

NTPC-Nava Raipur received Gold medal for Best Branding Initiatives at 32nd Corporate Communication Meet-2024 held at Lucknow on April 07-08. Director (HR) Dillip Kumar Patel presented the award to Shri Sahadev Sethi, Sr Mgr (Corp Comm), NTPC Nava Raipur in the presence of RED-NR N Srinivasa Rao; Harjit Singh, ED-Corp Comm; Dr Anil Kumar Dang, GM-HR, NRHQ and K M Prashanth, GM (Corp Comm).



The award recognizes NTPC Nava Raipur's efforts in promoting brand identity of the company especially through outdoor display and exhibitions. The display at Arrival and Departure areas of Raipur Airport; Installation of Branding Boards at 1.7 KM stretch median near Raipur Airport; Unipole in Nava Raipur; Signage at roundabout near NTPC Nava Raipur office and participation in exhibitions like IPS-2024, New India Festival and major events in reputed Institutions like IIIT Nava Raipur; NIT Raipur; AIMA, Arera Club etc are worth to mention.

SC permits MLA Abbas Ansari to attend 'Fatiha' ritual

● Of father Mukhtar Ansari

New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTI)

The Supreme Court on Tuesday permitted jailed Uttar Pradesh MLA Abbas Ansari to attend the 'Fatiha' ritual of his father gangster-politician Mukhtar Ansari, who died recently, on April 10.

Mukhtar Ansari, who had dozens of cases against him and was convicted in some, died of cardiac arrest at a hospital in Banda in Uttar Pradesh on March 28 while in judicial custody.

Abbas Ansari is currently lodged in Kasganj district jail in Uttar

Pradesh under judicial custody in connection with some criminal cases.

His plea seeking permission to attend his father's 'Fatiha' ritual came up for hearing before a bench of Justices Surya Kant and K V Viswanathan. The bench said it saw no reason to deny him permission to attend the event.

Following apprehensions voiced by the Uttar Pradesh government on maintenance of law and order, the apex court directed that Abbas Ansari shall be taken from Kasganj jail to his native place Ghazipur in police custody with adequate security. "The Director General of Police, Uttar

Pradesh, to do the needful in this regard," the bench said, adding that keeping in view the distance, the police in coordination with the jail authorities, shall ensure that Abbas Ansari starts his journey today at the earliest and not later than 5 p.m.

It said he shall be allowed to attend the Fatiha on Wednesday in police custody, and after it is over, temporarily shifted to the local jail in Ghazipur.

The bench said the district administration of Ghazipur shall verify if other rituals are to take place on April 11, and if so, Abbas Ansari be allowed to participate in police custody.

Pune varsity student attacked over 'love jihad' charge

Pune, Apr 09 (PTI)

A 19-year-old Muslim student of a university in Maharashtra's Pune city has been allegedly beaten up by five unidentified persons who accused him of engaging in "love jihad", police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place on Sunday afternoon when the male student was accompanying two female students on the campus of the state-run Savitribai Phule Pune University, an official from Chatushringi police station said. The police have registered a case against unidentified persons and are trying to identify the culprits, he said.

The university authorities said they have set up a committee for a probe into the incident. 'Love jihad' is

a term used by right-wing activists and outfits to allege a conspiracy by Muslim men to convert Hindu women to Islam through marriage.

The male student, along with the two female friends, was returning after having a meal when four-five unidentified persons on motorbikes approached them on the university campus, the official said. They started questioning the student and asked him to show his Aadhaar card. In his complaint, the student alleged that after seeing his name on the identity card, one of the persons asked whether he had come to the university to engage in "love jihad" and assaulted him and a Hindu male friend who was also present there, the police said.

Antony wants his son and BJP candidate Anil to lose

Thiruvananthapuram, Apr 09 (PTI): Veteran Congress leader and former Defence Minister A K Antony said on Tuesday that his son, Anil K Antony, who is contesting as a BJP candidate in the Pathanamthitta Lok Sabha seat in Kerala, should not win the election.

Antony said that his son's party should lose, and his rival, the Congress candidate in the south



Kerala constituency, Anto Antony, should win with an absolute majority. "The Congress is my re-

ligion", Antony said, reacting to repeated queries about his son's politics. The 83-year-old former

Kerala Chief Minister said he has put his health issues aside to address the media as he thought he has to come out and make his stand clear as this is an election to "safeguard the idea of India and its constitution."

"It is a do-or-die battle," said Antony, who is also India's longest-serving Defence Minister. He cited health issues as

a reason for not traveling out of Thiruvananthapuram for campaigning for the Congress party and said that even if he did not go for campaigning in Pathanamthitta, Anto Antony would win with an absolute majority.

"For me, family and politics are different. This stance isn't new; I have maintained it since my days in KSU," Antony said.

Pamban bridge: India's first vertical lift bridge over sea in Rameswaram faces 'curve' test

New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTI)

A sharp curve in the upcoming Pamban railway bridge, India's first vertical-lift bridge connecting the country's mainland with Rameswaram island, has become an additional challenge for the Railways besides its mechanical peculiarity and a rough sea.

The Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL), which is constructing this 2.08-km-long bridge, is facing a huge challenge in moving a lift span, which is 72.5-m-long, 16-m-wide and weighs 550 tonne, from the Rameswaram end to 450 m in the sea to fix it to the bridge.

"We started moving this lift span on March 10 and till date, we have moved the 550 ton lift span 80 m towards the centre of the bridge. The biggest challenge is the 2.65 degree of



curved alignment of the bridge. Had it been straight, we would have moved it faster," a senior official of RVNL said, adding the curved shape was essential due to various alignment changes.

The movement of lift span to its final fixing point shall be completed by the end of May, as it still has to be carried 370 m more.

"Once we cross the curved portion, we can ex-

pedite its movement. We have taken a huge precaution while moving it in the sea as its size and weight requires great precision at each step," the official said.

The RVNL has set a deadline of June 30 to make the bridge operational and its officials say that they are trying their level best to meet it.

"Once the lift span is fixed, the remaining work is no big deal," an RVNL official said.

EID PREPARATIONS



A Muslim woman gets her hands decorated with henna ahead of Eid al-Fitr, in Jammu, Tuesday.

Manipuris who took refuge outside state yearn to vote

● In LS polls

Imphal/New Delhi, Apr 09 (PTI)

"Don't treat us like outsiders". Forced to leave their state after clashes broke out last year, that's the impassioned plea from Manipuris who fled to other parts of the country to escape the violence and long to vote in the Lok Sabha election but can't because there is no such provision.

Displaced people living in relief camps in conflict-hit Manipur will be able to vote in the upcoming elections beginning April 19. However, there is no such arrangement for those outside the state unable to return home because they feel it's still not safe. And officials say getting them to vote is just not feasible.

Manipur has traditionally seen a very high voter turnout with more than 82 per cent polling recorded in the 2019 elections. This time, the ethnic violence has cast a shadow with several civil society

groups and displaced people questioning the relevance of holding elections in the current circumstances.

As leaders of both the Kuki-Zo and Meitei groups take up the issue with the Election Commission, those who took shelter outside the state say they have stakes in the future of Manipur and should be allowed to vote through postal ballots if no other arrangement can be made.

Like Biren Chandam, a Manipuri now living in Delhi.

"I came to Delhi and found a job here while my family moved to neighbouring Mizoram. We long to go back to our house which may or may not be existing right now but we cannot vote for our state. Why? "The elections should either be postponed or some arrangements should be made for us to vote from wherever we are. We are being made to feel as outsiders in our own home state. Don't make us feel like outsiders," Chandam told PTI.

WE ARE NOT OUTSIDERS

Kumthai, a tribal from Manipur now living in a relief camp in Mizoram, echoed him.

"We took refuge in a separate state because our state was burning. Eleven months later, the situation is still not conducive to return. Unless we vote for the right person to take the right steps for us, how can we come out of this situation," he said.

Ten Manipur MLAs belonging to the Kuki-Zo community earlier this month asked the Election Commission to let displaced members of the community scattered beyond the state to vote from wherever they have taken shelter across the country.

"If suitable arrangements are not made for our displaced people taking shelter in different parts of the country many of our genuine voters will be deprived of their constitutional rights to exercise their franchise as provided under the

Constitution," the MLAs said. A Meitei civil society group has also written to the poll panel asking that the postal ballot facility be extended to voters from Manipur living outside the state.

The Meitei Heritage Society said recently that it is impossible for voters living outside the state to take expensive flights and road travel is completely unsafe. "Many others are also unable to travel to Manipur to vote due to security concerns," the society wrote, referring to the sharp ethnic divide due to which Meiteis can't pass through Kuki-Zo-dominated hill areas by road, while members of the Kuki-Zo tribes have stopped taking flights since the airport is in Imphal valley.

According to officials in the state government, it is not possible to extend the vote facility to those outside the state.

"There is no official number of such people who left the state, some left through Mizoram... We do not have a count. It does not seem feasible to arrange voting for them due to logistical reasons," an official said on condition of anonymity.

The Mizoram Home Department estimates that at least 9,196 adults and children from neighbouring Manipur have taken shelter in different parts of the state.

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